



2011

## Images of God, Imago Dei and God's Relationship with Humanity Through the Image of Mary's Breast Milk: A Focus Upon Sor María Anna Águeda De San Ignacio (1695-1756)

Neomi Dolores DeAnda  
*Loyola University Chicago*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss)

 Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

DeAnda, Neomi Dolores, "Images of God, Imago Dei and God's Relationship with Humanity Through the Image of Mary's Breast Milk: A Focus Upon Sor María Anna Águeda De San Ignacio (1695-1756)" (2011). *Dissertations*. 243.

[https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/243](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/243)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).  
Copyright © 2011 Neomi Dolores DeAnda

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

IMAGES OF GOD, IMAGO DEI AND GOD'S RELATIONSHIP  
WITH HUMANITY THROUGH THE IMAGE OF MARY'S BREAST MILK:  
A FOCUS UPON SOR MARÍA ANNA ÁGUEDA DE SAN IGNACIO  
(1695-1756)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

BY

NEOMI DOLORES DE ANDA

CHICAGO, IL

MAY 2011

Copyright by Neomi De Anda, 2011  
All rights reserved.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I wish to thank that which I have been taught to call God for this life and all of the joys and struggles it brings. Thank you to my parents, Rita and Antonio De Anda, you were my first teachers and have always been my greatest cheerleaders. To my hermanito, Michael, you keep me focused on the future and motivated to create change in our world. To Martin, my partner and dear friend, you have walked the most daily steps with me through this process. For that, and for all of the formatting help, I am thankful. I am also grateful that we will walk many steps together beyond today. To my academic partner, Jackie Hidalgo, I would not have finished writing this dissertation without our internet boot camp sessions and endless hours of deep scholarly engagement and sharing of our daily struggles! To my guardian angel, Carmen Nanko-Fernández, we made it through many innings. Your cariño, passion and creativity are inspiring! To my tíologian, Gilberto Cavazos-González, O.F.M., thank you for the many hours you have spent with me sharing your vast knowledge of traditions of breast milk and practical wisdom of being a professional theologian. To Jean-Pierre Ruiz, thank you for teaching me about the politics of space and time. I thank you, Orlando Espín, for allowing me to be one of the many you pull through the doors you and your generation of Latin@ scholars have opened for us and continue to open. To Mary Frohlich, R.S.C.J., thank you for pointing me toward many of the best

sources in the field of spirituality which have informed my project. To everyone on this list, thank you for the many meals and laughs we have shared together. I look forward to many more!

It takes communities to raise a scholar, and I have been blessed with many groups and many homes. Muchas gracias a la comunidad de San Pio X en El Paso, Tx. In this sacred space, I began to discern my vocation which ultimately led me to be a theologian. Gracias a mi querida familia por todo su apoyo. Thank you to all of those who prayed for buckets of glue, particularly members of the Marianist family, especially Rey Gustamente and Mary Lynne and Andy Hill. I was stuck in my chair long enough to finish! To my many friends, especially Melissa Rios, thank you for rooting for me all the way to the finish line in this marathon. To Holy Spirit Friary, thank you for the many nights you have provided me with a room, so I did not need to drive home in the dark or snow. To Gregory Cuellar and the staff of the Cushing Memorial Library at Texas A&M University, thank you for digitizing over 1,000 pages of original texts which made this project both accessible and affordable and have given me much material for scholarly research for many years to come. Thank you to Peter Casarella and the staff of The Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology at DePaul University for providing me with a Junior Research Fellowship. To the Hispanic Theological Initiative, Joanne Rodriguez, Ángela Schoepf and Maria Kennedy, your hard work and lucha have provided me with so many spaces to create community with generations of Latin@ scholars. Because of you, I knew I was never alone, and the money was very helpful, too! To the many at DePaul

University, Catholic Theological Union and McCormick Theological Seminary, thank you for believing in my teaching ability and providing spaces for me to gain much teaching experience. Finally, I wish to thank my committee. To John McCarthy, thank you for serving as a reader of this project. Your class motivated me to find María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio. To Gary Macy, thank you for the early talks at the inception of this project and your support and wisdom throughout the writing process. Thank you also, for serving as a reader and to you and Saralynn for the beautiful gift of your presence at my defense. To David Stagaman, S.J., thank you for the many hours you have shared of yourself, your wisdom and experience. Thank you for pushing me to say what I mean and mean what I say, especially around Marian imaginaries. I am very grateful for your direction of both my comprehensive exams and dissertation project. Your office has become one of my many scholarly homes.

Para mi nina, Rosaura Melendy,  
y en memoria de mi abuelita, Celia DeAnda.  
Su modelo de ser mujeres fuertes siempre sera mi ejemplo.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
CHAPTER TWO: MARÍA ANNA ÁGUEDA DE SAN IGNACIO'S CONTEXT	17
CHAPTER THREE: MARÍA ANNA ÁGUEDA DE SAN IGNACIO AND AUTHORITY	37
CHAPTER FOUR: THE ROLE OF MARY IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE TRINITY, <i>IMAGO DEI</i> , AND IMAGES OF GOD IN MARÍA ANNA'S WRITINGS	67
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT	98
APPENDIX A: SELECT TRANSLATIONS FROM LAS <i>MARABILLAS</i>	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY	129
VITA	132

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents an original contribution to the academic field of Theology, specifically Constructive Theology, because it begins the retrieval work of a woman's voice from seventeenth and eighteenth century Mexico, an entire area of historical and theological thought which has been underexplored in the United States of America. Analysis of María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's eighteenth century original publications highlights a glimpse into this woman's official authority during her time, which also presents a historical woman who has held official ecclesial authority.

This project engages María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's work to draw theological insights and further expand understandings about notions of *imago Dei* and *imago Christi* through María Anna's use of the image of Mary's breast milk. María Anna's writings present a historical perspective where Mary is placed in direct relationship with the entire Godhead as well as with each individual part of the Trinity, i.e. daughter to the father, mother to the son and spouse to the spirit. Through these writings, I argue that Mary holds primacy over other humans in ways that make her an equal to the various persons of the Trinity as well as part of the entire Godhead. She is the door to humanity's knowledge of the Trinity which means the foundation of salvation. *El Camino de la Leche*, María Anna's

designated spiritual path, presents only one way to engage the Trinity. María Anna's proposed spiritual path endows an embodied female perspective as the one responsible for knowledge of God and the path to salvation. Therefore, offering alternatives to views of disembodied, misogynistic perspectives and images.

Furthermore, this dissertation reveals historical complexities of gendering images of God, *imago dei* and God's relationship with humanity. Critical engagement with the work of Cistercian writers, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, as well as other medieval thinkers who also used the image of breast milk within their theological development has presented embodied perspectives of men sharing with men, women sharing with women, as well as men and women sharing with one another. At the core of those writers who explore the image of breast milk, one finds relationality. Thus, the focus of those engaged in the exchange of breast milk becomes one of relationships together with all of their complexities and limitations.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Since the middle of the twentieth century, a burgeoning renaissance of insights into God has been taking place. Around the world different groups of Christian people, stressed by particular historical circumstances, have been gaining glimpses of the living God in fresh and unexpected ways. So compelling are these insights that rather than being hoarded by the local communities that first realized them, they are offered as a gift and a challenge to the worldwide church.<sup>1</sup>

These words from Elizabeth Johnson summarize my hopes for the benefits of this dissertation project. Beyond critically engaging current cultural norms, trends and religiosities, I am retrieving a particular text, Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's (1695-1756) *Marabillas del divino amor selladas con el sello de la verdad*, published posthumously in Puebla, Mexico in 1758, because "particular historical circumstances" do not only start in contemporary periods but have long histories and traditions. I seek to make a small but significant contribution through this project because as Carmen Nanko-Fernández states, "...theologies are the humble articulations of the perennially tongue-tied in the presence of mystery."<sup>2</sup> María Anna offers one such eighteenth century theology,

---

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Carmen Nanko-Fernández, *Theologizing en Español: Context, Community and Ministry*. (New York: Maryknoll, 2010), 51.

even though, until this dissertation, no critical commentary from a theological perspective of María Anna's work has existed, nor has there been a translation of her work from its original Baroque Spanish into English. Her writings exist today, because her bishop, Sr. Sr. D. Domingo Pantaleon Alvarez de Abreu paid for the publication of her texts soon after her death. To address this lacuna, I have translated and analyzed las *Marabillas* to contribute to the burgeoning renaissance of insights into God that Johnson recognizes in our contemporary moment.

I engage María Anna, her work in general and the image of breast milk in particular, as a Latina, specifically a Tejana and feminist. As Maria Pilar Aquino states, "The third task [of Latina Feminist Theology] is that of more deeply connecting theology and spirituality in feminist terms."<sup>3</sup> Part of my purpose for my writing this dissertation is to connect theology and spirituality by uncovering historical roots for deepening our theological reflections. I enter this endeavor fully understanding myself as part of the project. Due to the realities that the text has its meaning from its own historical time period, that little research exists on this time period, and that a critical commentary lacks for María Anna's writings and *Vida*, I openly state assumptions that I bring to this work. I am reading the text from a contextual perspective of a Tejana and a feminist. I do not pretend this text to have inherent meaning without my engagement. Simultaneously then,

---

<sup>3</sup> María Pilar Aquino, "Latina Feminist Theology: Central Features" in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 154.

I am engaged in a retrieval of las *Marabillas* and a theological trajectory of the twenty-first century.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The retrieval of historical voices remains an important and necessary function for theologies constructed in the twenty-first century. Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio renders a voice from seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Mexico which should not be lost in the folds and depths of Christian histories and traditions. She is another voice from a time period when current dominant thought reveres Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz as the prominent, if not only, female writer and theologian of her time and place.<sup>4</sup> María Anna adds another original voice to those we know from New Spain and early Mexico.

The plurality and multiplicity of voices from the past continually needs to be brought into conversation with current theological reflections. These voices of saints, martyrs and mystics may provide confirmations and correctives for our current theological understandings and traditionings.<sup>5</sup> Some of the areas of concern include beliefs held by many scholars that the Christian Tradition represents mainly misogynistic and disembodied images of God and humanity, especially women. Other assumptions show engendered theologies, such as the

---

<sup>4</sup> Michelle Gonzalez has written a parallel text to this proposed dissertation. Her dissertation at the Jesuit School of Theology at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley focused upon the retrieval of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz as a theological voice. Her dissertation has been published as Michelle Gonzalez. *Sor Juana: Beauty and Justice in the Americas*. (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> William M. Thompson. *Fire & Light*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 13.

depiction of a male *logos* in the person of Jesus to be dualistic. Elizabeth

Johnson presents a keen summary on this last issue,

In addition to critical concern about the Trinity's loss of connection with religious experience and its overliteralization in Christian imagination, feminist theology raises another critique, that this symbol is used to sustain the patriarchal subordination of women. It does this through both its male imagery and the hierarchical pattern of divine relationships inherent in the structure of reigning models of the symbol itself.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond this historical interpretation, Latin American perspectives have been omitted from this and many other summaries of Trinitarian thought.

---

<sup>6</sup> Johnson presents a very thorough summary as follows: "The fact is, however, that the doctrine of the Trinity in recent centuries has run into a thicket of problems, which were verbalized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although they were building long before that. These difficulties have considerably lessened appreciation of the Trinitarian speech about God. One fundamental obstacle arises from the fact that over time the triune symbol has been divorced from the original multifaceted, life-giving experiences that gave it birth in human understanding. This separation has been aided and abetted by extraordinary forgetfulness of the nature of theological language and of the indirect way it points to holy mystery. Clear and distinct Trinitarian terms give the impression that theology has God sighted through Jesus in the Spirit, but as a mind-bending mathematical puzzle, a mystery in the sense of a problem that can be solved or at least clarified with enough intellectual keenness and hubris.

Consequently, the triune symbol and the thought to which it gives rise have become unintelligible and religiously irrelevant on a vast scale, appearing as esoteric doctrine that one could well do without. This attitude is superbly represented in the way Friedrich Schleiermacher relegates the Trinity to the closing pages of his magisterial *The Christian Faith*. His controlling motive is the conviction that the doctrine, derived as it is from several more basic elements and being of little practical value, had little to do with the essence of this faith. The Trinity continues to be found in the appendix of the personal catechism of many minds and hearts, as compared with its place in official church teaching and prayer and in ecumenical statements. To paraphrase an observation by Karl Rahner, if people were to read in their morning newspaper that a fourth person of the Trinity had been discovered it would cause little stir, or at least less than is occasioned by a Vatican pronouncement on a matter of sexual ethics – so detached has the triune symbol become from the actual religious life of many people.

A paradox ensues. On the one hand, people think of God in a monolithic monopersonal way because Trinitarian doctrine is simply too separated from experience and too complicated to understand. On the other hand, if the triune God is thought about at all it is with a strong tendency toward tritheism, as if God were three people, three persons in the modern psychological sense of the term. Either way, the liberating point of the symbol is lost." In Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 193.

The lack of historical voices from Latin America found in theological scholarship in the United States of America raises concern for the Catholic Church with a large Latin@ population.<sup>7</sup>

However, we should not consider such a lacuna only a contemporary pastoral problem. As Michelle Gonzalez states, "Very few women's voices emerge in the history books and theological texts of the late seventeenth century in Latin America. In fact, many would argue that there are few substantial figures in this region, male or female, whose impact is significant beyond their local context."<sup>8</sup> Overall, historical figures from Latin America have been considered marginal and insignificant to wider theological discourse, as some consider these figures to be spiritual writers rather than theologians. One reason most of these figures have not been brought forward into the United States of America may not be because of their lack of theological insight or possible contribution for our time, but because they are seen as outside of the mainstream. Although some

---

<sup>7</sup> I use the terms Latin@ for a variety of reasons. First, the ending with both "o" and "a" signifies the identification of gender among our peoples. The Spanish language defaults to a male ending when including both male and female. Yet, the formative patterns presented by and through language lead to a negation and silencing of female voices, stories and identities. Using the "@" works to rectify this oppressive use of language. Second, I use these terms interchangeably for an egalitarian understanding because giving priority to one letter over the other through placement in the word may lead to discrimination against and oppression of certain contexts. Last, I do not use the slash between the "a" and "o," for example a/o, because the slash seems to signify an either/or context. When discussing gender contexts, I believe them to be much more fluid than the dominant categories of female and male. Using the letters ("o" and "a") without the slash I believe better represents the fluidity present in gender contexts. I have moved from using the term Latinoa/Latino interchangeably as found in Neomi DeAnda. "Cuentos: a perspective from the USA/Mexico Border" *New Theology Review*. (Liturgical Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Michelle Gonzalez. *Sor Juana: Beauty and Justice in the Americas*. (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2003), XI.

may think these historical figures should only be considered as part of USA Latin@ theologies and outside of the mainstream. Gary Macy argues that,

...whatever can be said of Latino/a theology, it cannot be said that it is out of the mainstream of Western European theological tradition. On the contrary, it is the heir of an ancient tradition that was greatly responsible not only for the preservation of the Western European traditions and learning, but also was one of the most influential creators of that tradition and of that learning. From this historical vantage point, then, Latino/a theology is as much, or more so, a part of mainstream theology than any other theological grouping.<sup>9</sup>

In light of this recognition, two historical facts must be remembered. One, the Catholic Church was first brought to the Americas<sup>10</sup> by the Spanish and was translated into a complex matrix of faith and religious experiences. As Macy states, “that colonial background was shaped by sixteenth-century Iberian theology, which in turn was influenced by the *Convivencia* that continued into that century of encounter and mutual discovery.”<sup>11</sup> Two, the oldest Catholic settlements in the United States of America are found in Florida and in the American Southwest in what is now El Paso County, Texas. This Catholic history needs to be remembered as we continue Catholic theological scholarship in the United States of America. While Catholic histories of the Southwestern United States of America must be remembered as histories rooted in Spain and Mexico,

---

<sup>9</sup> Gary Macy “The Iberian Heritage of US Latino/a Theology” in *Futuring Our Past*. Orlando Espín and Gary Macy, eds. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 44.

<sup>10</sup> I use the term “Americas” as the name known today. I recognize that when the Columbus and other Spanish settlers landed on the continents we now call North and South America, these names did not exist and the names themselves comply with a complex matrix of colonization.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Macy “The Iberian Heritage of US Latino/a Theology” in *Futuring our Past*. Orlando Espín and Gary Macy, eds. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 51-52.

these histories and historical figures should not be considered as belonging only to Latin America but also need to be understood as belonging to the United States of America.

In regard to the broader contribution of these individuals from fifteenth to nineteenth centuries New Spain, and why others chose not to bring them forward, I yield to Pamela Kirk, "Studies have shown that the marginalized have access to public discourse in forms which are themselves considered marginal."<sup>12</sup> So, possibilities exist that these writers and thinkers of New Spain knew they had made significant contributions, but today we consider their audiences marginal and insignificant. These scholars, such as Sor María Agreda and Úrsula Suárez, wrote for local communities and at the request of these communities. During this time period, the significant cost of publication prohibited their writings from being printed into a standard publication from the original manuscripts which were preserved within convents and monasteries. Few such publications existed which found their ways outside of convent walls through professional printing. However, María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's work, exists because, unlike Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz at the latter stages of her life, Sor María Anna remained in positive relationships with her local Ordinary (Bishop), Sr. Sr. D. Domingo Pantaleon Alvarez de Abreu and Joseph Bellido, her confessor, who documented her *Vida* or life story. Not only did the local Ordinary place his seal on her work, he also paid for the professional printing of

---

<sup>12</sup> Pamela Kirk. *Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz: Religion, Art and Feminism*. (New York: Continuum, 1999), 13.

numerous copies. Five copies still exist in public venues with the possibility of other copies being held in private collections.

Much scholarship today focuses upon the historical stifling of women's authority as ecclesial scholars and leaders. However, Sor María Anna's life and work challenges such an assumption as she was seen not only as a leader and foundress of her convent but also as a local ecclesial authority. I contend that through the image of Mary's breast milk, María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio, as foundress of her convent, a Dominican Convent by the name of El Convento de Santa Rosa in Puebla, Mexico, simultaneously appropriates authority for her theological treatise and participates in creating a transgendered embodied revelation of the unity of *oikonomia* and *theologia* thus rendering a complexity of images of God, *imago Dei*, *imago Christi* and God's relationship with humanity.

### **Literature Review**

Sor María Anna employs the image of Mary's breast milk to appropriate simultaneous authority for herself as leader and foundress of her Dominican convent in Puebla and her theological treatise *las Marabillas* within the context of Christian traditions.<sup>13</sup> Through the four books of *las Marabillas*, María Anna adopts *El Camino de la Leche*<sup>14</sup> as the spiritual path to develop her theological treatise. Through the image of Mary's breast milk, she explains connections between Mary and each person of the Trinity with particular attention to Mary's

---

<sup>13</sup> Maria Anna Agueda de San Ignacio. *Marabillas del divino amor, selladas con el sello de la verdad*. (Puebla, Mexico: Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 3-7.

<sup>14</sup> The Path of Milk or The Way of Milk (my translations).

relationship with Jesus. In this relationship, the fullness of what is human and divine comes to be known to humanity. Through this spiritual milk, humanity may also come to know and be in union with God.

María Anna develops her theology of breast milk within each of the four books of las *Marabillas*, each contain a specific focus and purpose. In Book One, she focuses on Mary and Mary's relationship to the Trinity, by situating her work within deep Catholic traditions. She makes a direct link between her writings on Mary's breast milk and Saints Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux. María Anna also gives numerous persuasive reasons why the reader should follow El Camino de la Leche.

In Book Two, María Anna uses the fifteen mysteries of the rosary to develop a theology of gift, with each decade of the rosary based on a particular gift. Examples include Mary's children coming to know the fruits of the Eternal Incarnate Word and matters of justice, one of María Anna's main themes throughout las *Marabillas*. The fifth mystery is dedicated to Mary's children coming to know necessary doctrine to find Jesus. Themes of suffering, nudity and the Holy Spirit are treated in mysteries seven through fifteen.

Book Three focuses on the soul's relationship to Christ. In this book, María Anna articulates how humanity should measure union with Christ. By explaining these measurements, such as wisdom,<sup>15</sup> María Anna develops a Christology based in a Jesus:Mary:Humanity model where the union with Christ results in

---

<sup>15</sup> Maria Anna Agueda de San Ignacio. *Marabillas del divino amor, selladas con el sello de la verdad*. (Puebla, Mexico: Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 228.

both relationship and community<sup>16</sup>. Finally, Book Four names rules for life in El Convento de Santa Rosa. María Anna explains the rules of divine love which a faithful nun in the convent of Santa Rosa should follow.

Overall, within las *Marabillas*, María Anna situates her own theology within extended Christian traditions. In particular, her employment of the image of breast milk places her firmly in a tradition created by both male and female leaders of religious communities through the history of Christianity, as will be further explored in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

The creation of spiritualities and theologies based on the image of breast milk opens a space to explore constructions of gender within Christian traditions. Current authors reveal a complex understanding in Christian traditions of applications of gender constructs to God and religious leaders, including maternal imagery such as breast milk. Caroline Walker Bynum shows,

All twelfth-century Cistercian writers use maternal imagery to add something to authority figures qua rulers or fathers, and the something added is always nurturing, affectivity, and accessibility. Thus the specific context in which maternal imagery appears suggests not only that these authors saw God and prelates as rulers but also that they felt that rule needed to be softened or complemented by something else...they needed to supplement their image of authority with that for which the maternal stood: emotion and nurture.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> I use the term community to include more than two persons gathered in relationship.

<sup>17</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum. *Jesus as Mother*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 154.

As Bynum continues in her work, she proves that twelfth-century Cistercian monks strove to create a new image of authority linked to nurture and compassion.

Margaret Miles argues that the breast was a general religious symbol between 1350 and 1750, contending that, “Women seem to have fared somewhat better when images of the breast reassured and reminded people of the providence and provisions of a loving God.”<sup>18</sup> Through her study of Western European art history, she concludes that by 1750, the breast was fully secularized and seen as an erotic image over one which provides and nurtures.<sup>19</sup> For Miles, a juxtaposing of Eve and Mary in the same painting where a disembodied Mary represents the virgin who leads humanity to redemption after a highly sexualized embodied Eve, the whore, led humanity to sin represents misogynistic perspectives of women’s bodies.

Beth Williamson argues against Margaret Miles’ interpretation of Eve as sexualized and the epitome of evil and Mary as disembodied goodness by examining a specific image of Mary Lactans from within its historical setting to further understand the painting and its implications for theology.<sup>20</sup> Williamson

---

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Miles. *A Complex Delight*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 131.

<sup>19</sup> I disagree with Miles’ interpretation that the breast is fully secularized by 1750. A case can be made for this secularization in Italy and France. But, the publication of María Anna Ágeda de San Ignacio’s *las Marabillas* in Puebla, Mexico in 1758 shows a more complex history of the secularization of the breast. Furthermore, Miles makes a connection between the secularization of the breast in 1750 to the current Church of the USA. The histories of New Spain must be included in such connections and implications for the current Church of the USA.

<sup>20</sup> Beth Williamson. “The Virgin *Lactans* as Second Eve: Image of the *Salvatric*.” in *Studies in Iconography* 19: (1998), 105 – 106.

analyzes Carlo da Camerino's *The Madonna of Humility and the Temptation of Eve* (ca. 1400). Williamson contends contra Miles that the placing of the Eve and Mary within the same painting makes Eve and her body along with Mary and her body co-protagonists in the story of salvation rather than a disembodied, pure and sin-free Mary replacing an embodied, sexualized and sinful Eve.

This dissertation places Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio as a theological voice both within her context and as part of Christian traditions, particularly focuses on the image of breast milk. I argue that context and community must remain a central piece of traditioning.

I understand traditioning to be the process of transmitting Christian traditions through time and place. It includes but is not limited to lo cotidiano, or daily lived experiences, culture, and social position of the one transmitting the tradition of Christianity.<sup>21</sup> Traditioning encompasses the relationship between transmissions of Christianity, the author, her/his text, and community.

Some argue that bringing forward a mystical figure from this time period, no matter what location, would fall into the realm of spirituality rather than constructive theology. William M. Thompson argues "that the experiences and texts of the saints, mystics, and martyrs ought normally to be consulted when theologians go about their work of mediating the Christian tradition to their contemporary situation. The saints are sources of theology, and even of

---

<sup>21</sup> See Orlando Espin. "Traditioning" in *Futuring Our Past: Explorations in the Theology of Tradition*. Orlando O. Espin and Gary Macy, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

doctrine.”<sup>22</sup> Thompson uses support from Ignatius of Loyola of *sentire cum sanctis et mysticis* (“attunement to the saints and mystics”)<sup>23</sup> to further his argument. He uses examples from Rahner, von Balthasar and many other scholars who have turned to the experience of saints as a basis for their theologies.<sup>24</sup> In Thompson’s definition of experience, he states,

When we say that it is *the experience* of the saints which bestows theological importance upon them, we have in mind a properly theological notion of experience. ‘Experience’ means varied things, but the reality of the saints teaches us that it cannot be limited to sense experience alone. Experience knows many levels, including that of openness to and communion with the Divine Mystery, and these other levels are every bit as real as simple sense experience. It is this ‘hard’ reality of these deeper levels which makes of the saints explorers of the depths of human experience, sometimes against their own choice.<sup>25</sup>

Experiences of saints, mystics and martyrs have emerged as sources for theological inquiry in contemporary scholarship. In doing so, they have provided and continue to provide confirmations and correctives for Christian traditions.

Maria Anna Agueda de San Ignacio stands as one more mystical voice who should be studied in light of theological inquiry and Christian traditioning from a Roman Catholic perspective. While she wrote *las Marabillas* primarily for her convent community, she not only shared her understandings of Christian

---

<sup>22</sup> William M. Thompson. *Fire & Light: The Saints and Theology*. (New York: Paulist Press 1987), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Mottola translation.

<sup>24</sup> William M. Thompson. *Fire & Light: The Saints and Theology*. (New York: Paulist Press 1987), 9-16.

<sup>25</sup> William M. Thompson. *Fire & Light: The Saints and Theology*. (New York: Paulist Press 1987), 53.

traditions but included new understandings, particularly of the richness of El Camino de la Leche, which reached a broader audience. Because of her relationships with her confessor, and archbishop, her work, whether to her knowledge or haphazardly, developed into a large part of Christian traditioning in Puebla, Mexico immediately after her death. Through the existence of these texts, this dissertation continues the process of traditioning as I now take elements found in her text and language from *las Marabillas* to further the transmission of Christianity today. For without the publication of her work, and the works written by Jennifer Eich, Kristen Eva Routt and now myself, this figure would be lost as a convent nun whose name is found only on a list of foundresses of the first Dominican Convent in Puebla, Mexico. But because of Maria Anna's choice to scribe her thoughts in the complexities of community, her work remains with us and allows for the continuing of this traditioning.

This dissertation builds upon Jennifer Eich's work on how María Anna employs rhetorical and literary devices to establish and gain authority for her own writing.<sup>26</sup> Her groundbreaking work, composed for a literary rather than theological audience, allows for Maria Anna's voice to be brought forward to lay a foundation for it to be explored within academic discourse today. I will further the strides made by Eich by moving into theological realms with Maria Anna's work.

While Eich engages in a broad exploration of literary devices, Kristen Eva Routt looks specifically at Maria Anna's use of Mary's breast milk in relationship

---

<sup>26</sup> Jennifer Eich. *The Other Mexican Muse*. (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004).

to other women writers of her time and place to construct a role of "corporality" in mystical and spiritual thought in the context of these women.<sup>27</sup> Routt places Maria Anna's use of this one image in conversation with Juana Inés de la Cruz and Maria de San Jose. I will focus only on María Anna's use of the image of Mary's breast milk in relationship to other factors.

To accomplish this task, I draw upon Catherine LaCugna's notion of the unity of *theologia* and *oikonomia*. According to LaCugna, "the starting point, context, and content of the doctrine of the Trinity is the self-communication of God in the economy of creation, redemption, and deification."<sup>28</sup> For LaCugna, understandings and articulations of Trinitarian Mysteries always come through communication of "God with all, all with God."<sup>29</sup> God remains in constant relationship with human community. María Anna, as a mystical writer, speaks of this notion of union with God. She never names it deification but designates its connections to redemption and creation. María Anna not only writes about her mystical experiences, but also writes about her experiences of the divine in her daily life within her convent community. Within this framework, I will argue that María Anna's life and works present a particular context which supports LaCugna's work while opening a space to explore the complexities of *oikonomia* in the human condition which remains *imago dei*.

---

<sup>27</sup> Kristen Eva Routt. 1998. "Authoring orthodoxy: The body and the camino de perfeccion in Spanish-American colonial convent writings." (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1998.), 180.

<sup>28</sup> Catherine Mowery LaCugna. *God for Us*. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1976), 319.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

## Contributions

This dissertation presents an original contribution to the academic field of Theology, specifically Constructive Theology because it retrieves a female theologian's voice from seventeenth and eighteenth century Mexico, an entire area of history and theological thought which has been traditionally under-explored in the Academy of the United States of America. Second, it examines María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's work to draw theological insights to further expand understanding about the notions of authority, images of God, *imago Dei* and *imago Christi* through María Anna's use of the image of Mary's breast milk. Third, this dissertation reveals historical complexities of gendering images of God, *imago dei* and God's relationship with humanity. Fourth, this dissertation provides historical and theological background to help address theoretical and pastoral needs of Catholic churches in the United States of America. At least forty percent of the Catholic Church in the United States of America is Latin@, with the largest constituency claiming Mexico as its country of origin. As a responsible scholar/practitioner/advocate, I find retrieving figures from historical settings of Latin America essential and necessary to further develop our theologies and pastoral approaches for Latin@s, the current majority of the population of the Catholic Church in the United States of America. Finally, this dissertation presents an interdisciplinary work drawing upon history, cultural studies, Latino/a studies, linguistics, art, and women's studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MARÍA ANNA ÁGUEDA DE SAN IGNACIO'S CONTEXT

The meticulous research shows that hagiography emerged and fully developed in the seventeenth century, a cultural phenomenon that expressed the complete transplantation of Counter-Reformation Catholicism to the hispanicized sectors of the population.<sup>1</sup>

María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio lived during a period in which the Catholic Church strongly influenced Mexican society, particularly women's roles in that society. Although the Church was understood as primarily a religious force, it also wielded much power over and within the socio-economic-racial<sup>2</sup> structures of Mexican society. To understand María Anna's life and context therefore not only necessitates situating her within these religious-socio-economic-racial structures as well as examining the attitudes toward women and women's authority within the eighteenth century Mexican Church.

To situate María Anna's context for the purposes of this dissertation, I deliberately probe the work of other scholars who consider her primarily from

---

<sup>1</sup> Asunción Lavrin, "The Church: Institution and Spirituality in New Spain" in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* Vol. no 17 (2), 408.

<sup>2</sup> I see these factors as all working together in the context of Mexico in the early Eighteenth Century. The histories of the Sixteenth Century which set the stage for the modern history of Mexico show that these factors were structurally systematized all in the name of God. For further explanation see Orlando Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY; Orbis Books, 1997), 37.

historical,<sup>3</sup> linguistic<sup>4</sup> and women's studies<sup>5</sup> perspectives. Overall, all of these scholars read María Anna's work from Post Counter-Reformation perspectives. However, the Reformation was not directly transplanted to the Americas as seems to be understood by the majority of contemporary scholars reading the writings and *Vidas* of religious women from sixteenth through eighteenth century New Spain. As a theological scholar and from a theological perspective, I contend that the historical setting of the eighteenth-century Mexican Catholic Churches as being far more complex than such Post Counter-Reformation perspectives allow. The forms of Catholicism, introduced by Spanish and Portuguese explorers and immigrants into North and South American continents, included aspects of originally those from pre-Reformation Catholicism. The intermixing of the European pre-Reformation Catholicism with indigenous cultures resulted in a radically different development of Catholic doctrines on these continents as opposed to that in Europe. The direct transplantation of the Counter-Reformation as seems to be understood by a large group of contemporary scholars reading the writings and *Vidas* of religious women from the sixteenth- through eighteenth-century New Spain, the quote at the beginning of this chapter providing one example, should be understood as more ambiguous

---

<sup>3</sup> Asunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Eich, *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004), and Kristina Eva Routt. "Authoring orthodoxy: The Body and the Camino de Perfeccion in Spanish-American Colonial Convent Writings." (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Arenal, Electa and Stacey Schlau. *Untold stories: Hispanic nuns in their own works.* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

due to the early arrival of pre-Reformation Catholicism to the Americas. Through this ambiguous lens, I read María Anna's context.

When one reads her context from a Post-Counter-Reformation/Colonial perspective, one may understand the main goal of María Anna's work, as well as the work of most other women religious writers,<sup>6</sup> to be that of evangelization, pure and simple, particularly due to the primary role of the Catholic Church from this perspective to save souls through conversion to Catholicism. Could reading her context as more complex lead us to understand her work in more multifaceted ways?

Although little is known about Sor María Anna's formal education, we do know she was born to lower middle class/lower class Mexicans in Mexico rather than to members of the elite. More than likely she was raised in a Catholic Church which lived with a fluid, complex, and even synchronistic understanding of some Christian doctrines such as that of God and God's relationship to humanity. The historical context of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mexican Catholic Churches strongly influenced Maria Anna's life. Born on Friday,

---

<sup>6</sup> Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was silenced for responding to a homily given by Antnio de Vieira. See "Critique of a Sermon of One of the Greatest Preachers, which Mother Juana called *Response* Because of the Elegant Explanations with which she Responded to the Eloquence of His Arguments" and "Letter of 'Sor Philotea'" and "Response to the Very Illustrious 'Sor Philotea'" in Pamela Kirk Rappaport. *The Classics of Western Spirituality: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 219-290. Also, four convent nuns wrote a two-page letter to their bishop to ask for permission to give shared homilies during daily mass. See *Constituciones de el Colegio de Nuestra Señora de la Assumpcion y el glorioso patriarcha Señor San José* (Mexico: En la imprenta real del superior gobierno de Da Maria di Rivera, 1734 held at Cushing Memorial Library Texas A&M University).

March 3, 1695,<sup>7</sup> to two Mexican parents her lineage is more complex than the label of criolla may describe. Her father, Pedro de la Cruz y Aguilar, was born in Puerto de Santa Maria, a city close to the Empire of Gaditano, while her mother, Doña Michaela Velarde, was from Puebla. Her genealogical lines prior to her parents are not definitively known, but a strong probability exists that María Anna was at least of partial indigenous heritage, not only of full Spanish decent as would be the proper description for one labeled a criolla, as Eich and others' building upon Eich's work have labeled her. Context as a foundational contributor to the creation of theological thought, a concept central to Latin@ theologies and religious discourses, makes this distinction noteworthy because María Anna's theological constructs found in las *Marabillas* should be read as thoughts from a woman of mixed heritages and backgrounds, not only Spanish.<sup>8</sup>

Although *Vidas*, religious biographies and autobiographies of that era, were written for the specific purpose of showing how holy certain members of religious life were in the stories of New Spain, one can learn much from these religious biographies. Her parents were joined through the Catholic sacrament of marriage and were blessed with many children—understood as the reward for

---

<sup>7</sup> José Bellido, *Vida de la V.M.R.M. María Anna Agueda de S. Ignacio, primera priora del religiosissimo convento de dominicas recoletas de Santa Rosa de la Puebla de los angeles* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 10.

<sup>8</sup> I wish to dispel a misconception that the Spanish Catholic Church acted only as religious (sometimes social and cultural) colonizers of the Americas during the periods of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Once members of the Spanish Church arrived on the content of the Americas, something new began to transpire. Of course, this history is not a peaceful one, nor should it be remembered as such, but María Anna's mixed background shows that people of mixed backgrounds and contexts (many different levels of these distinctions existed in Mexico, and I do not know into which category María Anna fit) contributed to the development of theological discourse of the Mexican Catholic Church of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

those pure souls whose procreation was not determined by lust or passion, as we see from Bellido, Maria Anna's biographer:

Felicitò el Cielo su Matrimonio, dandoles multiplicado fruto de bendicion, que es el primario fin de la institucion de este Sacramento; sin duda, que por averlo recibido, como tan Christianos, aviendo purificado antes sus almas con las saludables aguas de la penitencia, no arrastrados de la passion, ciegos del interès, ni con otro bastardo motivo, de los muchos que se suelen mezclar, y de que resultan tantas, y tan lastimosas monstruosidades en el Mundo.<sup>9</sup>

Maria Anna was one of eight children, four girls and four boys.<sup>10</sup> We know that she outlived three sisters and one brother,<sup>11</sup> and that the brother who died before she did was a priest.<sup>12</sup> Bellido furthermore notes that María Anna's parents gave her preferential treatment over her siblings. "María Anna, que se le siguiò, todo alivio, amparo, y Consuelo."<sup>13</sup> While this piece of information may not be factual but more hagiographical and idealized, Bellido's inclusion of it sets María Anna apart as one destined for a particularly holy life. He also describes María Anna's virtue as exemplary: "Estaban tan unidas en la virtud, que iban â competencia,

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 2. The heavens celebrated their marriage by giving them multiple fruitful blessings, which is the primary end of this Sacrament; without a doubt, having received it in such a Christian way, having purified their souls with the healthy waters of penance, not led by passion, blind of interest, nor with any other bastard motive, of the many which can be mixed together which result in so many pitiful monstrosities in the world. (My translation)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 2.

de quien amaba mas á su querido Jesus, repitiendo María Anna con innata humildad, que en todo, y siempre le ganaba a Theresa.”<sup>14</sup>

*Vidas* of course had a particular cultural purpose. Certain people’s lives were recorded because they demonstrated a certain holiness of people to the society of New Spain, in María Anna’s particular case, Mexico. Coupled with a Baroque Spanish characterized by hyperbole, these pieces presented examples of human beings who lived stellar religious vocations from a very young age and whose family background permitted and enabled them to live these saintly lives.

As Ascunción Lavrin states,

Religious biographers do not present a complete record of childhood, not even the childhood of those who became nuns, but these narratives suggest that fun and games were not part of the ideal upbringing of little girls in the homes of religious parents. The narrow and disciplined confines of home and church were conducive to creating and accepting a life commitment that had an aura of uniqueness to it and provided the ultimate comfort of the promise of salvation of their souls.<sup>15</sup>

From our twenty-first century perspective, these family backgrounds are described in heterosexist, racist, and classist ways so typical of the times. But, these *Vidas* also give us a lens to understand lives-in this case María Anna’s- within a particular social construct and situation. They help us grasp how society understood and even deliberately constructed her; however, through her writing we can also see how she framed or set up her own social world beyond the normative societal expectations.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ascunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 34.

That Bellido writes about her family life is very important because it reinforces that she came from an appropriate background for a saintly woman and one who should be lauded for her leadership. The following is a prime example of his many similar descriptions:

Cuidaban con el mayor esmero los Padres de nuestra Maria Anne de la crianza de sus hijos, doctrinandolos, insundiendoles el santo temor de Dios, y teniendolos recogidos; pero mas que todo dandoles siempre en las acciones vivos exemplos, de lo que avian de hacer, y caminando delante como guias, que los encaminaban por los senderos seguros de las virtudes; porque unidos con el yugo matrimonial de comun acuerdo las practicaban.”<sup>16</sup>

Of course her siblings were raised in the same religious and pious home. But María Anna was given special attention, as mentioned above, “Desde edad tierna acostumbrò su Padre rezar tres Salves todos los dias à Maria Santissima, rogandole, le deisfe à conocer la cercanía de su muerte.”<sup>17</sup> Maria Anna’s father told her that if God could do such great things with him who was a great sinner, then how much more could he do with one who served God with as great care as she did.<sup>18</sup> We know also that both her father<sup>19</sup> and mother<sup>20</sup> were strongly

---

<sup>16</sup> José Bellido, *Vida de la V.M.R.M. María Anna Agueda de S. Ignacio*, primera priora del religiosissimo convento de dominicas recoletas de Santa Rosa de la Puebla de los angeles (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 3.

María Anna’s parents cared with the greatest of hope in the beliefs of their children, through always keeping them together they indoctrinated them and instilled in them the holy fear of God; but more than anything always giving them living examples in action of what they should do, and walking ahead of them like guides who walked them through secure footpaths of virtues; because united in the yoke of marriage and agreed practices. (My translation)

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. From a young age, they were accustomed by their father to pray three Holy Mary’s every day to the Most Blessed Mary, begging, they understand the proximity of their death. (My translation)

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

devoted to Mary, and can thus begin to see that María Anna's dedication and devotion to Mary and Marian images in her writings find their roots in her childhood family life.

María Anna's familial socioeconomic context plays a pivotal role in my understanding of her context and place in eighteenth-century Mexican society. Bellido informs us that she was born poor. He quickly moves beyond this less-than-culturally-acceptable-fact for a saintly life by stating how she was in fact chosen to be a bride of Jesus because she was born into the same poor conditions as Jesus.<sup>21</sup> Her father, who was unemployed for an extended length of time during her childhood,<sup>22</sup> died when Maria Anna was still a girl,<sup>23</sup> leaving the family of nine quite poor.<sup>24</sup> At one point, Maria Anna's mother was asked for María Anna's hand in marriage in exchange for medical care for the rest of the family.<sup>25</sup> Her mother believed that Maria Anna's religious call was so strong that she rejected the offer,<sup>26</sup> telling Maria Anna to follow that divine calling.<sup>27</sup> While one may not be certain of the historical accuracy of this account, Bellido intends

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 7.

for the reader to conclude that María Anna was destined to be a remarkable nun beyond her socioeconomic circumstances. Of course this story may also be Bellido justifying how a poor girl could become such a respected leader, which would have been strongly contrary to the cultural norms and expectations of the time.

### **Entering Religious Life**

María Anna chose to enter the beaterio at the age of 19 after engaging in los *Ejercicios espirituales* of Ignacio de Loyola, founder of the Jesuits.<sup>28</sup> As Eich states, “Sor María Anna was admitted without the necessary ‘economic contribution’ although her biographer never explains the ‘miraculous’ event that enabled this startling exception.”<sup>29</sup> Some think Fr. Juan de Torres, her spiritual director who also served as the beaterio’s<sup>30</sup> chaplain, saw to her admittance in the beaterio.<sup>31</sup> Here one should note important differences existed between nuns and beatas. As Eich states, “Beatas were pious laywomen who adopted the rules and living habits of a religious order, sometimes professing as a tertiary or lay

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer Eich, *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004), 11.

<sup>30</sup> A beaterio is place where lay women lived together in prayer. These women made temporary but never permanent vows.

<sup>31</sup> Jennifer Eich, *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004), 12.; Josefina Muriel *Cultura Feminina Novohispana* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1982), 263.

sister of an established religious order.”<sup>32</sup> Whether or not to wear the religious order’s habit was their choice.

María Anna’s lack of dowry did not go unnoticed. Bellido makes a point of discussing the questions other women posed to and about María Anna because of her lack of dowry:

Què palabras le decian? Què estylos, y modos tenian en tratarla?  
 Què pesares no le daban? No era lo de menos decirle; para què  
 entraria esta aqui? Quièn hizo tal disparate? Quitate de delante,  
 que ni vèrte, ni oírte queremos? Nos estás comiendo, y gastando  
 las rentas del Beaterio.<sup>33</sup>

So, like many other young women who entered conventos and beaterios without a dowry, María Anna was more than likely treated as a lower-class citizen within the social structure of the beaterio.

Although María Anna’s role and station at the beaterio were initially questioned and at times scorned, she made considerable contributions as a beata and later as a nun both to her own beaterio, to at least one other convento, and to theological discourse.

### **Becoming a Nun in Eighteenth Century Mexico**

As in all cultures, particular constructs of and for women existed in and shaped New Spanish society. Lavrin states, “Historians and literary historians

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> José Bellido, *Vida de la V.M.R.M. María Anna Agueda de S. Ignacio, primera priora del religiosissimo convento de dominicas recoletas de Santa Rosa de la Puebla de los angeles* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 63.  
 What words did they tell her? In which ways did they treat her? What grief did they give? It was not beneath them to say, “Why did this one enter here?” Who did such a silly thing? Move away from here, because we neither want to see nor hear you. You are eating and wasting the rents collected from the Beaterio. (My Translation)

agree that sacred biography and even autobiography intend to ‘represent’ or create models of behavior that fit well-established canons of sacred writing.”<sup>34</sup> By the sixteenth century “the fact still stands that the official ‘construct’ of women as weak and threatened, and the beaterios and convents as sites of shelter, was part of the mind-set of those who were shaping New Spain’s society.”<sup>35</sup> In the world of María Anna, socio-economic and racial matters strongly influenced women’s choices in life. For example, poorer but nonetheless pure-blooded women entered convents to maintain racial class and purity of blood rather than lower their family’s racial status by marrying down.<sup>36</sup>

Asunción Lavrin names four standards for becoming a nun: purity of blood as a racial category; legitimacy of birth as a result of conception within the boundaries of marriage; virginity; and a dowry. According to Bellido, María Anna met some of these categories, with the possible exception of purity of blood and the exception of a dowry as I have previously stated. Yet, she met two other categories delineated by Bellido: call and high intelligence.

He begins by establishing her parents’ ancestry: “Ambos Confortes fueron de conocida limpieza en la sangre, de honrados proceder en el trato, de muy christianos costumbres, y de muy competentes bienes de fortuna, para una mas

---

<sup>34</sup> Asunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 26. (See note 39)—Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, passim; Avid M Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country. Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Michael Goodich, “The contours of Female Piety in Medieval Hagiography,” *Church History* 50.1

<sup>35</sup> Asunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 19.

<sup>36</sup> Asunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 18.

que mediana decencia.”<sup>37</sup> This notion was so important that a direct statement needed to be made in her *Vida* so that no question would ever exist as to whether María Anna was of the right lineage not only to be a bride of Christ but also to have such a significant place as a mystic, foundress, and leader in her convent community, as well the broader church of Puebla.

Bellido demonstrates legitimacy of birth as a result of conception within the boundaries of marriage through her parents having conceived all of their children thanks to their own pure souls rather than as a result of some untoward passion.<sup>38</sup> They entered into a “contraxo legitimo Matrimonio”<sup>39</sup> which was not only a legal agreement but, more importantly, a religious Sacramental union.

Bellido highlights María Anna’s virginity by focusing on one significant event. When she believed it time to enter the convent, she prayed diligently before making the final decision. During one of these acts of prayer, she had a mystical vision in which a large serpent tempted her to sin in a manner that would mean the loss of her virginity. In her vision, she resisted the serpent and remained a virgin.<sup>40</sup>

So, María Anna was accepted to the beaterio because she met extra requirements for entry. Yet, her lack of dowry was not without consequence. Lavrin mentions that many of the nuns of sixteenth through eighteenth century

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

New Spain were described as being precocious and highly intelligent but does not include those attributes as being ones sought after in candidates entering a beaterio or convento. But, Bellido describes María Anna as highly intelligent to the point of exaggeration, saying, for example, that she learned to read with just one lesson and could read anything given to her.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, María Anna's theological abilities are revealed in her writings moving beyond the questionable examples provided by Bellido. Finally, although the notion of a call to a religious vocation is not mentioned as one of Lavrin's themes, it was proposed as critical in María Anna's *Vida*. We see the critical nature of this call in the above examples of her mother foregoing health care for the family because she considered María Anna's call to be so strong. We also see it in the story of proof of her virginity, and in her final choice to enter the beaterio at the age of nineteen coming after completing the spiritual exercises of Ignacio de Loyola<sup>42</sup>

### **Converting the Beaterio to a Convento**

Fr. Bernado Andía was the provincial who oversaw the spiritual lives of the Province of Santo Domingo. According to Bellido, he cared zealously and tirelessly for the women in María Anna's beaterio. He took those whom he considered had a stronger vocation than that of a beata and placed them in one house. These women professed to be "Beatas del Tercer Orden de Santo

---

<sup>41</sup> José Bellido, *Vida de la V.M.R.M. María Anna Agueda de S. Ignacio, primera priora del religiosísimo convento de dominicas recoletas de Santa Rosa de la Puebla de los angeles* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 18.

<sup>42</sup> José Bellido, *Vida de la V.M.R.M. María Anna Agueda de S. Ignacio, primera priora del religiosísimo convento de dominicas recoletas de Santa Rosa de la Puebla de los angeles* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 48.

Domingo” and consecrated themselves to God in the beaterio “Virgen Limana Santa Rosa de Santa Maria”.<sup>43</sup> After seventy years, Fr. Andía knew he could not continue the work of growing the convent from a beaterio, and appointed María Anna as his successor.<sup>44</sup> Fr. Juan Ignacio de Uribe, a Jesuit priest, became one of the “Procuradores” sent by the Mexican province to the courts of Madrid and Rome. On one of his trips to Vera-Cruz, he stopped in Puebla to visit María Anna.<sup>45</sup> María Anna who had been working for a number of years at this point to convert the beaterio to a convento, to no avail, had petitioned multiple bishops to grant this conversion. In a moment of desperation during Fr. Uribe’s visit, “le propuso la pretension, le rogó se hiciesse cargo de ella, y que la tomasse con empeño.”<sup>46</sup> Fr. Uribe could not excuse himself from this request and promised María Anna that he would see this wish to its completion.<sup>47</sup>

...aviendo llegado à Madrid [Fr. Uribe at 26 years of age], puso por obra algunas diligencias, que le parecieron necessarias, y suficientes para obtener un feliz despacho en Roma. En esta Curia se valio nada menos, que del Poderoso brazo del Eminentissimo Señor Cardenal Alvaro Cienfuegos, Jesuita de tan Superior herarquia por sus letras; Religiosidad, bizarras, y valimiento, por ser Ministro del Imperio, que para no dar el lleno que merece à sus elogios, mas vale passarlos en silencio. Tomò el encargo aquel Eminentissimo, con el ardoroso empeño, que expressa su Apellido, y que mostrò bien en quantos negocios se pusieron à su cuidado.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 95. ...having arrived in Madrid [Fr. Uribe at 26 years of age] began to work diligently on

Interessose de modo en este, que se apersonò como Ponente, ò Postulador de esta causa. Presentò à su Santidad un Memorial, en que le proponia su pedimento, apyado de razones, y urgentes poderosos motivos, Luego que el Papa lo leyò, lo remitiò à la Congregacion de Obispos, y Regulares; para que lo examinanssen, y diessien su parecer. Lo hicieron con tanta exaccion, y rectitude, que juzgaron no se debia conceder, lo que se pedia. Con esta repulse se acalorò mas en el assumpto el Cardenal Ponente. Hizo segunda instancio con Nuevo refuerzo de razones, consentimiento expreso del Rey de España D. Phelipe V. positivos derechos, y muy justificados motivos. Registrados esto nuevamente por la Congregacion, mudò de parcer, y lo diò, para que se concediesse la gracia, que se pedia, si benignamente se inclinasse la Suprema Cabeza de la Iglesia.<sup>49</sup>

On May 22, 1739, Pope Clement XII on May 22, 1739 issued a papal bull in which he supported the conversion of the Beaterio de Santa Rosa into the convent of Religiosas Recoletas de Santo Domingo, furthermore stating that the beatas who are considered the foundresses were to take solemn vows with those who enter after this date taking solemn vows one year after entering the

---

that which seemed necessary and sufficient to a successful trip in Rome. In this curia was none other than the powerful arm of the most eminent Cardinal Alvaro Cienfuegos, Jesuit of such of a superior hierarchy because of his letters; religiosity, gallantries, and valor for being a minister of the empire, that for as not too give the fullness of all of the praises he deserves, it is better to remain silent. He took charge of the most eminent with an arduous persistence, which his last name expressed, and which worked well in all of the businesses which were put in his care. (My translation)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 95. He interested himself in the following way, he made himself the personal reporter and postulator of this cause (to convert the beaterio to a convent). He presented to his Sanctity a memorandum in which he gave his proposal, filled with reasons and urgent powerful motives, then the Pope read it, submitted it to the Congregation of Bishops and Ordinaries for their examination and decision on the matter. The report had been written with such precision and rectitude that they decided against conceding to what was asked. With this rejection, the reporting Cardinal became extremely angered. He made a second attempt with a new list of rational, consciously, he expressed to the King Spain D. Philip V's positive rights and very justified motives. He registered this new document with the Congregation so they may concede their grace which was blessedly asked if the Supreme Head of the Church was so inclined. (My translation)

novitiate.<sup>50</sup> As soon as Fr. Uribe learned of this, he returned from Madrid to Puebla to deliver the news in person to María Anna.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, on July 12, 1740 all of the beatas reconsecrated themselves to God by taking solemn vows.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond playing the pivotal role in converting her beaterio to a convento, María Anna made a notable contribution to the convent's constitution, possibly because of her own treatment when a novice. She included a clause abolishing the need for women wishing to enter the Convent of Santa Rosa to provide a dowry. *Constituciones* reads that women will be

recibidas sin dote; pero se advierte, que si lo tuvieren pueden dexarlo voluntariamente al Convento, e instituirlo por heredero; pues aunque se admitan en lugar, y por esso sin dote, no ha de ser este motivo para que se les prive hazer bien al Monasterio, concurriendo a obra tan piadosa, como es fomentar sus Rentas, conque se evitarà el inconveniente, de que la que tuviere dote se retenga de pretender, juzgando que es obice para ser admitida. Pero si alguna texere algo al Convento, nunca diga lo que traxo, o traxeron otras, porque no resulte de esto algun desambimientto en la Comunidad.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>53</sup> María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio, Regla y Constituciones de las Religiosas de la gloriosa virgin Sta. Rosa [de] Maria de Lima, Nuevamente fundada en la Ciudad de la Puebla de los Angeles, en virtud de la Bula expedida por N.<.S.P. Clemente XII. De felizmemoria, en Roma en Sta. MARIA la Mayor, a las que entran, y professan, fin el modo de dar el Habito, y Profession, a las que entran, y professan conforme a la observancia de sus estatutos. Mexico City: Imprenta Readl del Superior Gobierno, y del Nuevo Rezado, de Doña Maria de Rivera, 1746, p 72.

received without a dowry; but with notice that those who have one can leave it voluntarily to the convent and name the convent as an heir; even those who are admittedly have no dowry, this should not be the motive not to allow them to enter the monastery, concurrent with such a pious labor, even if this provokes an inconvenience in the rents, of those who do enter with a dowry, it is required that they pretend otherwise and not judge [the dowry] as an obstacle of admittance. But if one leaves something to the convent, she shall never say that she brought it or who

Beyond this particular example, María Anna made significant contributions both within her convent. It is difficult to trace the number of María Anna's published works. We know of at least thirteen different works for which original copies still exist today but many pieces were the same works published under different names and some short pieces were published in pamphlet form. A few of these pamphlets exist today, at least one of which is a small bound prayer book that appears to be from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

### **Life in the Eighteenth Century Mexican Church**

María Anna is considered a mystic because of her spiritual writings. Her spiritual devotions and theological writings disclose a strong baroque imagination. At a personal level, Ignacio de Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* strongly influenced María Anna's initial desire to enter the beaterio as well as her ongoing spiritual direction as her confessors were mainly Jesuits. As Ibsen states, "Loyola's exercises, and those that followed his model of mental prayer transform meditation into an imaginative act, a powerfully visual force, and this fit perfectly into the baroque notion of art as a means to provoke emotional and spiritual reaction."<sup>55</sup>

---

brought what so that this does not produce a negative environment in the community. (My translation)

<sup>54</sup> María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio, "Devoción a la Santísima Virgen María en Honra de su purísima leche" (Guadalajara: Impresa por Manuel Brambila, 1840) held at University of Illinois.

<sup>55</sup> Kristine Ibsen, *Women's Spiritual Autobiography in Colonial Spanish America* (Miami: University of Florida Press, 1999), 101.

Influenced by the 1562 Council of Trent's edict regarding the use of "visible signs" and by Spanish cultural influence, "Baroque spirituality, with its emphasis on the individual experience of God, converted the act of devotion into a work of art. No longer limited to the repetition of ritual formulae, a renewed notion of will and of an active calling to love God formed the nucleus of spiritual treatises throughout the Spanish world...The visual imagery for these mental pilgrimages was reinforced by the pictorial cycles in the churches and by privately commissioned panel paintings. Religious themes predominated, and paintings adorned churches, convents, and private homes."<sup>56</sup>

Yet, Iberian baroque notions of sign, symbol, and mystery were not easily transplanted and readily accepted in New Spain. The church setting of María Anna's life was strongly integrated into many realms of Mexican society and daily life. The process of colonization created a complex milieu in which to understand the Mexican Catholic Church of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Orlando Espín provides one example of this complexity for theological inquiry when he states, "*It is my contention that Trinitarian evangelization and belief outside of European cultural milieu are usually too difficult if not impossible.*"<sup>57</sup> His reasons apply to much of the complexity of theological thought and articulation of eighteenth-century Mexican Catholic doctrine. He states,

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>57</sup> Orlando Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1997), 33-34.

doctrines concerning the Trinity have been expressed, ever since the councils of Christian antiquity, through the cultural and linguistic vehicles of European philosophical traditions. No serious attempt has been made by the main Christian theologies to escape this cultural and linguistic straightjacket” (b) “most culturally non-European human groups have not had (and found no reason to have) the thought patterns and worldviews necessary to understand and appropriate Trinitarian monotheism *until they became “Europeanized” to some degree*” (c) the communication of Trinitarian doctrine “determines what, to what degree, and in what way the hearers of the proclamation understand and accept it.

This understanding of Trinitarian expression and theology becomes foundational to María Anna’s thought as I explain in chapter four.

The perspective I have laid of María Anna’s context provides the foundation for the analysis of her work in this project. Yet, significant questions remain as to the complexity of María Anna’s identity. She was not a wealthy criolla, and Bellido overcompensates for her questionable social status by devoting considerable discussion to her family’s commitment to God and Mary, and to the parents’ teaching their children the doctrines of the church. The fact that she was the child of two parents who were born in Mexico coupled with her biographer’s arduous efforts to ensure her parents’ purity of blood leads me to believe that she was not necessarily of the normally accepted socio-economic-racial background of such a strong theological writer and religious leader.

The use of religious signifiers, particularly of Mary and Marian images, by eighteenth-century religious women of New Spain, comes from a complex history in which one group, in this case the Spanish, colonized other groups, in this case indigenous peoples in the sixteenth century. At this point a pre-Reformation

Catholic Church was planted in North and South America in the regions which today we call Latin America. Therefore, the labels/names acquired/given/evangelized/theologized are those of the dominant group, the Spanish, yet the religious practices become religious syncretism and a complex mix of the various cultures. In this case, María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio's daily lived experience comes from a Catholic Church which grew out of these perspectives, which means she more than likely came from mixed backgrounds, and the lower middle to lower class, whose popular devotions were typically a mix of practices from the Spanish Catholic Church of the sixteenth century and various indigenous beliefs and practices. From this perspective I can initiate a comprehension of María Anna's description of Mary's role in the Godhead and God's relationship to humanity as will be developed in subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MARÍA ANNA ÁGUEDA DE SAN IGNACIO AND AUTHORITY

María Anna's writings reveal complexities<sup>1</sup> of authority through various contexts, specifically through the following (1) official authority as first prioress of her convent, (2) engagement with and at times resistance to socio/cultural/religious/political factors, (3) embodied power through the authority of her mystical experiences (4) and authority within a Catholic tradition. For a definition of authority, I primarily draw upon David Stagaman's work. The work of Jennifer Eich strongly informs my approach to resistance to the socio/cultural/religious/political factors, while Kristina Eva Routt's analysis of Sor María Anna's writings provides a basis for embodied authority of a mystic. Finally, an analysis of María Anna's writings on the image of breast milk develops a Catholic tradition of this image.

#### **An Understanding/ Approach to Authority**

A complex approach to authority, like Stagaman's, sheds light on how we view, interpret and understand both María Anna's writings and those writings about her life. As Stagaman states, "Authority resides in human practices that relate persons to persons or persons and things. These

---

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed postcolonial description of scripting complexities of history see Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

practices give one party in the relationship the initiative and place upon another party an obligation to heed that initiative.”<sup>2</sup> Authority is central to how we live in community and society,<sup>3</sup> as well as to what extent humans flourish in life. As a complex concept, authority’s meaning consists of at least three dimensions.

First, as Stagaman states, “the meaning of authority is best situated in that process of social construction and the human interaction which constitutes it.”<sup>4</sup> So, this processual reality reveals authority as something fluid and nebulous with different roles, diverse contexts, and plural settings not only shaping and forming authority, but also, corresponding changes within and among these social constructs. Authority is found in human “social realities and historical creations as well.”<sup>5</sup> Second, authority may lead persons to live in communities of friendship where persons not only live free of coercion but also flourish in life.<sup>6</sup> Third, authority presents a bond between and among members of communities. It “gives a particular identity to a community in a manner analogous to the identity an individual gains through free choices.”<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> David J. Stagaman, *Authority in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), xiv.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

From this perspective on authority, human sinfulness presents many challenges for the full flourishing of life.<sup>8</sup> Because human sinfulness limits the full flourishing of life, authority must be constantly negotiated by members of a community. At some levels, authority may never be questioned. For example, in a family the authority to pay the electric bill may be deemed to one member of the family and never questioned again. Yet, children not having clean clothes to wear to school will lead to the questioning and renegotiating of the authority of who is and is not responsible for the laundry. Free will, friendship, and flourishing of life are key factors that both guide and should be positive societal outcomes of authority. Because human sinfulness, like authority, exists as a social creation<sup>9</sup>, it can limit the possibilities of friendship, free will and full flourishing of life. Furthermore, because authority and sin are social creations the guidelines for judgment come from communities. While some forms of sin are universal, such as murder, interpretations of such sins must be placed in context of a community.

### **Perspectives on Authority in María Anna's Writings**

María Anna worked far outside the limits of her office and role as a woman to ensure that the beaterio became a convent. She developed alliances and relationships with men to secure her goal. Authority in this context functioned as both a human practice and a competence. According to Stagaman, "Human

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>9</sup> For a further discussion of sinfulness as a complex topic, please see chapter 4 of this dissertation.

practices are interactions that link individuals together and establish the relationship that constitutes human sociability... Not only are human practices not isolating actions, but they are social realities and historical creations as well.”<sup>10</sup> María Anna’s pre-established relationship with Fr. Juan Ignacio de Uribe, a relationship of human practice, made possible the competence<sup>11</sup> of authority fulfilled between María Anna and Fr. Uribe when she begged him for assistance in converting the beaterio, after he had become one of the “Procuradores.” Fr. Uribe promised María Anna that he would ensure the conversion of the beaterio to a convent and through this promise, María Anna’s goal was fulfilled. Because of this promise, Pope Clement XII converted the beaterio de Santa Rosa to a convento de Religiosas Recoletas de Santo Domingo.

### **Engagement with and resistance to socio/cultural/religious/political factors**

Jennifer Eich’s book, *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)*, currently stands as the most in depth analysis in the United States of America of María Anna’s writings. Eich categorizes María Anna’s use of authority in five ways: authority and integrity, transferal of authority

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>11</sup> “We consider people competent for one of two reasons: either they are endowed with certain personal qualities that are held in high esteem, or they have received their ability to act through a particular delegation or a pattern of doing so in the society.” David J. Stagaman, *Authority in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 38.

and prestige, secular sources of authority, sacred and dogmatic sources of authority, and the virgin as personal, spiritual and intellectual mentor.

According to Eich,

The colonial female mystic writer emplotted her spiritual narratives in an attempt to simultaneously present herself as a credible narrator and as an authority. She needed to demonstrate that she had permission to write, an essential authorial requirement for any woman who composed religious works. She also had to persuade her reader of the credibility of the supernatural events she recounted, especially if she participated in these occurrences on a regular basis. Finally, she had to establish her integrity as a *fidedigna* (faithful or trustworthy) narrator of mystic events that were questionable, yet plausible, to her contemporaries.<sup>12</sup>

Few women in María Anna's time period were "encouraged to develop their intellectual potential or exercise their mental talents."<sup>13</sup> These opportunities were saved generally for upper-class European, criolla, and cacique daughters.<sup>14</sup> A female author writing from a religious perspective also had to establish her authority not only to write about religious themes but also to establish her reasons for transgressing religious restrictions. These women overcame these obstacles because they recognized the benefits of writing.<sup>15</sup> To overcome the challenges of authoring texts, these women wrote as "mouthpieces for the inner voice of God, Christ, Mary or the Saints,"<sup>16</sup> even as they also declared obedience

---

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Eich, *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004), 77.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 83

<sup>16</sup> Arenal, Electa and Stacy Schlauf, eds, *Untold sisters: Hispanic nuns in their own works*

to their superiors and local ordinaries. According to Arenal and Schlau, recurrent themes used by religious women writers included “obedience, greeting, self-depreciation, respect, gratitude, and closing.”<sup>17</sup> María Anna’s work is consistent with this norm, in most cases, as she employs all of these themes in her writings.

For Eich, María Anna depended on the authority of male authors so as to create credibility for her own writing. Here one can see a connection to Stagaman’s notion of complexities of authority situated within relationships. Riding on scripting text which conformed to spiritual, religious and cultural norms, her work, received by, published, attended to and placed in the midst of work about her, Bellido and Villa Sánchez dispelled any thoughts of heresy about her work. Addressing ecclesial credibility and authority, Eich presents an intriguing perspective, “Although Sor María Anna clearly reinforces patriarchal and institutional perspectives, her explanation of the need for obedience as a spiritual progress – or lack of it – corresponds to the spiritual director of confessor. That is, the spiritual director is responsible for hindering the Devil’s attempts to thwart the spiritual evolution of the women’s soul and, more importantly, liable in case he is unsuccessful in doing so.”<sup>18</sup>

Eich uses the categories of transferal of authority and prestige to discuss how María Anna uses literary tactics to claim “She uses her authorial voice,

---

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Eich, *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004), 81.

rhetorical tropes, narrative techniques, and perspicacious cultural awareness of her readers' expectations to validate her mystical experiences, give credibility to herself as a writer, and imbue her treatises with sacred authority."<sup>19</sup> Maria Anna needed to establish personal credibility and integrity because she wrote about topics traditionally reserved for men such as theology and mysticism. To help establish this credibility, she references female saints and other mystics such as Rosa de Lima and Teresa de Avila as well as sacred and doctrinal sources.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, María Anna did not always follow the normative standards for writing. The publication of her work, along with Bellido's *Vida* and Villa Sánchez's funeral sermons, demonstrates that she was held in high esteem and was considered to be extraordinary in her life. However, she parts with normative literary strictures and structures because she did not chronicle her life as a religious and spiritual autobiography;<sup>21</sup> instead she wrote theological treatises partially based on her mystical experiences. María Anna's decision to stray from the norm for *Eich* represents a woman who transgressed social and personal inhibitions to chronicle her lessons and experience. Her chronicling of these lessons contrasts with Bellido's traditional *Vida* on her life.

Eich claims, "Readers, therefore, initially accepted Sor María Anna's treatises as 'authorized' works because of the context of their appearance, and

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 85.

the narratives that serve as textual bookends for them. That is, the mystical/theological works are religiously and socioculturally framed so that prestige transfers to them.”<sup>22</sup> María Anna’s work is published between the *Vida* written by Bellido, a noted scholar and theological teacher, and Villa Sanchez’s funeral sermon as one consolidated text. Villa Sánchez was a celebrated writer, orator, and educator. Both of these men praised her writings as doctrinally sound.<sup>23</sup> One must also note that both her *Vida* and her own writings received ecclesial and civil approval needed for publication only a short-time after her death. Other published texts, such as “*Varias devociones compuestas por la sor María Anna Ágeda de S. Ignacio, priora y fundadora, que fue, del sagrado Convento de recoletas dominicas de Santa Rosa de Santa Maria de esta ciudad, sacadas de la Vid y obras de la misma V.M. Reimpresas y unidas en este quaderno por orden de Domingo Pantaleon Alvarez de Abreu, arzobisop, obispo de esta dioecesis*”<sup>24</sup> further promotes María Anna’s mystic status and theological treatises for readers today.<sup>25</sup>

Along with not writing in an accepted genre such as spiritual autobiography, María Anna also does not directly appeal to female saints and mystical writers for permission to write as was customary at the time. María Anna

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>24</sup> María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio. (Impresa de C.T. de Ortega y Bonilla, Puebla, 1758).

<sup>25</sup> Jennifer Eich, *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004), 88

wrote by her own authority rather than claiming permission from another mystical writer or the Virgin Mary to write. However, she does subsume the prestige of these women both religiously and literarily. She co-opted her own Dominican predecessors of Rosa de Lima and Catherine of Sienna as an umbrella under which to usurp authority for her own mystical experiences as sources for her theological treatises.<sup>26</sup> María Anna's referencing of these women simultaneously dispels heretical notions of her role as a teacher because of both ecclesial and secular acceptance of these women and their writings.<sup>27</sup> She also imports secular sources into her own writings mimicking the writings of these women.<sup>28</sup>

Along with categorizations of transferal of authority and prestige as well as authority and integrity, Eich also examines Maria Anna's work in relation to secular sources of authority. In regard to drawing from Dominican mimeses such as Catherine of Sienna, Eich states, "Sor María Anna's use of secular sources of authority is a direct literary inheritance from the authors of the Old and New Testaments."<sup>29</sup> Like St. Teresa de Jesús' use of a watering a garden to create spiritual understanding for types of prayer, María Anna develops a Marian theology through real-life observations and scientific beliefs to develop her

---

<sup>26</sup> María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 9.

<sup>27</sup> Jennifer Eich, *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004), 90.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Marian theology.”<sup>30</sup> She evokes popular knowledge or what Latin@ theologians name *lo cotidiano* to appeal to her reader by drawing on popular knowledge such as the phrase ‘*y como dicen*’ which is a saying that implies a shared understanding of culture and background. This phrase, translated as “like they say” or “as is said” implies a maxim or proverb for education and inspiration.<sup>31</sup> Another example comes in María Anna’s reference of sociocultural commonplaces and linguistic regionalisms and anecdotes taken from everyday life that keep the reader attentive and intrigued.<sup>32</sup> According to Eich, “This strengthens the sense that they are equals and that anyone can understand her texts...It also creates the impression that they inhabit an identical social space in which word of mouth is an important source of information and form of communication.”<sup>33</sup> Eich states “Since she is aware that people other than her sister nuns or male superiors will see/hear her works, she skillfully exploits interest in spectacle and excitement by using indirect discourse to recreate dialogue and dramatic presentation. Figures that speak are usually divine or saved, and often combine biblical, pagan, and New Testament roots.”<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

The fourth category of authority Eich identifies in Maria Anna's work concerns sacred and dogmatic sources of authority. "Sor María Anna's discursive style, literary techniques, and narrative organization are consistent with the stylistics of male saints such as Sts Thomas Aquinas, Bernard, Benedict, Dominic, Bonaventure, and Ignatius of Loyola, all of whom she refers to, paraphrases or quotes."<sup>35</sup> Her inclusion of quotations are not rote lists but point to theological implications and many times make a theological point or provide evidence for her exegesis of a particular mystical event.<sup>36</sup>

Eich's fifth authority theme focuses on Marian themes in María Anna's work. Marian themes and popular devotions of regional images of Mary composed a significant part of the culture of New Spain. María Anna not only included these themes in her own writing but also attended to the treatment of these themes in the tradition and the mystical works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Dominic and Bonaventure. In Eich's analysis, "The Church's recognition of these men's Marian devotion lends increased importance to hers, and their authorized status as mystics and spiritual guides confirms the Dominican nun's status as their colleague... their mystic experiences and spiritual practices grant validity and increased importance to her own, even when she does not articulate them openly or in detail."<sup>37</sup> Eich interprets María Anna's authority as coming from her

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 102.

self-placement within a tradition of both male and female saints and mystics while overcoming cultural, literary and religious obstacles faced by Spanish American women writers. These same obstacles were not necessarily challenges to men.<sup>38</sup> María Anna's work both circumvents questions of heresy and validates her own mystical experiences because she establishes her work in the midst of a long list of church doctors, church fathers and mothers, and mystical writers.<sup>39</sup>

According to Eich,

while firmly respecting sacred sources of authority and traditional scholastic thought, Sor María Anna transcends them through her psychological acumen, mental agility, and literary gifts. Her studies allowed her to refer to quite canonic role models, and to document her mystical/theological treatises with dogmatic texts written by Augustine and Jerome as well as Sts Thomas Aquinas and Ignatius of Loyola. Her readings enabled her to cite the vitae of Sts Catherine Martyr and Catherine of Sienna and Madre Villani, and of Sts Bernard, Dominic, and Cajetan.<sup>40</sup>

María Anna was in her time, and needs to continue to be, an important female figure in the Roman Catholic Tradition. Her savvy use of traditional scholarship and traditional rhetoric for women religious of this time allowed her not only to be a published author but a teacher<sup>41</sup> in her local church beyond the convent community of Santa Rosa.

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 125-126.

While a large corpus of María Anna's work is extant, she was not the only woman who wrote during this time and in this context. I do not wish to create a declension narrative<sup>42</sup> that this woman was the only one of the few in her situation who wrote at the time. She may be one of the few whose writings exist with us today, but most foundresses and first prioresses were asked to write for their convent communities. Lavrin provides the following description which proves accurate for María Anna's historical and theological place as compared to religious men and women of this her time.

...although not in the active way of friars and clergy. Ironically, their own immobility and sheltered condition as cloistered women were to create a different culture of female archetypes in the colonial setting. They introduced devotional practices specifically promoted to cater to female affectivity, with Christ and Mary at their center.<sup>43</sup>

I further claim María Anna was one among a number of women who wrote in New Spain. Routt situates María Anna's "work in the context of the plethora of religious literature that appeared in her time as well as an exploration of her unique place in the particularly female tradition of using the body to access the divine."<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, women religious were not banned from writing but women's writings were expected to shy away from prideful philosophical proofs. For

---

<sup>42</sup> A declension narrative creates a story of over compassing characteristics of one person or a particular group of people which is then given/used to label a larger group of people and/or cultural phenomenon.

<sup>43</sup> Asunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 351.

<sup>44</sup> K. E. Routt, "Authoring Orthodoxy: The Body and the *Camino de Perfección* in Spanish American Colonial Convent Writings" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1998), 181.

example, Sor Filotea's letter to Sor Juana, only one generation earlier than Sor María Anna, insists women are to read more spiritual texts and focus upon heavenly endeavors rather than write.<sup>45</sup> While reprimanding Sor Juana for engaging in theological discourse with Antonio de Vieira's homily, Sor Filotea tells Sor Juana, "You have spent no little time on these curious studies (philosophy and poetry). Move on, like the great Boethius, to take advantage of them, combining the subtleties of natural science with the usefulness of moral philosophy...It is a pity that your great mind should become confused by the despicable things of the earth and not desire to penetrate the things of heaven."<sup>46</sup> In the particular instance of Sor Filotea and Sor Juana, the practice of writing for one's community is used as a way to silence Sor Juana by Sor Filotea, a penname believed to be used by the local ordinary, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, Bishop of Puebla, Mexico. However, through this act of silencing, we learn that writing for one's convent community was an accepted act of most first prioresses and many of the educated nuns of a community.

### **Mystical Bodily Authority**

Along with Eich, another scholar, Kristina Eva Routt, who examines María Anna's work by focusing on María Anna's use of the body as a way to gain authority and respect from the Church. Routt, like Eich, notes that María Anna

---

<sup>45</sup> Pamela Kirk Rappaport, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Selected Writings*, New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 249-253.

<sup>46</sup> "Letter of 'Sor Philotea' in Pamela Kirk Rappaport. *The Classics of Western Spirituality: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. New York: Paulist Press, 2005.

“appropriates the strategies that male authors of devotional literature use to authorize their texts.”<sup>47</sup> But, men’s influence upon María Anna’s work does not represent a central theme for Routt as it does for Eich. María Anna develops an image of her body to present herself as a model of patient suffering and prayer that leads to her knowledge of God’s presence through physical effects manifested in her body.

Routt situates María Anna among three other women writers, Madre María de San José, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and Úrsula Suarez of the Mexican colonial period who also drew upon the body in their work. These authors crafted their works by invoking the body as a touchstone to describe their spiritual experiences in their pursuit of *camino de perfección* (way of perfection), the spiritual path sought by most nuns and beatas during this time period. For Routt, María Anna, as well as these other writers, grapple with the “interplay within the texts between the Church’s guidelines for treating the body and the nun’s own spirituality [to allow] them to communicate their individual religious experience while enjoying the Church’s acceptance of their writing.”<sup>48</sup>

Along with reasons mentioned previously, María Anna’s work also possesses authority because her writing endorses the same models of orthodoxy, the body, and personal experience as other female writers of

---

<sup>47</sup> Kristina Eva Routt, “Authoring Orthodoxy: The Body and the *Camino de Perfección* in Spanish American Colonial Convent Writings” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1998), 159.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

the same period and location. Because she stayed within these cultural and literary expectations, she was considered a model nun and female writer. As the place of the Virgin Mary as a spiritual guide was consistent with Catholic understanding, she developed the idea of the Virgin's nourishing body as the key to reaching God. In doing this, María Anna continued the tradition of breast milk within Catholic thought for the base of claims to authority and leadership initiated in medieval traditions employed by other members of religious orders such as the Cistercians and the Franciscans. For Routt, "(María Anna) implicated the female body in the journey to God in a unique way, while inscribing her work into the orthodox terms that would win her superiors' favor."<sup>49</sup>

### **Authority and Tradition**

The tradition of the image of breast milk is found deep within Christian literature, beginning in *The Paedagogus* by Clement of Alexandria's, who included the image as early as the second century. However, for this study, the focus on the genealogy of this image is on the high Middle Ages and eighteenth century Mexico. Historically, the image has been applied to a plurality of persons including Mary, Jesus, God, the bride, bridegroom and audience in the Song of Songs, leaders of religious orders, Peter and Paul. These figures have at times been portrayed as the giver of the breast milk and other times those who received it. Gilberto Cavazos-González in his book, *Greater than a Mother's Love*, which focuses on Saints Francis and Claire states, "Symbolic gender

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 181.

reversal along with the renewed appreciation for the humanity of Christ slowly worked its way into the spirituality of the high Middle Ages. This helped both male and female saints develop an affective spirituality of union.”<sup>50</sup> This spirituality served as good for individual souls’ union with God and for leaders of religious orders and religious houses to demonstrate authorial leadership as they claimed to be both mother and father.

The image of breast milk first appears in the works of Cistercian monks, especially those of Bernard of Clairvaux, after the patristic period, in the twelfth century.<sup>51</sup> The malleability of this image, to be associated with men, women, and even communities, is rooted primarily in the connection between images of blood and milk in the context of the Middle Ages. As Carolyn Walker Bynum states,

In medieval legends like the lactation of St. Bernard and in medieval devotions like the sacred heart, milk and blood are often interchangeable, as are Christ’s breasts and the wound in his side. What writers in the high Middle Ages wished to say about Christ the savior who feeds the individual soul with his own blood was precisely and concisely said in the image of the nursing mother whose milk is her blood, offered to her child.<sup>52</sup>

The connection of milk and blood in the high Middle Ages comes from a common physiological understanding of these bodily fluids. Breast milk was understood as

---

<sup>50</sup> Gilberto Cavazos-González, *Greater than a Mother’s Love*. (Scranton: Scranton University Press, 2010), 36.

<sup>51</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1982), 112.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 132 – 133.

processed blood, through which “the loving mother, like the pelican who is also a symbol for Christ, feeds her child with her own blood.”<sup>53</sup>

The connection between blood and milk also allows for the image to symbolize traits of birth, nurturing, teaching, guidance and authority in leadership. While in the high Middle Ages these traits were marked as feminine, many leaders of male religious orders would appeal to the image of breast milk, and its associated traits, to demonstrate their strength as balanced leaders who possessed feminine and masculine traits.

Like the connections between breast milk and blood, milk and wine also become connected in theological claims around Christ’s body. In an example of breast milk within this tradition, Walker Bynum finds,

In a complex discussion of John reclining on Jesus’ breast, Aelred [of Rievaulx (died 1167)] says that John drinks the wine of knowledge of God, whereas the soul of the ordinary believer feeds on the milk that flows from Christ’s humanity. The blood that flows from the wound in Christ’s side becomes wine, the water becomes milk; and the soul not only draws nurture from Christ but also flees for refuge into the wound in the wall of his body.

Then one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance and there came forth blood and water. Hasten, linger not, eat the honeycomb with your honey, drink your wine with your milk. The blood is changed into wine to gladden you, the water into milk to nourish you. From the rock streams have flowed for you, wounds have been made in his limbs, holes in the wall of his body, in which, like a dove, you may hide while you kiss them one by one. Your lips, stained with blood, will become like a scarlet ribbon and your word sweet.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 123.

Like Aelred, Bernard of Clairvaux developed ambiguous applications and interpretations of this image. At times he interpreted the image as nurturing and as a primarily maternal function.<sup>55</sup> For him, this motherly image is not a distant one or one attributed only to Mary or women in general, but can be Mary, God, bride,<sup>56</sup> bridegroom,<sup>57</sup> self and other superiors of religious orders,<sup>58</sup> as well as an unknown person and/or community of people, such as the wedding audience in the Song of Songs.<sup>59</sup> Regardless of attribution, for Bernard, this image is symbolic of nurturing, care, preaching, and union with God. His repeated summon of the image emanates from a foundation of relationship, revealing it as innately relational because one must give while another receives the breast milk. Yet, those giving breast milk are not always women. In one of his complex applications of this image, Bernard speaks of feeding his own brothers for whom he is responsible as a way of revealing his balanced power and authority as a leader who can be both mother and father.<sup>60</sup> Using the image of breast milk and breast feeding, Bernard highlights the nurturing and caring

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 115-116.

<sup>56</sup> Kilian Walsh, OCSO, translator *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux Volume Two: On the Song of Songs I* (Spencer, Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 55-57.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>58</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1982), 118.

<sup>59</sup> Kilian Walsh, OCSO, translator *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux Volume Two: On the Song of Songs I* (Spencer, Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 53-60.

<sup>60</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1982), 116.

needed to be a leader of a religious community. Like other leaders of religious communities, he also focuses on these attributes primarily as the feminine side of leadership. It is important to note, however, that contemporary ideas of the feminine are not necessarily the same as those of Bernard's time. Caution should be taken to understand these images as feminine within their original context of each particular writer, image, or story, within Catholic traditions, rather than usurping and displacing these images within our current ideas of feminine. To do so risks essentializing various attributes of these images when removed from their original context.

Through Bellido's *Vida*, we learn that María Anna was called from a young age to be a devout daughter of God and live a life of a beata-become-nun. We do not know for sure if María Anna felt her call in this way or if Bellido presents this information as part of a hagiography created to show what an exemplar María Anna was of her vocation. The reality, in all likelihood, falls somewhere between the two. However, although it is uncertain about what she thought about her call to religious life, it is certain how she thought about her own writing. About her own writing, María Anna states that she is not writing from her own accord rather because she has been asked for this writing.<sup>61</sup> Again, we will never know whether this information is actual fact or whether María Anna wrote this simply to follow the cultural literary norm of humility amidst baroque elegance. We do know

---

<sup>61</sup> María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 1.

that María Anna wrote particularly for her convent community.<sup>62</sup> While I understand that she may have been writing for audiences beyond her convent community, I do assume that she wrote primarily for this particular community of Dominican nuns.

When writing for her convent community, María Anna as foundress had the responsibilities both to guide and to leave a legacy for her community. Her role of authority was rooted in the seat of her office as well as granted by her convent community when she was named leader. For María Anna, writing about her spiritual journey was a responsibility associated with the relationship she had with her convent sisters. Also, her leadership role motivated her to write for her sisters as they were required to heed her initiative. As was common practice in eighteenth century Mexican convents, the foundress was the person who set the spiritual guidelines for the rest of the community. In this case, María Anna fulfilled a responsibility expected of her because of her office. She acted with authority not only because the occupation of her office was condoned by the larger Church, but also because her convent community received her writings. The local bishop's publication of her writings also confers even greater authority of her text in an official capacity.

Unfortunately, writings have not been found from other community members to explore how they accepted or rejected her writings. We do know that she entered the convent without a dowry and was treated differently as a novice

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 2.

for this reason.<sup>63</sup> Such taunting when she was a novice may have most probably informed her decision to eliminate the dowry requirement to enter the convent of Santa Rosa in the conventual *Constituciones*. This change to former beaterio guidelines outlined in the new conventual constitution may have generated challenges in the community as to how María Anna's authority was engaged. Nevertheless, we do know that María Anna was not removed from her office by her sisters and continued living with them until her death. This indicates that she flourished within her community.

Another example of a relationship which flourished because of María Anna's role of first prioress may be exemplified through her relationship with the local bishop. María Anna became well-known to and respected by the local ordinary through the bishop's niece, who was a nun in the convent of Santa Rosa and very fond of María Anna. These two examples present us with at least a glance into two possible scenarios where authority may have been challenged through the use of power. In the first example, fellow nuns may not have been fully accepting of María Anna's decision to allow novices to enter the convent without a dowry because this practice not only challenged cultural norms but also tested financial stability for the convent community. María Anna used authority of office to ensure the enforcement of this practice in the convent of Santa Rosa through her writings. The second example leads us to explore María Anna's roles

---

<sup>63</sup> I believe this point to be more factual than hagiographic because Bellido spends so much time showing how María Anna's lack of dowry placed her more among saints than sinners. See Chapter 2 for further treatment of this topic.

in the larger Catholic Church within her lifetime as well as beyond her lifetime through her writings. We see that María Anna's primary relationship of authority within the larger Church came through her office. But, other relationships, such as leader of her religious house, show a broader scope and other examples of authority.

María Anna through the image of breast milk places her work within complex gendered traditions of leaders of religious houses. This image was prevalent in the high Middle Ages, particularly among Cistercians and Franciscans. Placing her work within this tradition allows María Anna simultaneously to demonstrate her work as credible and believable theologically. According to David Stagaman, "We consider people competent for one of two reasons: either they are endowed with certain personal qualities that are held high in esteem, or they have received their ability to act through a particular delegation or a pattern of doing so in society."<sup>64</sup> María Anna reveals her competence by tapping into the tradition of the image of Mary's breast milk adopted by other religious leaders.

María Anna reaps similar benefits of the use of the breast milk image such as those reaped by male medieval writers such as Bernard of Clairvaux, including an understanding of leadership as nurturing and teaching. Through her crafting of this image, she directly situates herself in earlier traditions drawing on

---

<sup>64</sup> David J. Stagaman, *Authority in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 38.

this image while claiming these traditions themselves to be a benefit of Mary's breast milk,

Otro privilegio de la Leche de MARIA Santissima, Fué conservación de ella, aùn despues de resucitada, y gloriosa en los Cielos; Dígalo el Grande Padre de la Iglesia San Augustin, á quien apareciendosele Christo nuestro Señor, y su Madre Santissima á un tiempo, le ofreció el Señor la Sangre de su Costado, y la Señora la Leche de sus Pechos; y hallandose el Santo con ardientes deseos de beber tan maravillosas, y dulces Fuentes, pusose en medio, y à un tiempo bebió el amor en Christo, y la dulzura, y pureza en MARIA: Digalo tambien San Bernardo, quien mereció beber en tan suaves Fuentes, dexandolo todo melifluo, y suave...<sup>65</sup>

María Anna's interpretations of the image of breast milk follow closely those articulated by Bernard of Clairvaux. But, she specifically relates the image of breast milk only to Mary, Mary's relationship with Jesus, and Mary's relationship with all of humanity in salvation history. These relationships become significant in understanding María Anna's theological developments of *imago Dei* and *imago Christi* which are discussed in chapter four of this dissertation. María Anna, who believes the image of breast milk to be a source for union with God, also shows the benefits of Mary's breast milk to be for the good of all humanity.

The depth of María Anna's knowledge of the image of breast milk within Catholic traditions is unclear. She names St. Bernard and St. Augustine as

---

<sup>65</sup>“Another privilege of Holy Mary's milk was the conservation of the milk beyond the resurrection and her glory in the sky; As the great father of the church Saint Augustine said, when once Christ our Savior and his Holy Mother appeared to him, Christ offered him the blood from his side and his mother, the milk from her breast. The Saint placed himself in the middle of both with ardent desires to drink from such marvelous and sweet fountains. He simultaneously drank in Christ's love and Mary's purity and sweetness. And as St. Bernard said, who deserved to drink from such gentle fountains, leaving all mellifluous and smooth...” María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 10 (My translation).

having encounters with the Virgin Mary where Mary shares her breast milk for multiple reasons. She also mentions local stories of apparition of the Virgin sharing breast milk. So the image of breast milk not only comes from the extended traditions of the Catholic Church but also part of the religious experiences of the local church.

Maria Anna tapped into the tradition of Bernard's malleable and fluid image of breast milk in her own writings. While María Anna wrote specifically as a leader and therefore teacher for her fellow convent nuns, knowledge of her own writings reaching audiences beyond the convent walls is unclear. The prologue of *las Marabillas*, which was published after María Anna's death in 1756, by the local bishop, states,

Este conocimiento tan profundo de Sí misma, como no la havia de levantar â los mas altos conocimientos de las Maravillas del Divino Amor! Este fuè el Titulo, que le inspire el mismo Señor, que avia de poner â sus Obras, estando dudosa de como las avia de intitular, assegurandola juntamente de que estaban Selladas con el Sello de la Verdad.

Noticioso de todo esto el Ilmô. Señor Doctor Don Domingo Pantaleon Alvarez de Abreù, Dignissimo Arzobispo, Obispo de la Puebla de los Angeles, no contento con alentar â sus Ovejas con los exemplos admirables de sacò â publica, quiso tambien se imprimiessen las Obras, quer dejó escritas la misma V.M.R.M para dár â su Rebaño el escogido pasto de tan saludable Doctrina, y enseñanza.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> "How is one not to raise this profound self-knowledge among the highest of knowledge of the *Miracles of Divine Love!* This was the title, inspired by the same God, who had inspired her work, being mindful of how they should be titled, securing simultaneously that they should be *sealed with the seal of truth*."

Attending to the prior, the Illuminous Reverend Doctor Don Domingo Pantaleon Alvarez de Abreù, Most Dignified Archbishop, Bishop of Puebla de los Angeles, was not only satisfied by encouraging his sheep with these admirable examples publicly but also wished the works written by V.M.R.M. to be published so as to give his flock the chosen pasture of such healthy doctrine and teaching." "Prólogo" de María Anna Agueda de San

Like Cistercian leaders, María Anna's use of this image simultaneously grants her authority as a leader within her own community and places her theological writings within Catholic traditions. Unlike Bernard of Clairvaux's direct relational usage of the image, María Anna never claims that she will feed her breast milk to her sisters, as Bernard does his brothers.

The following three excerpts from María Anna's original work reveal her employment of the image of breast milk as the basis of her theology. First, beyond being a nurturing gift, María Anna sees Mary's breasts and her breast milk as engorged in creation:

Criò Dios el Parayso terrenal, y puso en èl quatro Fuentes que le regaran, para la conservacion de las delicias de que estaba adornado: Criò á MARIA Santissima Parayso celestial en que se diò el Arbol de la vida Christo Jesus, que mató la muerte, y destruyò la causa de ella, que fue el pecado, y puso en este Nuevo Parayso otras quatro Fuentes para conservar este Arbol, y fructo de vida; dos que le conservaran, que son las dos Fuentes de su Leche purissima en sus dos castisimos, y virginals Pechos, con que le alimentó, y aumentó la Humanidad Santissima; y dos que lo regalaran, que fueron las crystalinas Fuentes de sus Ojos.<sup>67</sup>

María Anna moves from images of breast milk which signify primarily attributes of leadership to breast milk being central to creation and part of the plan of creation.

---

Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), unnumbered page (My translation).

<sup>67</sup> "God created an earthly paradise and placed four fountains to water it for the conservation of the delicacies they were adorning: God created most blessed Mary of celestial Paradise which gave the tree of life to Jesus Christ, who killed death, and destroyed the cause of it, which was sin and put in this new paradise four other fountains to conserve the tree, which are the fountains of her purest milk in her two most chaste and virginal breasts, with which she fed and augmented the holiest humanity; and two which were gifted were the two crystal fountains of her eyes." María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 6 (my translation).

The fountains of the breast milk were created as part of the plan of salvation and therefore place Mary as central to the plan of salvation history.

Second, since María Anna presents Mary's milk as a great gift, she also believes her audience has a responsibility to recognize and honor Mary's grand contribution to salvation history:

Más quanto debemos à MARIA Santissima por este alimento que ministro á Jesu Christo nuestra salud, y vida? Le debemos el que su Hijo santissimo satisficiera à su Padre por nuestras deudas, y pecados, dando la vida, que MARIA SS. Conserve con su Leche dulcissima, y candidissima! Le debemos el exemplo que nos dexò en su vida, la doctrina, los Milagros, la Institucion de los Santos Sacramento! Le debemos el tener Maestro, redemptor, Salvador, y todo nuestro remedio, y todo debido à la Leche con que le criò y sustentò!<sup>68</sup>

In this quote, Maria Anna calls for a communal response in regard to the gifts offered by Mary's breast milk. She also contends that everything related to the Church is indebted to Mary.

Third, along with calling for a communal response of honor and recognizing Mary's role in the creation of salvation history, María Anna arduously details the privileges of Mary's breast milk for sinners. María Anna believes, as was common at the time, that Mary continued to lactate even after Jesus no longer needed milk as a child. In support of this belief, María Anna offers

---

<sup>68</sup> "Furthermore, we owe Most Holy Mary for this nourishment which she ministered to Jesus Christ our health and life? We owe her because her Most Holy Son satisfied his Father for our debts and sins, giving his life which Most Holy Mary conserves with her sweetest and most chaste milk! We owe her the example which he left with his life, the doctrine, the miracles, the institution of the Holy Sacraments! We owe her the having of teacher, redeemer, savior and all of our healing and all owed to the milk with which she created and sustained him!"  
María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 6 (my translation).

examples of local stories of miracles where Mary had physically shared her milk with a layman and a priest. On one level, then, María Anna's descriptions appear figurative, but at another level, she articulates a belief that Mary can reenter human history physically to share her milk when her children need it. Mary's breast milk, therefore, has a variety of privileges/gifts for sinners who need it. María Anna outlines these privileges as a rhetorical device to convince her audience of the importance of Mary's breast milk:

Privilegio es del sinamomo destilar tan suave licor, y por è les conoçide su valor: Mayor, unico, y raro es el privilegio de MARIA Santissima de destilar por las Fuentes de sus castissimos, y viginales Pechos un licor, que tiene lleno el Cielo, y la tierra de sus fragrancias, y que se conosca este prodigioso Arbol, no solo por el fruto de su Vientre sobre celeste, sino tambien por el Licor, que de èl se regaló el mismo Dios humanado, y quedaron estas Fuentes para riego de la Iglesia Santa, la que en naciendo puso Jesu-Christo en brazos de su Sagrada Madre, para que la sustentara, fomtara, y aumentara con sus Pechos Soberanos: Y si no, diganlo los Santos Apostoles, á quienes acudía en la ausencia de Jesu-Christo por su Ascension á los Cielos la Virgen MARIA, aqui hallaban con abundancia el magisterio, y doctrina de JESUS su Hijo amantissimo: Diganlo los primitivos Fieles, donde hallaban el Consuelo, y el progresso en la nueva vida, que por el Baptismo gozaban: Digalo aquel siglo de oro, que tanto resplandece, y resplandecerà; Aquel dilatarse la Iglesia por todo el Mundo tan en breve, que era sino gozar de los brazos de su Madre, sustentarse con la Leche de sus Pechos, y recibir con ella tanta Fortaleza?<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> "The privilege is synonymous with distilling a fine liquor and for that reason I will share with you its value. Supreme, unique and rare is the privilege of distilling such a fine liquor from the fountains of most holy Mary's chaste and virginal breasts which fill the heavens and earth with its fragrances, so that this prestigious Tree may be known, not only as the fruit of the extra celestial womb, but also because of the liquor, of which was gifted the same humanized God, and these fountains remained as gifts for the entire holy Church, which upon Jesus' birth placed Jesus Christ in the arms of Jesus' Sacred Mother, to sustain her (the Church). In this way she (Mary) will foment and augment with her Sovereign Breasts. And if not, tell the Holy Apostles, who the Virgin Mary coddled in the absence of Jesus Christ because of Christ's ascension to the sky. Here they found in abundance the magisterium and doctrine of Jesus, her Most Holy

María Anna did not need to use historically male attributes to provide credibility for her authority as leader. She finds her authority as leader and writer in the image of Mary's breast milk itself. This flowing breast milk not only physically fed the Incarnate Word but also continues to feed and nourish the church. In this section, María Anna describes the significance of breast milk for the church of the entire world. The gifts of Mary's breast milk are not only for the infant Jesus. They are communal. Because they are communal, María Anna needs to go no further than the image of Mary's breast milk to establish her authority as a thinker and leader. Even though other aspects of her writing, as mentioned previously, did contribute to her authority as leader and thinker.

For María Anna, the image of breast milk is central to her theology. The privileges brought by Mary through her breast milk to all of humanity directly impact humanity's salvation. Mary's role is therefore a gift to humanity, part of the mind of the godhead from the beginning, engorged in creation and central to salvation history. María Anna, by directly placing herself in the literary and cultural traditions associated with the image of breast milk, enters into and enriches the discourse of the complex gendering of this image across centuries.

---

beloved Son. Ask the primitive Faithful, where they found consolation and where new life progressed. Ask the golden century that greatly shines and will continue to shine, that Church which continues to expand throughout the entire world, briefly, what would be without enjoying the arms of its Mother and the sustenance of the Milk of her Breasts and receive with it so much Strength?" María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 10 (my translation).

The particular lens of Maria Anna's life and writings highlights a complexity of authority. While the authority of her office provides her with a formal position from within the church to speak, she also implores a multitude of other ways to reveal the polyvalence of her authority.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ROLE OF MARY IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE TRINITY, *IMAGO DEI*, AND IMAGES OF GOD IN MARÍA ANNA'S WRITINGS

María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio develops a Trinitarian theology in which Mary lives in relationship with each person. She also presents Mary as a perfect created image of God, a mirror of the entire Trinity so humanity may know what it means to be *imago Dei*. This Trinitarian image is not only for the Trinity as an end for Mary or an end *per se*. The end develops through an *imago Christi* of relationship between Mary and Jesus which humans may choose to enter. Humans are created in the image and likeness of God, *imago Dei*, but humans may become *imago Christi*, through El Camino de la Leche<sup>1</sup> where Mary acts as the path for humanity to come to know God and come to union with God. Becoming *Imago Christi* is a choice for humanity. Furthermore, humanity chooses to become *imago Christi* as embodied persons with a complexity of genders. As I stated in chapter 1, lack of embodied images of God, as well as predominantly male images of Divinity name some of the problems raised by

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Path of Milk" or "The Way of Milk" or "The Milky Way" (my translation). I use the Spanish phrase because the latter translation has many other connotations. The first two translations do not connote a movement as the word "camino" does. The first-person singular form of the verb "caminar" is "camino" as in "Yo camino." Though, María Anna does not always mean that individuals move through El Camino de la Leche.

Western feminist theological scholarship of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

**Mary and the Trinity: A Focus on María Anna's Writings, *Theologia and Oikonomia***

María Anna creates a complexly gendered embodied Trinitarian theology of the unity of *oikonomia* and *theologia*. I understand *Oikonomia* as patterns of salvation history.<sup>2</sup> In other words, soteriology is the study of relationships of God's self-revelation understood through historical settings. Salvation history functions as a complex matrix where creation acts as agent engaged in relationship with God.

*Theologia* is understood to be the "eternal being of God."<sup>3</sup> Theology is the study of God's eternal being as revealed through the course of history. While God's eternal being may be revealed outside of human existence, such as in nature and other parts of the cosmos, humans interpret and script these revelations in theological discourse. So, human experience is a primary basis for theology. Humans learn and experience life first and foremost through their bodies. Bodies, therefore are often the basis for interpretation of God's revelation in history. Bodies are also the basis for interpretation of salvation. Embodied humans interpret, create and script patterns of salvation history. LaCugna contends that, "For Christians, the summit of the economy, the unveiling of God's

---

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1973), 230.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

providential plan, is God's unity with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. The mystery of this unity between divine and human continue in the ongoing and permanent presence of the risen Christ through the power and activity of the Spirit."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, through *Oikonomia*, patterns of salvation history become intelligible through embodied humans.

One of the richest ways to view the relationship between *oikonomia* and *theologia* is to understand it through the framework of a Trinitarian theology. As La Cugna states, "The central theme of trinitarian theology is the relationship between the pattern of salvation history (*oikonomia*) and the eternal being of God (*theologia*)...God by nature is self-expressive, God seeks to reveal and give Godself, God seeks to be united with other persons."<sup>5</sup> This self-expression, self-revelation, self-gift of God is not one which is a fixed or stagnant "formula".<sup>6</sup> This mysterious matrix changes through the course of history because the receivers of the self-expression, self-revelation, self-gift change in context and community. As Elizabeth Johnson states,

...the Christian experience of the one God is multifaceted. The God of inexhaustible mystery who is inexpressibly other is also with the world in the flesh of history, and is furthermore closer to us than we are to ourselves. Sophia-God is beyond, with, and within the world; behind, with and ahead of us; above, alongside and around us. The religious experience of being met in this diversity of saving ways functioned historically and continues to be the starting point for

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 319.

seeking the intelligibility of speech about God in the Christian tradition. Shaped by this encounter, thought discerns a distinct kind of monotheism: the one God enjoys a Trinitarian existence.<sup>7</sup>

For María Anna, the revelation of God's providential plan does not only come through the person of Jesus, but also through the person and body of Mary, Mary's relationship to Jesus, and Mary's relationship to humanity.

Mary represents the link of this unity for María Anna, the unity of this "Trinitarian existence" of "God who is beyond, with, and within the world" of the connection between *oikonomia* and *theologia*. María Anna begins las *Marabillas* with an explanation of how God *per se* is unknowable to creation. So, God, wishing for creation to know Godself, creates Mary, "haciendola su poder, favor, y amor, tan admirable, tan prodigiosa, y rara, que por ella se diera a conocer su Author."<sup>8</sup> Mary is the door to God.<sup>9</sup> For María Anna, God's inner self is unknowable through our human ways, but God, in God's wisdom, created Mary to stand above all creatures so humans may come to know and be with God. Therefore, María Anna attributes the Marian roles of

...Madre de Dios, Reyna, y Señora de todo lo criado, elegida, escogida, y criada *ab initio, et ante secula*, que salió de la boca del Altissimo, como primogenita de todas las criaturas, granando la

---

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 191.

<sup>8</sup> ...making her power, favor, and love so admirable, marvelous and rare that through her, her author would be known. María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 2 (My translation).

<sup>9</sup> See second page of "Book I Chapter I" text in Appendix A of this dissertation.

primacia à los Angeles, y á los hombres; porque fuè ideada en la mente divina ante todas las demàs obras de sus manos...<sup>10</sup>

Mary stands as part of the divine mind before all of creation. In a Platonic hierarchy, Mary places higher in the structure than angels, having primacy over the angels.<sup>11</sup> María Anna also places Mary in the highest places of ecclesial hierarchy,

...MARIA Santissima es Madre, y tiene por fructo de su Leche candidissima los altos Montes de los Patriarchas, y Prophetas, las elevadas Columnas de los Apostoles, los fortissimos Martyres, los Pontifices, y prelados de la Iglesia, los ilustres, y sapientissimos Doctores, los excelentes Confesores, las candidas, y herosas Virgenes, y todos los hijos de Dios son hijos de MARIA.<sup>12</sup>

This primacy places her extremely close to God. When God created Mary, the divine mind "...empleando en MARIA Santissima todo su poder, delineando, ô dibujando una Imagen en que resplandeciera toda la Santissima TRINIDAD, poniendola por puerta, y entrada à el conocimiento de Dios, y puerta para entrar â Dios."<sup>13</sup> For María Anna, Mary is the image which reflects the entire Trinity.

---

<sup>10</sup> María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 2 (My translation). ...Mother of God, Queen and Lady of all of creation, selected, chosen and created since the beginning and without sin, who came from the mouth of the Most Holy, with primacy to the angels and to humanity because she was an idea in the divine mind before all of the other works of these hands...

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 38-41 (My translation).

<sup>12</sup> ...Most Holy Mary is mother and has by the fruit of her most chaste milk the extremes of the mountains of the patriarchs and prophets, the elevated columns of the Apostles, the martyrs, the Popes and prelates of the Church, the lustrous and most knowledgeable Doctors, the excellent Confessors, the chaste and heroic virgins and all of the children of God who are Mary's children. Ibid., 38-41 (My translation).

<sup>13</sup> ...implementing in Most Holy Mary all of Its power, scripting or drawing an image in which the entire Most Holy Trinity would shine, putting her as the door, the entrance to knowledge of God

Mary was not a complete image in herself but in relationship to the Trinity. María Anna uses the notion of the Immaculate Conception to outline these Marian/Trinitarian ways of being in relationships.

Historically, the Immaculate Conception<sup>14</sup> was not a dogma in María Anna's time but a touchstone for her because of Mary's relationships with each of the persons of the Trinity. Mary is a virgin mother as a virgin God is father to the Incarnate Word. She is perfect wife to the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> As the wife of the Holy Spirit, María Anna states,

Alaba el Divino Esposo los ojos de su Esposa MARIA Santissima, y le dice: *Oculí tui columbarum*, tus ojos son de Paloma; y es porque estos pequeñitos son las niñas de los ojos de MARIA por su sencillez columbina; ass los ama, los guarda, y favorece, conservadolos en inocencia, y limpieza. Como no aspiramos â tanto bien? Quien podrá yâ gustar de grandezas de este Mundo, que no son mas que una apariencia? Y en la verdad, essa es la mayor desdicha: *Deposuit potentes de sede, et humiles*, los potentes quedan depaestos, y privados de la celestial Leche de la Purissima Madre, y exaltados los himildes â los Pechos castissimos, y dulcissimos.<sup>16</sup>

---

and a door to enter into God. Ibid., 2 (My translation).

<sup>14</sup> Mary as the Immaculate Conception presents the backdrop for understanding why Mary would have particular relationships with each person of the Trinity over any other human being. In other words, Mary conceived without sin adds to her special placement in the hierarchical imagining of the Godhead. Her Immaculate Conception also allows for her to conceive Jesus, but does not refer to the conception of Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> I do wish to make note of the heteronormative assumption of this relationship. This relationship marks how María Anna saw the relationship in her time, but I think caution needs to be heeded when theologizing about the inception of the Incarnate Word and the spouse of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>16</sup> The Divine Spouse praises it's spouse's, Most Holy Mary, eyes and says "*Oculí tui columarum*, your eyes are from a dove and it is for this reason that these little ones are the daughters of the eyes of Mary because of her simplicity and dovelike qualities. In these ways Mary loves, guards, favors, conserves in innocence and cleanliness her chlidren. Why shouldn't we aspire to so much goodness? Who would want to like the greatness of this world which is nothing more than a facade? In truth, this is the greatest saying: *Deposuit potentes de sede, et humiles*, the powerful are left without a pasture and deprived of the celestial milk of the most pure

She is daughter to the first person of the Trinity.<sup>17</sup> While María Anna is not the first to claim this Marian/Trinitarian conception,<sup>18</sup> she finds a necessity to promote this concept which not only makes Mary relationally special to the Trinity but shows Mary working within the Godhead as an equal, as seen in the following quote, "...la que es Madre de Dios, y Reyna de los Cielos, y que en sí encierra la perfeccion criada, y se asemeja a la Divina..."<sup>19</sup> She is similar to divinity in feminine form. María Anna does not spend any time describing any differences between feminine and masculine divinity but as seen in chapter 3, divine qualities, like qualities of a leader were seen as complimentary between masculine and feminine in many of the mystical and theological writings invoking the image of breast milk.

María Anna continues to ascribe special status to Mary which places her very close to the Trinity,

---

mother and exalted are the humble to the most chaste and sweetest breasts. María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 38-41 (My translation).

<sup>17</sup> In my translation of this text in Chapter 4, I use the term "Father" because it is the best translation of the text in it's historical setting, but for theologizing today, this term is seen as sexist where only a father can be a good parent and creator.

<sup>18</sup> For more on this topic see, Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez. *Greater than a Mother's Love*. Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 319.

<sup>19</sup> ...the one who is the Mother of God and Queen of the skies, and in whom is encapsulated perfect creation similar to Divinity [feminine] María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 2-3 (My translation).

...MARIA Santissima tan singular, y unica, que ella sola constituye gerarchia tan sublime, que es inaccessible á toda otra criatura, y solo á su Hijo inferior; y es, como yà se dixom un retrato de la Santissima TRINIDAD, en que se vén (en quanto cabe en pura criatura) su perfeccion, se quedaba esta Planta tan celestial, y este Arbol tan frondoso, esta Vid tan fructisera, esta Fuente tan copiosa, y este Balsamo tan odorisero sin semejante...<sup>20</sup>

María Anna also gives Mary, by consistently calling her “Santissima” or Most Holy, primacy to all of creation because God’s glory shines in her,

“MARIA Santissima como primera antes que todas las cosas criadas, siendo exemplar do todas MARIA Santissima; y como obrar Dios nuestro Señor por sí mismo grandezas, y maravillas, no es mucho, pues es propio de Dios el haverlas, y obrarlas: Quiso dár â MARIA Santissima esta Gloria, en que resplandece mas la del mismo Señor, y la de su Hijo humanado. Digo que se complació toda la Santissima TRINIDAD en que todas sus obras tuvieran respecto â MARIA Santissima, que fueran fructo de su Leche purissima.”<sup>21</sup>

Finally, María Anna shows God’s greatness through God’s lack of need to build a home. God’s choice to build such a home is reflected in Mary,

Edificó la sabiduria casa para sí, Dios nuestro Señor no necessita de casa, no asiento pues aunque criò los Cielos, la tierra, el mar, y los abysmos, todo es como un granillo de mostaza respecto de

---

<sup>20</sup> ...Most Holy Mary, so extraordinary and unique that she alone constitutes a sublime hierarchy that is inaccessible to another creature and only inferior to her Son and as was said a picture of the Most Holy Trinity, in which they see themselves (in which fits a pure creature) its perfection was in this very celestial Plant and this very leafy tree, this very fruitful life, this copious fountain and this fragrant balsam without resemblance... Ibid., 2-3 (My translation).

<sup>21</sup> Most Holy Mary first before all created things, being the exemplar of all; and such great and marvelous work for God our Father is nothing because God is the one to have had them and worked them: Wanted to give Most Holy Mary this glory, which illuminates more of the same Father and of God made human in the son. I say that the Most Holy Trinity was pleased in that all their works would have respect for Most Holy Mary, who would be the fruit of her purist milk. Ibid., 42-43 (My translation).

su grandeza, y ninguna de estas cosas son casa, ni asiento del Señor, aunque todas las llena.<sup>22</sup>

These lines reveal the closest link between Mary and the Godhead by giving the Glory of God's home to Mary, it illuminates both God the Father and God made human in the son. Furthermore, this excerpt of María Anna's work shows the basis of Mary's milk and El Camino de la Leche for understanding *imago Dei* and *imago Christi*.

### ***Imago Dei: Mary as Created Perfect Image***

As stated in chapter 1, one of the problems facing theology today is the understanding of *imago Dei* in general and women's interpretation of this doctrine in particular. Elizabeth Johnson summarizes historical theological problems with the *imago* in the following three ways. First, a gender dualism framed in Hellenistic thought where men were identified with "mind, reason, and spirit" and women identified many times in a lesser way with "bodiliness and passion" to the point of being "projected to be the symbol of evil."<sup>23</sup> Second, Biblical interpretations of both creation stories are primarily based in "a binary pattern of sexual complementarity with its hidden theme of domination."<sup>24</sup> Third, a problem exists in a forced choice of one interpretation over another. For Johnson the

---

<sup>22</sup> God who does not need a house or a seat since God our Lord created the skies, the earth, the sea and the universe, edified a home of wisdom (Mary) for Godself for all is like a mustard seed in respect to God's greatness and none of these things are homes in themselves nor seats of the Father, although God fills them all. *Ibid.*, 42-43 (My translation).

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 70.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.

solution to this last problem appears through the act of women articulating their own experiences of *imago Dei*.<sup>25</sup> Johnson also presents other possible avenues for further exploration in responding to these problems,

Interpreting women's conversion experience in theological terms presses feminist theology toward reclaiming the dignity of the image of God and Christ for women not only in general but in the concrete. To be precise, actual, historical women are created in the image of God and are bearers of the image Christ. This affirmation of women's theological identity opens the door to critical retrieval of overlooked aspects of Scripture and tradition.<sup>26</sup>

While I do not intend to take on all possible areas of necessary work implied in the above quote, I do wish to focus on the last aspect of critical retrieval of a specific part of such traditions, the work of María Anna. My treatment of María Anna's writings will also attend to some of the problematics in the *imago* raised by Johnson. In keeping with Johnson's thought, I believe that development in feminist thought allows us to view the *imago* in particular ways, so my interaction with María Anna's text comes through the lens of feminist perspectives. I wrestle with the following questions: (1) How do I frame the *imago*? (2) What does María Anna say about the relationship between human and divine? (3) What can María Anna's work add to our understanding of the *imago*?

The belief that we are created in the image and likeness of God is fundamentally based in an ever developing relationship between creation and

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 70.

creator. As Elizabeth Johnson gives a basic overview of *imago* interpretations,

The precise content of what it means for human beings to be created in the image of God has shifted in the course of theological history. In Genesis it is located in human stewardship of the earth and its creatures, ruling, using, and caring for the world as representatives of God. Patristic authors interpret the *imago* in a less functional, more essential way as the human race's kinship to divine reality, a relation interrupted by the factual separation of sin. Medieval theologians looked for the image's content in the human soul with its spiritual gift of rationality (*natura intellectualis*), while the Reformers translated it into functional terms and found it in original righteousness, the conformity of the human will with divine will. More recent interpretations have identified the image of God with human creativity, or with human community, or with the likeness of human beings to God in their whole person including bodily form. Some stress the incomplete character of the *imago Dei* since it is the eschatological destiny for which human beings are intended.<sup>27</sup>

The ever developing notion of the relationship between creation and creator becomes interpreted through its historical context. Because I know many gaps exist in the historical context which shaped María Anna's life and thought, I do not claim *imago* interpretations in a primarily historical-critical context. I do claim interpretations based on a conversation between women of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with this woman of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Two possible perspectives, which show the connection between our human existence and relationship with the divine, include LaCugna's and Nanko-Fernández's. La Cugna states, "To know, love, and worship God-for-us, is to

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 71.

know, love, and worship God.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, humanity knows God through knowing God in salvation history. Human perspectives of knowing God are based in culture, context and bodies. Carmen Nanko-Fernández in agreement with La Cugna and building on Johnson’s thoughts of using women’s experience for the basis of *imago Dei* further develops this thought through saying, “I would contend that for Latin@’ theologians, human beings, in all our particularity, constitute revelatory texts. Our God-talk, in our vernacular, requires us to read in nuanced ways the contexts and contours of our situated humanity—in relationship.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, what I present as *imago Dei* stands as a particular way of understanding this mystery. In no way, should this understanding be applied as a universal. Through interpretation of María Anna’s work, I present one way to read women’s experience of being created in the image and likeness of the divine.

Traditional teaching of *imago Dei* promotes the idea that humanity is created in the image and likeness of God. This belief requires some type of knowledge of God. María Anna, a mystic, believed God *per se* to be unknowable. To know what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God, humanity must know God in some way. Therefore, God created Mary, the perfect mirror image of God. She states,

---

<sup>28</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1973), 319.

<sup>29</sup> Carmen Nanko-Fernández, *theologizing en espanglish: Context, Community and Ministry*. (New York: Maryknoll, 2010), 51.

Querido Dios nuestro Señor dares â conocer â los hombres, y siendo, como es, infinito, y por esso inconocible, diòse â conocer por una pura criatura, haciendola su poder, favor, y amor, tan admirable, tan prodigiosa, y rara, que por ella se diera â conocer su Author.<sup>30</sup>

From this perspective, Mary becomes the door through which humanity comes to know God as can be seen in the following,

“...empleando en MARIA Santissima todo su poder, delineando, ô dibujando una Imagen en que resplandeciera toda la Santissima TRINIDAD, poniendola por puerta, y entrada â el conocimiento de Dios, y puerta para entrar â Dios...”<sup>31</sup>

She further states, “...los hombres todo su refugio, amparo, Consuelo, y remedio, Abogada, y Madre, que lo es, y se precia de llamarse Madre de Pecadores.”<sup>32</sup> Mary as mirror of God imagines these traits of God as reflected in Mary. Because humans cannot know God in Godself through this perspective, these traits reflected in Mary become traits reflected in humanity and therefore traits of *imago Dei*.

One of the most important aspects of God made human was Humility understood as smallness and purity. Humility, for María Anna becomes one of

---

<sup>30</sup> Beloved God our Father give humanity knowledge of you. Since you are infinite and for that reason unknowable, you gave humanity this knowledge through one creature making her power, favor, and love so admirable, marvelous and rare that through her, her author would be known. María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 2 (My translation).

<sup>31</sup> ...implementing in Most Holy Mary all of Its power, scripting or drawing an image in which the entire Most Holy Trinity would shine, putting her as the door, the entrance to knowledge of God and a door to enter into God... Ibid., 2 (My translation).

<sup>32</sup> ...to humanity all refuge, shelter, comfort, remedy, lawyer and Mother, which she is, and she prides herself in being named Mother of Sinners. Ibid., 2 (My translation).

the defining traits of *imago Dei* and *imago Christi* in a way that God revealed Godself both through Mary and Incarnate Word,

...el que miró Dios tu humildad: *Quia respexit humilitatem ancille suæ*; participanos esse Principado de tu humildad, danos à gustar, y beber essa humildad, comunicandonosla en la Leche de sus Pechos Sagrados, alcanzandonos inocencia, pequeñez, y pureza, para merecer ser tus hijos, y entrar por Ti (ô Puerta del Cielo) à gozar de tu vista hermosa, y alabar contigo à el que te criò tan Santa, tan admirable, y tan bella.<sup>33</sup>

God made Godself small by making Mary the door to the sky and by becoming human. So, humans should recognize their small size to be able to enjoy God's beauty and glory. I will further develop this thought in the section on *imago Christi*.

Furthermore, Mary encompasses perfect creation because her humble body held the Incarnate Word and her milk created the creator and sustainer. So, through her milk humanity has the right to be created and sustained in order to come to know God. She states,

...Madre de Dios, y Reyna de los Cielos, y que en sí encierra la perfeccion criada, y se asemeja a la Divina, y como hijos tenemos derecho para ser criados, y sustentados con la Leche de sus castissimos Pechos, de la que tenemos mucha necesidad para dexar, y desechar las miserias, que de ser hijos de Eva nos quedaron, y aspirer con la Leche de nuestra amantissima Madre à ser hijos de Dios, ê hijos, suyos, en que consiste toda nuestra felicidad.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> ...God saw your humility, and humanity responds, help us to participate in your principle of humility, make us to like it, to drink of that humility, communicating it in the milk of your Holy Breasts, sharing with us innocence, smallness, and purity so we deserve to be your children and enter through You (Oh Door to the Sky) to enjoy your beautiful vision and praise the One who created you so Holy, admirable and beautiful. Ibid., 38-41 (My translation).

<sup>34</sup> ...Mother of God and Queen of the skies, and in whom is encapsulated perfect creation similar

I do not want to overlook the challenge left by the exchange principle or the virgin/whore dichotomy which has plagued theology and literature alike, and was one of the problems summarized by Elizabeth Johnson. I recognize care must be taken in carrying forward the thought that a pure Mary undid the evil left through original sin from Eve. Close attention to María Anna's words, reveals that she recognizes misery and suffering coming from Eve. Misery and suffering can be seen as a human condition, but through a possible reading of María Anna's context can also be understood as a condition of the relationship between Jesus and Mary through the images of blood and milk, as I will discuss in the *imago Christi* section of this chapter.

Another part of the problem affecting the *imago Dei* according to Elizabeth Johnson, is the use of women's bodies as inferior to men's minds. Yet, María Anna presents a woman's body as the core to the *imago Dei*. Through relationship with Mary, an embodied woman, does humanity come to know God and know what creation in the image and likeness of God means. Furthermore, María Anna does not only focus on Mary's body, but she focuses on a very particular part of her body, her lactating breasts. She states,

Para elogiar el Divino Esposo el vientre de MARIA, le dice, que es como un monton de trigo circumhalado de Azucenas: *Venter tuus sicut acervus tritici vallatus lilijs*, Viene bien esta alabanza, porque

---

to Divinity [feminine] and as children we have the right to be created and sustained with the milk of her most chaste breasts of which we need to leave and undo the miseries which have been left to us by being children of Eve, and we aspire with the Milk of our beloved Mother to be children of God and her children in which our entire happiness exists. Ibid., 2-3 (My translation).

todos sus hijos son pequeñitos, y por eso humildes; así como el trigo pisado, trillado, y traspaleado, así los felices hijos de MARÍA Purísima, siempre andan bajode los pies de todos, se dexan como el trigo trillar; pero merecen ser recogidos, como el grano escogido para trasponerlos, y guararlos en la trox del Cielo; pero el estar carcado de Azucenas, es por la pureza, y gragrancia, que estos sus hijor derraman. Es también MARÍA Santísima comparada â la Paloma, cuyos frutos son pequeños, y abundantes; así esta Soberana Señora, dà copiosos, y dulces frutos de sus Pechos de su sauvissima Leche...<sup>35</sup>

Much of our culture today in the United States of America, sees breasts as sexual organs displayed through various media. Even lactating breasts should be covered when nursing a child. The natural act of nursing a child has become a private and sexualized act. Because of this context, I am forced to think of how women's bodies function as nursing mothers when faced with this image as the primary image to know God and know what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God. The use of this image forces me to stop and think about Mary's body, but also forces me to stop and think about my own body.

Theological discourse about breasts and breast milk in the United States of America in the twenty-first century, because of the cultural sexualization of breasts, may force thoughts of one's own body and embodiment.

---

<sup>35</sup> ...To choose Mary's womb, the Divine Spouse tells her that she is like an enormous amount of lilies: *Venter tuus sicut acervus tritici vallatus lilijs*, she is well praised because all of her children are small and for that reason humble like stepped-on, worn-out and transplanted wheat, so are purest Mary's children happy, always under the feet of all and left to wear like wheat. But, they deserve to be raised like the chosen grain to be transplanted and saved in the large space of the Sky. But, to be loaded with lilies is because of their purity and fragrance that her children overspill. Most Holy Mary is also compared to a dove, whose fruits are small and abundant, so too this sovereign woman gives copious and sweet fruits from her breasts and her delicious milk... Ibid., 38-41 (My translation).

The above quotation from María Anna is also fascinating in that she specifically speaks about coming to know God, the Holy Spirit through Mary's milk. Further exploration for a pneumatology could come from these writings. These explorations will need to fill another volume based on María Anna's writings. But, Mary's relationship with the Holy Spirit found in María Anna's writings do present an important aspect of the relationship between *imago Dei* and *imago Christi*. To further explore the task at hand, I now turn to interpretations of María Anna's writings and the *imago Christi*.

### ***Imago Christi: Human:Mary:God Relationships***

The belief that creation is created in the image and likeness of God defines the *imago Dei*. The *imago Christi* however, is a state of becoming for a person who believes in Christ. As Elizabeth Johnson states, "It is true that central to Christian anthropology has always been the doctrine that human beings, male and female, are created in the image of God, and that in the power of the Spirit members of the community, men and women, are transformed according to the image of Christ."<sup>36</sup> This transformation is one of choice for members of a community, for persons in relationship. As LaCugna states, "The mystery of God is revealed to be a matter of invitation and incorporation into divine life through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit; at the same time it is also invitation and incorporation into new relationship with each other, as we are gathered together

---

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 70

by the Spirit into the body of Christ.”<sup>37</sup> Again, LaCugna sees this incorporation into divine life as relational. She further goes on to state that this relationship is not only for Christians but also a way to theologically speak about the Trinity, “The purpose of the doctrine of the Trinity is to speak as truthfully as possible about the mystery of God who saves us through Christ in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>38</sup> Yet, speaking about the Trinity in this sense has historically encountered challenges from a feminist perspective. As Elizabeth Johnson states,

*Imago Christi*: Due to the androcentric nature of the traditioning process, the understanding that women are likewise christomorphic has been more difficult to grasp. A mentality centered on the priority of men has taken identification with Christ as its own exclusive prerogative, aided by a naive physicalism that collapses the totality of the Christ into the bodily form of Jesus. From the earliest days Christians are indeed marked by the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed, the blessed one. But this confession also witnesses to the insight that through the power of the Spirit the beloved community shares in this Christhood, participates in the living and dying and rising of Christ. Identified with the redemptive acts of Christ’s historical and risen life, women and men together form one body that lives through, into, with and in Christ. Broken by sinfulness though they be, the members of the community are *en christō*, and their own lives assume a christic pattern.<sup>39</sup>

The many parts of the body of Christ, the Christhood, according to Johnson are all found in relationship and in community. Johnson further explains how Christian tradition has manifested this notion,

---

<sup>37</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1973), 319.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 71-72.

The baptismal and martyrdom traditions bear this out in ways that are being newly appreciated. An early Christian baptismal hymn cited by Paul sets the theme as it announces that the old barriers of race, class, and sex are transcended in a new form of identity: 'As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:27-28). Through baptism the Christian is ontologically identified with the death and resurrection of Christ, putting on Christ through the vitalizing power of the Spirit. This happens corporately, through becoming a member of the whole Christ. As a consequence, the baptized are recreated in every dimension of their existence: 'If anyone is in Christ, that one is a new creature' (2 Cor 5:17). Destined for the fullness of participation in Christ in eschatological glory, the Jews, Greeks, slaves, free persons, males and females of the body of Christ are even now equally united with Christ in a union that connotes one flesh: 'Don't you know that your bodies are members of Christ?' (1 Cor 6:15a).<sup>40</sup>

She further states,

If the model for sharing in the image of Christ be one of exact duplication, similar to the making of a xerox copy, and if Christ be reduced to the historical individual Jesus of Nazareth, and if the salient feature about Jesus as the Christ be his male sex, then women are obviously excluded from sharing that image in full. But every one of those suppositions falls short and twists the central testimony of biblical and doctrinal traditions. The guiding model for the *imago Christi* is not replication of sexual features but participation in the life of Christ, which is founded on communion in the Spirit: those who live the life of Christ are icons of Christ. Furthermore, the whole Christ is a corporate personality, a relational reality, redeemed humanity that finds its way by the light of the historical narrative of Jesus' compassionate, liberating love: Christ exists only pneumatologically. Finally, what is essential to the saving good news about Jesus is not his bodily sex but the solidarity of the Wisdom of God in and through this genuine human being with all those who suffer and are lost. To make of the maleness of Jesus Christ a christological principle is to deny the universality of salvation.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

María Anna presents another voice in this tradition where relationship is the basis of the *imago Christi* and both women and men are embodied beings involved in these relations. The focus is not the physicalism of the bodies but rather the importance of relationship and what occurs within relationships. Both the *imago Dei* and the *imago Christi* are based in relationship for María Anna. These images are so rooted in relationship that the Trinity cannot self-communicate with creation without the presence of Mary. Mary, one who was always part of the divine mind but also human, according to María Anna, has the role of relationship within the Trinity itself but, more importantly for creation to know the Trinity and to come to God. El Camino de la Leche presents the path for coming to know God and being in union with God, but el Camino de la Leche also presents a Christ-image based on relationship. The relationship between Jesus and Mary is the *imago Christi* for María Anna. Those who choose to enter into el Camino de la Leche may also become *imago Christi* because they enter into the same relationship as Mary and Jesus. Union with God, through knowledge of God revealed through Mary's breast milk, is the central theme of María Anna's theology. This theme maintains *imago Christi* through el Camino de la Leche as embodied and complexly gendered because one is focused on the relationship of breasts and sucking.

---

El Camino de la Leche presents one way humanity as *imago Dei* lives as *imago Christi*. El Camino de la Leche is primarily relational and circumvents hierarchy because of the direct relationship between Mary and Jesus. María Anna imagines a relational model over even the hierarchical medieval understanding of the supremacy of angels over humans. Mary stands above the angels and humanity below the angels in the platonic hierarchical schema, but through El Camino de la Leche, human beings live in direct relationship with Mary who in turn lives in direct relationship with each of the persons of the Trinity. In María Anna's eyes, these Trinitarian relationships are the perfect image of God for humanity.

María Anna presents Mary as the door to union with God. A way to enter through this door comes through El Camino de la Leche. The most direct way to union with God for María Anna is following El Camino de la Leche. Mary has been given a special place by God, has always been included as part of the plan of salvation in the Godhead, and encapsulates perfect creation similar to Divinity. El Camino de la Leche along with the various roles Mary plays in María Anna's writings give insight into complex embodied images of the Trinity, *imago Dei*, and God's relationship with humanity. From this, two questions arise. First, how is the *imago Christi* conceptualized in María Anna's writings? Second, how does humanity enter into this relationship to become *imago Christi*?

*Imago Christi* for María Anna is not based only in the person of Jesus but in the relationship between Jesus and Mary. Like any mother who nurses a child,

Mary was Jesus' first teacher. She taught him the most basic survival skill to eat from the beginning of his human life. Like Mary was the first to teach Jesus to survive as a human, María Anna states that Mary teaches Jesus how to be Christlike.<sup>42</sup> In the act of nursing Jesus, Mary, like most first-time mothers, probably experienced a sense of being awkward in teaching a child to nurse. She was also probably unsure of herself in terms of how to properly care for this child. She may have also been fearful to hurt unintentionally this child because of the lack of experience of being a parent.

The question of Jesus Christ's dual natures then arises. If a human Mary could teach a human Jesus to be Christlike, then what makes Jesus Christ different, fully human and fully divine? María Anna, prepared for this question, wrote,

dibujando una Imagen en que resplandeciera toda la Santissima TRINIDAD, poniendola por puerta, y entrada à el conocimiento de Dios, y puerta para entrar à Dios, como elegida Madre de Verbo Eterno, y desde entonces, como Madre, se le condediò Leche purissima, acendradissima, y virginal, para sustentar al Criador, y Conservador, que dà *escam omni carni*...Bien pudo Dios sin cacer, ni tener Madre, ni ser sustentado, como los demás niños, aparecer en el Mundo Hombre, y Dios.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 43-44.

<sup>43</sup> scripting or drawing an image in which the entire Most Holy Trinity would shine, putting her as the door, the entrance to knowledge of God and a door to enter into God, as the chosen Mother of the Eternal Verb and since then as a mother was conceded to her the purest and virginal milk to sustain the Creator and Sustainer...God would have been fine without being born or having a mother, nor been sustained like every other child, appearing in the world as human and God. Ibid., 2-3 (My translation).

If Mary first taught Jesus to be Christlike<sup>44</sup>, how does María Anna deal with the fully human/fully divine question? Jesus learns to be Christlike but conquers death by resurrection. Mary prepared Jesus for these events. Mary is both divine mother and earthly mother because she was always a thought in Godhead and a special hierarchy all her own. Mary is necessary for communication with humanity. God chose to become human through Mary because of this communication. Because God could have conquered death without becoming human, the Christology found in María Anna's writings is one of a Christ who is fully human and fully divine. Because Mary was necessary for Jesus to learn to be Christlike, the relationship between Mary and Jesus becomes what leads to creation, nurturing and sanctification, so the *imago Christi* is this relationship not just the person of Jesus. In other words, for Christians to come closer to God, to become *imago Christi* is based in relationship, particularly with Mary through El Camino de la Leche. Christians also become *imago Christi* through human relationship in María Anna's thought because she presents a very human relationship of Mary and Jesus where Jesus learns as a human to be Christlike from Mary. What then describes some of the aspects of *imago Christi* for María Anna?

Nurturing, pain, suffering, learning, sharing, embodiment and humility serve as the main aspects of the *imago Christi*, in María Anna's work. Nurturing, sharing and learning seem the most obvious through the creation and exchange

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 228 – 229.

of breast milk from mother to child. A mother teaches a child to eat through the process of nursing, a process which may be awkward at times. A mother also nourishes and sustains a child through this process, so Mary accomplished all of these in her relationship with Jesus.

Mary also experienced pain. The act of breast feeding usually brings about physical pain for a woman. First, in the process of breast feeding, a woman usually experiences pain as breast milk fills the breast. Also, a woman may experience pain if a child does not latch properly, causing sore nipples. A child biting the breast may also cause pain. Furthermore, a woman experiences pain when her breast milk dries and her body returns to a pre-lactating place. Specifically in medieval thought the pain associated with breast milk had other physiological connections, as described in Chapter 3, breast milk was believed to be processed blood, which had nurtured the child in the womb. As María Anna states,

Pues si avia de tener casa Dios nuestro Señor? Se avia de edificarla para sî? Razon era, que ante todas las cosas la eligiera, y que todo quanto criara fuera para adorno de esta casa. Assi â MARIA Santissima la vemos adornada en la descripcion, que de esta Señora hace San Juan, con el Sol, la Luna, y Estrellas, y su mayor grandeza es tener en su vientre por fructo suyo à el Hijo de Dios Eterno, vestido de su misma Carne, y que avia de sustentar con su Sangre convertida en Leche suavissima.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup>Should God have had a home? Should God edify it for Godself? The reason was that before all created things would choose her and all of creation would adorn this home. In this way, we see Most Holy Virgin Mary adorned with St. John's description made of this Lady, with the sun, the moon and the stars and her greatness comes through having in her womb as her own fruit the Son of the Eternal God, dressed in Mary's same flesh and who she would sustain through her blood converted into delicious milk. Ibid., 42-43.

In the relationship between Mary and Jesus, this connection between milk and blood increases in significance with the side Jesus is pierced on the cross when his side has been pierced. The blood that flowed at this event is linked back to the blood Jesus shares with Mary in the womb and through the breast milk. In this sense, the suffering of Jesus on the cross is also Mary's suffering. Seeing the *imago Christi* as this relationship between Mary and Jesus rather than only through the person of Jesus also addresses another issue raised by twentieth century feminists. The notion of *kenosis* within the *imago Christi* has been raised as problematic throughout several feminist explorations. The problem of a Christ who self-empties presented to peoples, particularly women, who already may hold little or no sense of self can be used to create an oppressive situation. But if one reads this self-emptying on the part of the Incarnate Word as a way for the Incarnate Word to be filled with Mary's breast milk, then the process of *kenosis* is two-fold. First, the notion of self-emptying stands. But this first part cannot be separated from the second part of the filling with knowledge which begins and ends through breast milk and its connection to blood. So, the self-emptying Incarnate Word must become filled with this breast milk to be nurtured and sustained in human life. This life then leads to the moment on the cross, the blood shed by Jesus connected to the breast milk, blood and tears shed by Mary. These tears also connect the relationship between Mary and Jesus with the rest of humanity. As María Anna states,

Bienaventurados llama el Señor á los Pobres de espiritu, â los que

lloran, à los mansos, pacíficos. Y MARIA Santísima dice: *Beati qui custodunt vias meas. Beatus homo qui audit me, etc.* Estos à quien MARIA Santísima dice que son bienaventurados, porque guardan, y vàn por sus caminos, y porque oyen sus palabras: Estos son los mismos à quienes Jesu-Christo nuestro Señor lla bienaventurados, porque estos son los hijos de MARIA, que chuparon, y bebieron de sus Pechos la pobreza de espíritu, porque si no la tuvieran, y estuvieran vacíos de todas las cosas, no cupieran en ellos las riquezas, que esta Leche comunica; si no fueran mansos, como avian de ser hijos de la que es alabada por singular entre todos los mansos? Y esta, mansedumbre es muy propia de los hijos de MARIA, Paloma sin hiel, como avia de criar à los que no fueran mansos? Pues el manso Cordero JESUS dexó en sus Pechos tanta mansedumbre, que nunca tuvo ni una leve sombra de ira, ni aún con los que maltrataron, è hirieron à su querido Hijo JESUS. Son tambien hijos de MARIA los que lloran, porque acompañan con sus lagrimas las de los ojos de su amantísima Madre MARIA Santísima, que tan abundantes las derramò en la Muerte, y Passion de JESUS nuestra salud, y vida.<sup>46</sup>

María Anna articulates a connection between Mary's breasts and Mary's eyes. This connection becomes extremely significant when interpreting an *imago Christi* from María Anna's work.

Admirable es Dios nuestro Señor en todas sus obras, como resplandece la Sabiduría con que las crió; la providencia, con que las ordenò: la bondad, con que las conserva. Admiranos vér esos Cielos, y asómbranos vér la tierra, porque desde el Planeta mayor

---

<sup>46</sup> The Lord calls the following beatified: the poor in spirit, those who cry, the bellwethers, and the peaceful. *Beatus homo qui, audit, me, etc.* These whom Most Holy Mary called beatified because they stand guard and follow her ways and listen to her words: These are the same whom Jesus Christ our Lord calls beatified because they are children of Mary who suck and drink from her breasts the poverty of the spirit, because if they did not have it and were empty of all things, they would not fit in the riches that this milk communicates, for if they were not bellwethers like they should be as children as the one who is praised above all the bellwethers? And this meekness is very appropriate of the children of Mary, dove without boundaries, how should she not raise those that are bellwethers? The bellwether Shepherd Jesus left in her breasts so much meekness that it never had any weight of wrath, not even to those who abused and hurt her son Jesus. Those who cry are also children of Mary because they accompany their tears the tears shed from their beloved Mother Most Holy Mary, who shed so many during the death and passion of Jesus, our health and life. Ibid., 47 (My translation).

del Cielo hasta la hojita verde, y gusanito de la tierra, tiene tanto porque alabar la Omnipotencia de Dios, su Sabiduría, Bondad, etc. pero todo lo hizo con un *Fiat*, pero en llegando a la obra de la Encarnación de Verbo Eterno, quedan suspensos los entendimientos Angelicos, y humanos, y no aciertan a discurrir como pudo amar Dios tanto a el hombre, que se hiciera como uno de ellos para librarlo del mal do que avia enfermado. Es posible, que teniendo poder infinito para sanarlos por tantos medios, este eligió, este cogió de humanarse: Què es esto Dios Hombre? El Hombre Dios! Què misericordia es esta? Quien se atreviera a pensarlo, ni en que pensamiento pudiera caber? Solo aquella misericordia infinita, solo aquella Sabiduria pudo trazar la salud de los hombres por medio tan asombrosamente misericordioso, piadoso, y amoroso.

Crió Dios a el hombre con libre alvedrio para mucho bien suyo, porque siendo libre merece con la buena aplicación de su libertad para honrar, y servir a su Criador, más usó tan mal de esta libertad, que con ella se despeñó, y perdió... Para vér, y conocer mejor esta fineza, este amor grande de Dios, hemos de vér los males de que nos librò, y los bienes que nos ganó... O palabras en que se comprendían todos los males de que nos librò! Consumió el Hijo de Dios humanado la prevaricación, puso fin al pecado, y quitó la maldad. O que libertad: O que bienes puso en lugar de estos males la Justicia Eterna! Entendido todo el bien obrar por la Justicia, y esta eterna, porque el que assi obra, eternamente goza esta Justicia que guardò... Levantò el Señor a los caídos, sanó a los enermos, y toda carne refloreció, se honró, y remedio... Este es el fructo que en est Misterio hemos de coger bebido de los Pechos de nuestra Madre MARIA Santissima, vér los males de que nos librò, y los bienes que nos ganó el Hijo de Dios encarnado en MARIA Virgen, Bebiendo de los Pechos de la Divina Madre esta ciencia, gozarèmos colmados fructos, porque el alme que se alexó del mal, y se exercitò en el bien, y llegando a mirar yá como en salvo, y seguro los peligrosos passos en que anduvo...<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> God our Lord is admirable in all God's works like wisdom shines with all who she created, divine providence with the ones whom she ordained, kindness with all who conserve it. Let us admire seeing the sky and let us astonish as we see the earth because the largest planet in the sky to the smallest green leaf and smallest worm of the earth have so much for which to praise the omnipotence of God, God's wisdom, kindness, etc. But everything was made by a *Fiat*. But, when it came to the work of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, remaining in suspense without full understanding both Angels and humans without ascertaining how God could love humans so much that God would become like one of them to liberate them of the evil that had diseased them. Is it possible that having infinite power to heal them through so many means, God chose to become human? Who is this God-Human? The Human God! What

Jesus, Mary and humanity are directly connected through relationship.

The notion of humility in the *imago Christi* is prevalent in the above relationship of Jesus, Mary and humanity within María Anna's work,

...parecerà Madre de los grandes, pero no es sino Madre de los pequeñitos; porque no fueran tan grandes, sino se huvieran hecho pequeños para tomar, y beber la Leche de MARIA Santissima, porque esta Señora, y Madre nuestra, es tan humilde, que no caben entre sus brazos, ni dà sus Pechos à los que en su estimacion son grandes, andan en zancos, y quieren dominar à los demás...Cria à JESUS...se llamò á sí mismo *Gusano*, y el deshecho de los hombres; pues como darà sus Pechos à los que siendo menos que gusanos, se inchan, y quieren estar sobre todos? No, no pequeñitos son los hijos de MARIA Santissima, estos gozan sus favores, sus regalos, y su Leche Purissima, y Santissima, con que mysticamente los alimenta, y hermana con el manso Cordero; y humilde JESUS su Hijo primogenito.<sup>48</sup>

---

mercy is this? Who would dream to imagine, nor in whose thought could it fit? Only that infinite mercy, that Wisdom could draw upon the health of humans through astonishingly merciful, pious and loving ways.

God created humanity with free will for humanity's own good because being free deserves with the good application of one's liberty to honor and serve one's creator. But, humanity used this liberty so poorly so as to plummet and lose... To see and understand better this benefit of love, this great love of God, we should see the evils from which we were liberated and the goods which were won for us...O words in which we understand all of the evils from which we were liberated! The Son of God made flesh consumed prevarication, put an end to sin and took away evil. O what liberty: O what goodness put in its place these evils, Eternal Justice! Knowing all goodness to work for justice, is eternal, because the one who works, eternally enjoys this justice which is preserved...The Lord raised the fallen, healed the sick, and all incarnation flourished again, was honored again, and healed...This is the fruit which we are to glean through drinking from Most Holy Mary's breast, see the evils from which we were liberated and the goodness that was won for us the Son of God incarnated through the Virgin Mary, Drinking from the Breasts of the Divine Mother is science, let us enjoy these overwhelming fruits because the soul which put away all evil and exalted the good and coming to see in one safe and secure previously dangerous steps one had taken...Ibid., 125-127 (My translation).

<sup>48</sup>She may seem to be the mother of the grand but they would not be so grand had they not been made small to take and drink Most Holy Mary's milk because this woman and our mother is so humble that those who believe themselves grand, are in power and want to dominate others and are like worms do not fit in her arms...She nurtured Jesus ... who called himself a worm

While the characteristic of humility was deeply embedded in much of the culture of Baroque New Spain in general, humility to María Anna seems particularly significant. As stated in chapter 2, she lived in a lower-social class after the death of her father and entered the convent without a dowry. She probably knew the complexities of those who try to make themselves greater than others because of similar social struggles. She spends arduous time addressing the notion of those trying to make themselves great and the need for humility in the second book of *las Marabillas*, for example,

Estos son los mismos â quienes Jesu-Christo nuestro Señor Ila bienaventurados, porque estos son los hijos de MARIA, que chuparon, y bebieron de sus Pechos la pobreza de espiritu, porque si no la tuvieran, y estuvieran vacios de todas las cosas, no cupieran en ellos las riquezas, que esta Leche comunica; si no fueran mansos, como avian de ser hijos de la que es alabada por singular entre todos los mansos? Y esta, mansedumbre es muy propia de los hijos de MARIA, Paloma sin hiel, como avia de criar â los que no fueran mansos? Pues el manso Cordero JESUS dexó en sus Pechos tanta mansedumbre, que nunca tuvo ni una leve sombra de ira, ni aún con los que maltrataron, e hirieron â su querido Hijo JESUS. Son tambien hijos de MARIA los que lloran, porque acompañan con sus lagrimas las de los ojos de su amantísima Madre MARIA Santissima, que tan abundantes las derramò en la Muerte, y Passion de JESUS nuestra salud, y vida.<sup>49</sup>

---

and he absolved humanity. So how shall Mary give her breasts to those who are less than worms that inch their way to dominate others? No, no, little ones are the children of Most Holy Mary, they reap her favors, her gifts, and her purist and holiest milk with which she mystically nourishes them. She is the sister the bellwether Shepherd. Humble Jesus is her first-born son. *Ibid.*, 38-41 (My translation).

<sup>49</sup> These are the same whom Jesus Christ our Lord calls beatified because they are children of Mary who suck and drink from her breasts the poverty of the spirit, because if they did not have it and were empty of all things, they would not fit in the riches that this milk communicates, for if they were not bellwethers like they should be as children as the one who is praised above all the bellwethers? And this meekness is very appropriate of Mary's children, dove without boundaries, how should she not raise those that are bellwethers? The bellwether Shepherd Jesus left in her breasts so much meekness that it never had any weight of wrath, not even to

This allusion of Incarnate Word as a worm also links this text to those of to Bernard of Clairvaux who uses the same image. So, María Anna continues to remind the reader that she is building upon Christian traditions. Furthermore, this quotation shows a strong notion of embodiment through the notions of sucking and drinking and that humanity will not reap the rewards offered through the *imago Christi* without sucking and drinking Mary's breast milk. While María Anna does not expect humanity to physically suck on Mary's breasts, the use of this imagery makes the reader and the one following *El Camino de la Leche* aware of one's own body in relationship to this spiritual path. Following this spiritual path or any spiritual path is a choice of free will in María Anna's writings, "Crió Dios â el hombre con libre alvedrio para mucho bien suyo, porque siendo libre merece con la buena aplicación de su libertad para honrar, y servir â su Criador."<sup>50</sup> Because humanity lives as a complexity of genders, and humans choose to enter the *El Camino de la Leche* as embodied persons, this Jesus:Mary:Humanity relationship leading to a God:Mary:Humanity image becomes one of complex gendering.

María Anna presents a perspective of God's self-revelation through an explicit description of Mary's body, Jesus' body and other human bodies who

---

those who abused and hurt her son Jesus. Those who cry are also children of Mary because they accompany their tears the tears shed from their beloved Mother Most Holy Mary, who shed so many during the death and passion of Jesus, our health and life. Ibid., 47 (My translation).

<sup>50</sup> God created humanity with free will for humanity's own good because being free deserves with the good application of one's liberty to honor and serve one's creator. Ibid., 125-127 (My translation).

choose to follow El Camino de la Leche to come to know God and ultimately come to union with God. The human person is never asked to leave the human body to enter into this spiritual path of El Camino de la Leche. But, humanity is encouraged to use the body, particularly through the actions of sucking, drinking and crying to reach this union with God.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

This dissertation has presented an original contribution to the academic field of Theology, specifically Constructive Theology in at least four ways. First, it has initiated the retrieval of a powerful female theologian's voice from seventeenth and eighteenth century Mexico, an extensive area of historical and theological thought which has been underexplored in the United States of America. Analysis of María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's writings has provided insight into this woman's official authority during her time period, including official ecclesial authority. The retrieval work of this dissertation presents only the beginning steps necessary to integrate María Anna's writings fully into the English-speaking academy. For possibilities for deeper study in this area, see the first and second points under "Directions for Future Developments" of this chapter.

Second, this project has engaged María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's work to develop theological insights and further expand understandings about notions of *imago Dei* and *imago Christi* through María Anna's use of the image of Mary's breast milk. María Anna's writings present a historical perspective in which Mary is placed in direct relationship with the entire Godhead as well as with each individual part of the Trinity, i.e. daughter to the father, mother to the

son and spouse to the spirit. Based on these writings, I have argued that Mary holds primacy over other humans in ways that make her an equal to the various persons of the Trinity as well as part of the entire Godhead. She is the door to humanity's knowledge of the Trinity, the foundation of salvation. El Camino de la Leche, María Anna's designated spiritual path, presents one way to engage the Trinity as a spiritual path that endows an embodied female perspective as the one responsible for knowledge of God and the path to salvation. In doing so, it offers a rich alternative to views of disembodied, misogynistic perspectives and images.

Third, this dissertation revealed historical complexities of gendering images of God, *imago Dei* and God's relationship with humanity. Critical engagement with the work of Cistercian writers, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, as well as other medieval thinkers who also used the image of breast milk within their theologies, has presented embodied perspectives of men sharing with men, women sharing with women, as well as men and women sharing with one another. At the core of the thought of those writers who engage the image of breast milk, one finds relationality. Thus, the focus of those engaged in the exchange of breast milk becomes one of relationships with all of their complexities and limitations.

Fourth, this dissertation has provided historical and theological background to help address theoretical and pastoral needs of Catholic churches in the USA. At least forty percent of the Catholic Church in the USA is Latin@,

with the largest constituency claiming Mexico as its country of origin. As a responsible scholar/practitioner/advocate, I find retrieving figures from historical settings in Latin America essential and necessary to further develop our theologies and pastoral approaches for Latin@s, the current majority of the Catholic Church in the USA. I hope to use reflections I have presented in this project not only in academic settings, but also within parish communities and university ministries to highlight a woman's voice from Latin America who was a writer, scholar and theologian, who possessed official and unofficial authority within ecclesial structures. She was a woman whose writings were not only deemed important in her time by her local bishop, but also continue to be important in our time because of the new possibilities her thought offers.

### **Directions for Future Development**

This project has opened a realm of possibilities for my future work with María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's writings and *Vida*. First, as a companion project to this dissertation, I intend to translate the entire text of las *Marabillas* from eighteenth century Spanish to twenty-first century English for use in the English speaking academy. I hope to encourage others to interact with her cultural, spiritual and theological writings through this project by extending the translations I have made for this dissertation to complete the project of translations of María Anna's writings. Because these texts may be used in scholarship of other disciplines such as women's studies, Latin@ studies,

American studies possible funding exists for such a translation project through the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Second, from a historical perspective, the composition of a critical commentary of María Anna's work is necessary as no such commentary currently exists. The second chapter of this dissertation will serve as the basis of such a commentary. Third, relating to official ecclesial structures, chapter three of this dissertation may be extended to a larger work on women's authority in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Mexico to develop further my emerging theory concerning women's voices, who have been silenced through history, but have indeed existed in various places and at different historical moments. In other words, women have been allowed to write, be leaders and have official authority within Roman Catholic Church structures in history but these women, their stories, and their writings for numerous reasons have not been carried forward into scholarly discourses.

Fourth, reflections on devotions to Mary from Mexican and Mexican-American perspectives<sup>1</sup> need to be further explored because Guadalupe has been the central area of Marian research among Latin@s. Throughout this dissertation process I have wondered how and why Our Lady of Guadalupe became such a national symbol for Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican-Americans

---

<sup>1</sup> I also find a majority of non-Latin@s who write about Latin@ Marian devotions also focus on Guadalupe as an overarching uniting image of Mary for Latin@s. Pope John Paul II declared Guadalupe the Mother of the Americas. Blogs, articles and books have made claims of Guadalupe being a general marker for Latin@s. These assumptions need to be challenged and further clarified both from within and beyond Latin@ communities. Allowing such assumptions to remain continues a flattening of the polyphonic and multivalent experiences, religious traditions and histories which exist within Latin@ communities.

today, and what had happened to devotions such as those to Maria de la Leche. Has Guadalupe colonized other Marian devotions? I see two trajectories for projects stemming from this initial question. One trajectory would follow Marian traditions of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to question if and how Guadalupe has colonized other Marian devotions. The second trajectory would explore Marian devotions throughout Latin America posing some of the following questions: Did other writers see Mary in a similar vein as María Anna? Did other writers grant Mary the primacy within the Trinitarian cosmology as María Anna did? Taking this project one step further, what does this historical knowledge and understanding mean for various Latin@ Marian devotions in the United States of America? Does this knowledge and understanding differently inform assumptions made by other groups of scholars, such as predominantly white feminists, who have interpreted Marian devotions as primarily subservient?

Fifth, from an ecclesial perspective, analyzing the *imago* from María Anna's theology raises significant questions for notions of communion, community and Eucharist. If both *imago Dei* and *imago Christi* are found in relationships among and between persons rather than individuals, then further investigation and reflection upon these concepts with particular attention to Eucharistic theology may lead to new developments of the concept of *in persona Christi*.

Finally, María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio presents only one of a number of convent nuns who wrote during the colonial period in Latin America.

Some of the original writings and *Vidas* from these women still exist today and merit attention and translation for the Academy and churches of the United States of America. While this work remains a difficult puzzle, many times filled with more questions than answers, I hope the contribution of this project inspires others to investigate and work in this area. As one can see, my work with María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio's writings, theology and *Vida* has only begun!

APPENDIX A  
SELECT TRANSLATIONS  
FROM LAS *MARABILLAS*

María Anna's texts and translations of these texts lay a framework for development of Trinitarian thought, *Imago Dei*, and *Imago Christi* based in her writings. I have chosen these chapters from *Las Marabillas* because they best show, explain and summarize María Anna's perspectives on the above topics in these texts. The first excerpt details Mary's role within the Trinity and creation. The second excerpt explains María Anna's reason for choosing the image of Mary's breast milk as the basis for *Las Marabillas*. The third excerpt presents the relationship between breast milk and the Trinity. The fourth excerpt focuses on the benefits of Mary's breast milk for humanity. The last excerpt summarizes reasons why Christians should follow El Camino de la Leche. For ease in reading, I have placed the text in two columns. The left column holds the original Spanish text from the 1758 publication of *Las Marabillas*. My translations of this text consume the right column.

Texto Original de 1758	English Translation of Original Text from 1758
<p>Libro I Capitulo I</p> <p>“A Mayor Honra, Y Gloria de Dios, y de Maria Santissima.”<sup>1</sup></p> <p>“Querido Dios nuestro Señor dares â conocer â los hombres, y siendo, como es, infinito, y por esso inconocible, diòse â conocer por una pura criatura, haciendola su poder, favor, y amor, tan admirable, tan prodigiosa, y rara, que por ella se diera â conocer su Author: con esto se dice ser MARIA Santissima Madre de Dios, Reyna, y Señora de todo lo ciado, elegida, escogida, y criada <i>ab initio, et ante secula</i>, que saliò de la boca del Altissimo, como primogenita de todas las criaturas, granando la primacia à los Angeles, y</p>	<p>Book I Chapter I</p> <p>To the Greatest Honor and Glory of God and Most Holy Mary.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>Beloved God our Father give humanity knowledge of you. Since you are infinite and for that reason unknowable, you gave humanity this knowledge through one creature making her power, favor, and love so admirable, marvelous and rare that through her, her author would be known. With this is said that Most Holy Mary is the Mother of God, Queen and Woman of all of creation, selected, chosen and created since the beginning and without sin, who came from the mouth of the Most Holy, with</p>

<sup>1</sup> María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio. *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad* (Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 (My translation).

<p>á los hombres; porque fuè ideada en la mente divina ante todas las demàs obras de sus manos, empleando en MARIA Santissima todo su poder, delineando, ô dibujando una Imagen en que resplandeciera toda la Santissima TRINIDAD, poniendola por puerta, y entrada à el conocimiento de Dios, y puerta para entrar â Dios, como elegida Madre de Verbo Eterno, y desde entonces, como Madre, se le condediò Leche purissima, acendradissima, y virginal, para sustentar al Criador, y Conservador, que dà <i>escam omni carni</i>...Bien pudo Dios sin cacer, ni tener Madre, ni ser sustentado, como los demás niños, aparecer en el Mundo Hombre, y Dios, pues á Adan lo formò, y sacò de sus manos perfectos; pero como todas las obras de Dios tienen dos fines principales, que son: Gloria suya, y</p>	<p>primacy to all creatures, taking primacy over the angels and to humanity because she was an idea in the divine mind before all of the other works of these hands, implementing in Most Holy Mary all of Its power, scripting or drawing an image in which the entire Most Holy Trinity would shine, making her the door, the entrance to knowledge of God and a door to enter into God, as the chosen Mother of the Eternal Verb and since then as a mother was conceded to her the purest and virginal milk to sustain the Creator and Sustainer...God would have been fine without being born or having a mother, nor been sustained like every other child, appearing in the world as human and God. After all, God took from God's perfect hands and formed Adam, like all of</p>
---	--

<p>provecho de sus criaturas, assi en esta obra de la Encarnacion miró à estos dos fines, porque de tener el Verbo, como Hombre, Madre Virgen; assi como tiene en quanto Dios Virgen Padre, tuvo el Padre la Gloria de tener tal Hija como MARIA, y el Hijo la Gloria de tener Divina Madre, y el Espiritu Santo tan perfecta, y unica, Esposa, y los hombres todo su refugio, amparo, Consuelo, y remedio, Abogada, y Madre, que lo es, y se precia de llamarse Madre de Pecadores. Este orden, y hermosura, que tan maravillosamente resplandece en la obra de la Encarnacion del Hijo de Dios, nos descubre, no solo la Sabiduria de Dio, sino su amor; porque naciendo de Madre Virgen, gozamos el incomparable beneficio de tener derecho à ser hijos de la que es Madre de Dios, y Reyna de los Cielos, y que</p>	<p>God's works have two principle ends, which are: God's Glory and benefit for God's creatures, so too in this work of the Incarnation, God saw these two ends because to have the Word made human, Virgin Mother as a Virgin God Father, the Father had the Glory to have a daughter like Mary and a son the Glory to have a Divine Mother, and the Holy Spirit a perfect and unique wife and to humanity all refuge, shelter, comfort, remedy, lawyer and Mother, which she is, and she prides herself in being named Mother of Sinners. This order and beauty which miraculously shines in the work of the Incarnation of the Son of God, discovers for us, not only God's wisdom but also God's love because being born of a Virgin Mother, we all enjoy the incomparable benefit of being</p>
---	--

en sí encierra la perfeccion criada, y se asemeja a la Divina, y como hijos tenemos derecho para ser criados, y sustentados con la Leche de sus castissimos Pechos, de la que tenemos mucha necesidad para dexar, y desechar las miserias, que de ser hijos de Eva nos quedaron, y aspirer con la Leche de nuestra amantissima Madre à ser hijos de Dios, ê hijos, suyos, en que consiste toda nuestra felicidad. Orden, y providencia de Dios muy singular fuè esta para todo nuestro remedio; porque siendo, como es MARIA Santissima tan singular, y unica, que ella sola constituye gerarchia tan sublime, que es inaccessible á toda otra criatura, y solo á su Hijo inferior; y es, como yà se dixom un retrato de la Santissima TRINIDAD, en que se vén (en quanto cabe en pura criatura) su perfeccion,

children of the one who is the Mother of God and Queen of the skies, and in whom is encapsulated perfect creation similar to Divinity [feminine] and as children we have the right to be created and sustained with the milk of her most chaste breasts of which we need to leave and undo the miseries which have been left to us by being children of Eve, and we aspire with the Milk of our beloved Mother to be children of God and her children in which our entire happiness exists. God's order and providence were very exceptional in her for all of our remedy because being, as is Most Holy Mary, so extraordinary and unique that she alone constitutes a sublime hierarchy that is inaccessible to another creature and only inferior to her Son and as was said a picture of the

<p>se quedaba esta Planta tan celestial, y este Arbol tan frondoso, esta Vid tan fructisera, esta Fuente tan copiosa, y este Balsamo tan odorisero sin semejante: Pues què remedio?<sup>3</sup></p>	<p>Most Holy Trinity, in which they see themselves (in which fits a pure creature) its perfection was in this very celestial Plant and this very leafy tree, this very fruitful life, this copious fountain and this fragrant balsam without resemblance: What great remedy?<sup>4</sup></p>
<p>LIBRO I CAPITULO X</p> <p>“MARIA Santissima dà sus Pechos, y sustenta con su Leche purissima â los pequeñitos.”<sup>5</sup></p> <p>“La via lacteal, ô camino de leche, que vemos en el Cielo, se forma de menudas Estrellas tan unidas, que hace essa via. Camino, y via lacteal</p>	<p>Book I Chapter X</p> <p>Most Holy Mary gives her breasts and sustains the little ones with her purest milk<sup>6</sup></p> <p><i>La via lacteal</i> or The Path of Milk which we see in the sky, formed by many very united minute stars which makes that path and milky way forms</p>

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 2-3 (My translation).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 38 (My translation).

forma MARIA Santissima para el Cielo con la Leche de sus Pechos; pero no vãn por èl sino es los pequiñitos. Se dixo arriba, que MARIA Santissima es Madre, y tiene por fructo de su Leche candidissima los altos Montes de los Patriarchas, y Prophetas, las elevadas Columnas de los Apostoles, los fortissimos Martyres, los Pontifices, y prelados de la Iglesia, los ilustres, y sapientissimos Doctores, los excelentes Confessores, las candidas, y herosas Virgenes, y todos los hijos de Dios son hijos de MARIA; parecerà Madre de los grandes, pero no es sino Madre de los pequeñitos; porque no fueran tan grandes, sino se huvieran hecho pequeños para tomar, y beber la Leche de MARIA Santissima, porque esta Señora, y Madre nuestra, es tan humilde, que no caben entre sus brazos, ni dà sus Pechos â los que en

Most Holy Mary for the sky with the milk from her breasts. But they do not travel the way. It is the little ones who travel the way. It was said above that Most Holy Mary is mother and has by the fruit of her most chaste milk the extremes of the hills and the patriarchs and prophets, the elevated columns of the Apostles, the martyrs, the Popes and prelates of the Church, the lustrous and most knowledgeable Doctors, the excellent Confessors, the chaste and heroic virgins and all of the children of God who are Mary's children. She may seem to be the mother of the grand but they would not be so grand had they not been made small to take and drink Most Holy Mary's milk because this woman and our mother is so humble that those who believe themselves grand, are in

su estimacion son grandes, andan en zancos, y quieren dominar â los demás...Cria â JESUS...se llamò á si mismo *Gusano*, y el deshecho de los hombres; pues como darà sus Pechos â los que siendo menos que gusanos,se inchan, y quieren estar sobre todos? No, no pequeñitos son los hijos de MARIA Santissima, estos gozan sus favores, sus regalos, y su Leche Purissima, y Santissima, con que mysticamente los alimenta, y hermana con el manso Cordero; y humilde JESUS su Hijo primogenito.

Como MARIA Santissima es Madre de los hijos de Dios, y juntamente es Puerta escarlercida de los Cielos, por donde han de entrar, es fuerza, que para gozar una, y otra dicha nos hagamos pequeños, porque si no, todo lo perderemos; por esso

leadership and want to dominate others and like worms do not fit in her arms...She nurtured Jesus ... who called himself a worm and he absolved humanity. So how shall Mary give her breasts to those who are less than worms inch their way to dominate others? No, no, little ones are the children of Most Holy Mary, they reap her favors, her gifts, and her most pure and holiest milk with which she mystically nourishes them. She is the sister the bellwether Shepherd. Humble Jesus is her first-born son.

Most Holy Mary is mother to the children of God and jointly the stairway and door to the sky through which they should enter. It is strength that we make ourselves small to enjoy one or another saying because if we don't we will lose all. For this

Jesu-Christo nuestro Señor su Hijo nos avisó en su Evangelio por San Mathèo, que si no nos convertiamos, y haciamos como un parvulíto, no entraríamos en el Reyno de los Cielos, donde hemos de advertir la necesidad grande, que tenemos de esta pequeñez, pues para gustar la Leche de MARIA, y entrar por elle como Puerta del Cielo en èl, es precisso, y necessario apocarnos, y hacernos como unos gusanillos; el que fuere, ô se hiciere mas pequeño, esse sera mayor en el Reyno de los Cielos. Los parvulos siempre procuran andar por lo llano, y si hallan pies agenos en que ir, no lo escusan, porque conocen la seguridad que se encentran; assi los hijos de MARIA Santissima, como son pequeñitos, escusanse de lo alto, y se gozan en lo bajo; si hallan â quien obedecer, rindense luego, y vãn en

reason, Jesus Christ our Lord, her son, advised in Matthew's Gospel that if we do not convert and make ourselves into a tiny worm we will not enter into the Kingdom of the Sky where we are to be warned of the necessity to be grand that we are to be small to like Mary's milk and enter into through it to the Door of the Sky. For this precise and necessary reason we must diminish ourselves and make ourselves like little worms because the smallest shall be greatest in the Kingdom of the Sky. Worms always make sure to travel through what is level and if they find foreign feet, they do not excuse it because they know the security in which they enter. So too, Most Holy Mary's children because they are small, they have excused themselves from the high and they

brazos ajenos, porque no se fían de sí, ni se aseguran en su propio juicio, y dictamen, dicen con su amantissima Madre: *Fiat secundum verbum tuum*, andan en humildad con este propio conocimiento, y merecen los agrados de su humildissima Madre, y gozan sus caricias, y regalos.

Alaba el Divino Esposo los ojos de su Esposa MARIA Santissima, y le dice: *Oculí tui columbarum*, tus ojos son de Paloma; y es porque estos pequeñitos son las niñas de los ojos de MARIA por su sencillez columbina; ass los ama, los guarda, y favorece, conservadolos en inocencia, y limpieza. Como no aspiramos â tanto bien? Quien podrá yà gustar de

enjoy themselves in that which is low. If they find who they need to obey and give themselves over and they go in foreign arms, they do not betray themselves because they are not secured by their own justice and dictate, they say with their Most Holy Mother "*Fiat secundum verbum tuum*" be humble with this very knowledge and deserve the graces of your most humble Mother and enjoy her caresses and gifts.

The Divine Spouse praises it's spouse's, Most Holy Mary, eyes and says *Oculí tui columarum*, your eyes are from a dove and it is for this reason that these little ones are the daughters of the eyes of Mary because of her simplicity and dovelike qualities. In these ways Mary loves, guards, favors, conserves in innocence and

grandezas de este Mundo, que no son mas que una apariencia? Y en la verdad, essa es la mayor desdicha: *Deposuit potentes de sede, et humiles,* los potentes quedan depaestos, y privados de la celestial Leche de la Purissima Madre, y exaltados los himildes â los Pechos castissimos, y dulcissimos.

Para elogiar el Divino Esposo el vientre de MARIA, le dice, que es como un monton de trigo circumhalado de Azucenas: *Venter tuus sicut acervus tritici vallatus lilijs,* Viene bien esta alabanza, porque todos sus hujos son pequeñitos, y por esso humildes; assi como el trigo pisado, trillado, y traspaleado, assi los felices hijos de MARIA Purissima, siempre andan

cleanliness her children. Why shouldn't we aspire to so much goodness? Who would want to like the greatness of this world which are nothing more than a facade? In truth, this is the greatest saying: *Deposuit potentes de sede, et humiles,* the powerful are left without a pasture and deprived of the celestial milk of the most pure mother and exalted are the humble to the most chaste and sweetest breasts.

To choose Mary's womb, the Divine Spouse tells her that she is like an enormous amount of lillies: *Venter tuus sicut acervus tritici vallatus lilijs,* she is well praised because all of her children are small and for that reason humble like stepped-on, worn-out and transplanted wheat, so are purest Mary's children happy, always under the feet of all and left

<p>bajode los pies de todos, se dexan como el trigo trillar; pero merecen ser recogidos, como el grano escogido para trasponerlos, y guararlos en la trox del Cielo; pero el estar carcado de Azucenas, es por la pureza, y gragrancia, que estos sus hijor derraman. Es tambien MARIA Santissima comparada â la Paloma,cuyos fructos son pequeños, y abundantes; assi esta Soberana Señora, dà copiosos, y dulces fructos de sus Pechos de su sauissima Leche, pero pequeños.</p> <p>O MARIA Santissima, humilde Madre de Dios, enslazada, y levantada, como la mas humilde entre las humildes; Quien podrà dignamente alabar tu pequeñez en tanta altura: Tù estás sobre todos los Choros de los Angeles, y Santos levantady, y por Reyna de todos coronada; y eres tan</p>	<p>to wear like wheat. But, they deserve to be raised like the chosen grain to be transplanted and saved in the space of fruitfulness of the Sky. But, to be loaded with lilies is because of their purity and fragrance that her children overspill. Most Holy Mary is also compared to a dove, whose fruits are small and abundant, so too this sovereign woman gives copious and sweet fruits from her breasts and her delicious milk but also small.</p> <p>O Most Holy Mary, humble Mother of God, slated and lifted like the most humble of the humble. Who can rightly praise your smallness in such height? You are above all of the choirs of angels and Saints and crowned because you are Queen of all and you are so humble and being</p>
---	---

humilde, tan pequeña en tu estimacion, que dás por razon de ser bendita, y alabada de todas las generaciones, el que miró Dios tu humildad: *Quia respexit humilitatem ancille suæ;* participanos esse Principado de tu humildad, danos à gustar, y beber essa humildad, comunicandonosla en la Leche de sus Pechos Sagrados, alcanzandonos inocencia, pequeñez, y pureza, para merecer ser tus hijos, y entrar por Ti (ô Puerta del Cielo) à gozar de tu vista hermosa, y alabar contigo à el que te criò tan Santa, tan admirable, y tan bella.”<sup>7</sup>

small in your estimation is the reason you give for being holy and praised by all ages. God saw your humility, and humanity responds, help us to participate in your principle of humility, make us to like it, to drink of that humility, communicating it in the milk of your Holy Breasts, sharing with us innocence, smallness, and purity so we deserve to be your children and enter through You (Oh Door to the Sky) to enjoy your beautiful vision and praise the One who created you so Holy, admirable and beautiful.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 38-41.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 38-41 (My translation).

<p>Libro I Capitulo XI</p> <p>“La Leche pura de Maria Virgen causó complacencia â la Santissima Trinidad en su eternidad, y â los Espiritus celestials despues de su creacion les causó gozo, y alegria accidental.”<sup>9</sup></p> <p>“Dios nuestro Señor en su eternidad, para quien no ay preterio, ni futuro, tenia presentes todas las obras, que fuera de si avia de hacer comunicandose â sus criaturas, y como las mas excelente, y admirable avia de ser la de la Encarnacion del Verbo Eterno, tenia presente aquella fecundissima Virgen, de quien avia de nacer, miraba â su Hijo humanado entre sus brazos, y â sus pechos, miraba à MARIA Santissima como primera antes que todas las cosas</p>	<p>Book I Chapter XI</p> <p>The Virgin Mary’s pure milk gave great pleasure to the eternal Trinity and caused incidental joy and happiness to the celestial spirits after their creation.<sup>10</sup></p> <p>God our Father in his eternity, so as not to have a past nor future, had all of his works present, where he would communicate with his creations, the most excellent and admirable of which were the Incarnate Word; also had present the most abundant Virgin, who would give birth to, and God would see God’s Son in her arms; and with her breasts would see Most Holy Mary first before all created things, being the exemplar of all; and such great and marvelous</p>
--	--

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 42 (My translation).

<p>criadas, siendo exemplar do todas MARIA Santissima; y como obrar Dios nuestro Señor por si mismo grandezas, y maravillas, no es mucho, pues es propio de Dios el haverlas, y obrarlas: Quiso dár â MARIA Santissima esta Gloria, en que resplandece mas la del mismo Señor, y la de su Hijo humanado. Digo que se complació toda la Santissima TRINIDAD en que todas sus obras tuvieran respecto â MARIA Santissima, que fueran fructo de su Leche purissima. Explicome mas, que no solo fuera Reyna de todo lo criado, y que todos los Angeles, y hombres estuvieran subyugados, y sujetos â su obediencia, sino es que le debieran ser fructose de su Leche prissima, que todo su bien, toda su gracia, toda su gloria se le debieran â MARIA Santissima, porque previsto en Dios el merito de la Señora, su</p>	<p>work for God our Father is nothing because God is the one to have had them and worked them: Wanted to give Most Holy Mary this glory, which illuminates more of the same Father and of God made human in the Son. I say that the Most Holy Trinity was pleased in that all their works would have respect for Most Holy Mary, who would be the fruit of her most pure milk. I further explain that she would not only be the queen of all of creation; all of the angels and humans would be subjugated to her and subject to her obedience because not only would they be indebted to the fruit of her most pure milk, that all of one's goodness, one's grace and one's glory is indebted to Most Holy Mary because God anticipated in this woman of merit her intercession, her</p>
---	---

intercession, su patrocinio, por donde avian de conseguir lo dicho, assi se complacía en los fructose, que se avian de cojer en el granero del Cielo, mediante la Leche pura de MARIA Santissima, que como Madre avia de difundir mysticamente en sus hijos en todos los siglos.

Edificó la sabiduria casa para sí, Dios nuestro Señor no necessita de casa, no assiento pues aunque criò los Cielos, la tierra, el mar, y los abysmos, todo es como un granillo de mostaza respecto de su grandeza, y ninguna de estas cosas son casa, ni assiento del Señor, aunque todas las llena: Pues si ninguna cosa criada puede ser casa, ni assiento de Dios, que es infinitamente inmenso, ni tiene necesidad, què casa es esta, que ante todas las cosas crió para sí?...esta es MARIA Santissima, que encerró como Hombre en su

patronage, through which one should find what was said so the fruits, which were to be found in the stable of the sky through the pure milk of most Holy Mary, who as a mother was to spread mystically to all of her children throughout the centuries.

God who does not need a house or a seat since God our Lord created the skies, the earth, the sea and the universe, edified a home of wisdom (Mary) for Godself for all is like a mustard seed in respect to God's greatness and none of these things are homes in themselves nor seats of the Father, although God fills them all. Because no single created thing can be a home or seat of God, who is infinitely immense, does not have any need, what home is this which God created before all

<p>vientre, dandole assiento â el que como Dios no cabe en ninguna cosa criada, y que sustentò con su Leche, y crió â sus Pechos â el Criador, y Conservador de todo: Pues si avia de tener casa Dios nuestro Señor? Se avia de edificarla para sî? Razon era, que ante todas las cosas la eligiera, y que todo quanto criara fuera para adorno de esta casa. Assi â MARIA Santissima la vemos adornada en la descripcion, que de esta Señora hace San Juan, con el Sol, la Luna, y Estrellas, y su mayor grandeza es tener en su vientre por fructo suyo â el Hijo de Dios Eterno, vestido de su misma Carne, y que avia de sustentar con su Sangre convertida en Leche suavissima.<sup>11</sup></p>	<p>things for Godself?...this home is Most Holy Mary who enclosed like a human in her womb, giving a seat to the One who as God does not fit in any created thing, who nourished him with her milk so through her breasts she created the Creator and Sustainer of all. Should God have had a home? Should God edify her for Godself? The reason was that before all created things would choose her and all of creation would adorn this home. In this way, we see Most Holy Virgin Mary adorned with St. John's description made of this Lady, with the sun, the moon and the stars and her greatest adornment comes from having in her womb, as her own fruit, the Son of the Eternal God, dressed in Mary's same flesh and who she would</p>
---	--

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

	sustain through her blood converted into delicious milk. <sup>12</sup>
<p>Libro I Capitulo XII</p> <p>“Los que son hijos de la Leche de MARIA Virgen Purissima, son bienaventurados, y gozan las bendiciones de Dios.”<sup>13</sup></p> <p>“Bienaventurados llama el Señor á los Pobres de espiritu, â los que lloran, â los mansos, pacificos. Y MARIA Santísima dice: <i>Beati qui custodunt vias meas. Beatus homo qui audit me, etc.</i> Estos â quien MARIA Santissima dice que son bienaventurados, porque guardan, y vãn por sus caminos, y porque oyen sus palabras: Estos son los mismos â quienes Jesu-Christo nuestro Señor Ila bienaventurados,</p>	<p>Book I Chapter XII</p> <p>The children of Purest Virgin Mary’s milk are beatified and enjoy God’s Blessings.<sup>14</sup></p> <p>The Lord calls the following beatified: the poor in spirit, those who cry, the bellwethers, and the peaceful.</p> <p><i>Beatus homo qui, audit, me, etc.</i></p> <p>These whom Most Holy Mary called beatified because they stand guard and follow her ways and listen to her words: These are the same whom Jesus Christ our Lord calls beatified because they are children of Mary who suck and drink from her breasts</p>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 42-43 (My translation).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 47 (My translation).

porque estos son los hijos de MARIA,  
 que chuparon, y bebieron de sus  
 Pechos la pobreza de espiritu, porque  
 si no la tuvieran, y estuvieran vacios de  
 todas las cosas, no cupieran en ellos  
 las riquezas, que esta Leche  
 comunica; si no fueran mansos, como  
 avian de ser hijos de la que es alabada  
 por singular entre todos los mansos? Y  
 esta, mansedumbre es muy propia de  
 los hijos de MARIA, Paloma sin hiel,  
 como avia de criar a los que no fueran  
 mansos? Pues el manso Cordero  
 JESUS dexó en sus Pechos tanta  
 mansedumbre, que nunca tuvo ni una  
 leve sombra de ira, ni aùn con los que  
 maltrataron, e hirieron a su querido  
 Hijo JESUS. Son tambien hijos de  
 MARIA los que lloran, porque  
 acompañan con sus lagrimas las de los  
 Ojos de su amantísima Madre MARIA  
 Santissima, que tan abundantes las

the poverty of the spirit, because if  
 they did not have it and were empty  
 of all things, they would not fit in the  
 riches that this milk communicates,  
 for if they were not bellwethers like  
 they should be as children like the  
 one who is praised above all the  
 bellwethers? And this meekness is  
 very appropriate of the children of  
 Mary, dove without boundaries, how  
 should she not raise those that are  
 bellwethers? The bellwether  
 Shepherd Jesus left in her breasts so  
 much meekness that it never had  
 any weight of wrath, not even to  
 those who abused and hurt her son  
 Jesus. Those who cry are also  
 children of Mary because they  
 accompany their tears, the tears  
 shed from their beloved Mother Most  
 Holy Mary, who shed so many during  
 the death and passion of Jesus, our

<p>derramò en la Muerte, y Passion de JESUS nuestra salud, y vida.”<sup>15</sup></p> <p>“Son tambien hijos de MARIA los que JESUS llamó bienaventurados, porque tienen hambre, y sed de Justicia...y anda en los caminos de ella la que no conociò, ni anduvo por otro, como concebida en justicia original; pues como no han de tener esta hambre, y sed de Justicia los que se crian con su Leche? Quien me gusta tiene hambre, y quen de mi bebe tendrà sed.”<sup>16</sup></p> <p>“MARIA Santissima, como es Oliva especiosa y es toda misericordias, tiene abundantemente Miel, Leche, y Azeyte, para todos sus hijos Justos, y</p>	<p>health and life.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>Those whom Jesus named in the beatitudes are also Mary’s children because they have a hunger and thirst for justice...they walk through paths unknown to her nor did she walk any other path since she conceived the original justice. So then, how are they not to have such hunger and thirst for justice those who have been nourished by her milk? Those who love me will be hungry and those who drink from me will be thirsty.<sup>18</sup></p> <p>Most Holy Mary who is a spicy olive and all merciful has abundant Honey, milk, and oil for all her</p>
---	---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 47 (My translation).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 48 (My translation).

<p>Azeyte, para todos sus hijos Justos, y Pecadores, todos hallan en esta comun Madre el sustento, el remedio, la misericordia, la dulzura, y el regalo.”<sup>19</sup></p>	<p>children both just and sinner, all find this in common in their mother, the sustenance, remedy mercy, sweetness and gift.<sup>20</sup></p>
<p>Libro II Capitulo I</p> <p>“En su leche purissima dà MARIA Santissima à sus hijos el fructo de la Encarnacio del Verbo Eterno.”<sup>21</sup></p> <p>“Admirable es Dios nuestro Señor en todas sus obras, como resplandece la Sabiduría con que las crió; la providencia, con que las ordenò: la bondad, con que las conserva. Admiranos vér esos Cielos, y asómbranos vèr la tierra, porque desde</p>	<p>Book II Chapter I</p> <p>Through her purest milk Most Holy Mary gives her children the fruit of the Eternal Incarnate Word.<sup>22</sup></p> <p>God our Lord is admirable in all God’s works like wisdom shines with all who she created, divine providence with the ones whom she ordained, kindness with all who conserve it. Let us admire seeing the sky and let us astonish as we see the earth because the largest planet in the sky to the smallest green leaf</p>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 49 (My translation).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 125 (My translation).

el Planeta mayor del Cielo hasta la  
hojita verde, y gusanito de la tierra,  
tiene tanto porque alabar la  
Omnipotencia de Dios, su Sabiduría,  
Bondad, etc. pero todo lo hizo con un  
*Fiat*, pero en llegando a la obra de la  
Encarnacion de Verbo Eterno,  
quedanse suspensos los  
entendimientos Angelicos, y humanos,  
y no aciertan a discurrir como pudo  
amar Dios tanto a el hombre, que se  
hiciera como uno de ellos para librarlo  
del mal do que avia enfermado. Es  
possible, que teniendo poder infinito  
para sanarlos por tantos medios, este  
eligió, este cogió de humanarse: Què  
es esto Dios Hombre? El Hombre Dios!  
Què misericordia es esta? Quien se  
atrevera a pensarlo, ni en que  
pensamiento pudiera caber? Solo  
aquella misericordia infinita, solo  
aquella Sabiduria pudo trazar la salud

and smallest worm of the earth have  
so much for which to praise the  
omnipotence of God, God's wisdom,  
kindness, etc. But everything was  
made by a *Fiat*. But, when it came to  
the work of the Incarnation of the  
Eternal Word, remaining in suspense  
without full understanding both  
Angels and humans not ascertaining  
how God could love humans so  
much that God would become like  
one of them to liberate them of the  
evil that had diseased them. Is it  
possible that having infinite power to  
heal them through so many means,  
God chose to become human? Who  
is this God-Human? The Human  
God! What mercy is this? Who would  
dream to imagine, nor in whose  
thought could it fit? Only that infinite  
mercy, that Wisdom could draw upon  
the health of humans through

de los hombres por medio tan  
asombrosamente miriocordioso,  
piadoso, y amoroso.

Crió Dios â el hombre con libre  
alvedrio para mucho bien suyo, porque  
siendo libre merece con la buena  
aplicación de su libertad para honrar, y  
servir â su Criador, más usó tan mal de  
esta libertad, que con ella se despeñó,  
y perdiò... Para vér, y conocer mejor  
esta fineza, este amor grande de Dios,  
hemos de vér los males de que nos  
librò, y los bienes que nos ganó...O  
palabras en que se comprendían todos  
los males de que nos librò! Consumió  
el Hijo de Dios humanado la  
prevaricación, puso fin al pecado, y  
quitó la maldad. O que libertad: O que  
bienes puso en lugar de estos males la  
Justicia Eterna! Entendido todo el bien  
obrar por la Justicia, y esta eterna,  
porque el que assi obra, eternamente

astonishingly merciful, pious and  
loving ways.

God created humanity with  
free will for humanity's own good  
because being free deserves with  
the good application of one's liberty  
to honor and serve one's creator.  
But, humanity used this liberty so  
poorly so as to plummet and lose...  
To see and understand better this  
benefit of love, this great love of  
God, we should see the evils from  
which we were liberated and the  
goods which were won for us...O  
words in which we understand all of  
the evils from which we were  
liberated! The Son of God made  
flesh consumed prevarication, put an  
end to sin and took away evil. O  
what liberty: O what goodness put in  
its place these evils, Eternal Justice!  
Knowing all goodness to work for

<p>goza esta Justicia que guardò...Levantò el Señor à los caídos, sanó à los enermos, y toda carne reflorció, se honró, y remedio...Este es el fructo que en est Mysterio hemos de coger bebido de los Pechos de nuestra Madre MARIA Santissima, vèr los males de que nos librò, y los bienes que nos ganó el Hijo de Dios encarnado en MARIA Virgen, Bebiendo de los Pechos de la Divina Madre esta ciencia, gozarèmos colmados fructos, porque el alme que se alexó del mal, y se exercitò en el bien, y llegando á mirar yá como en salvo, y seguro los peligrosos passos en que anduvo..."<sup>23</sup></p>	<p>justice, is eternal, because the one who works, eternally enjoys this justice which is preserved...The Lord raised the fallen, healed the sick, and all incarnation flourished again, was honored again, and healed... This is the fruit which we are to glean through drinking from Most Holy Mary's breast, see the evils from which we were liberated and the goodness that was won for us the Son of God incarnated through the Virgin Mary, Drinking from the Breasts of the Divine Mother is science, let us enjoy these overwhelming fruits because the soul which put away all evil and exalted the good and coming to see in one safe and secure previously dangerous steps one had taken..."<sup>24</sup></p>
---	--

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 125-127.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 125-127 (My translation).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Águeda de San Ignacio, Maria Anna. *Marabillas del divino amor, selladas con el sello de la verdad*. Puebla, Mexico: Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758.
- . *Devoción a la Santísima Virgen María en Honra de su purísima leche*. Guadalajara: Imprensa por Manuel Brambila, 1840 held at University of Illinois.
- Aquino, María Pilar Aquino. "Latina Feminist Theology: Central Features" in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*. Aquino et al., eds. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002.
- Arenal, Electa, and Stacey Schlauf. *Untold stories: Hispanic nuns in their own works*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.
- Bellido, José. *Vida de la V.M.R.M. María Anna Agueda de S. Ignacio, primera priora del religiosísimo convento de dominicas recoletas de Santa Rosa de la Puebla de los angeles*. Puebla, Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758.
- Cavazos-González, Gilberto. *Greater than a Mother's Love*. Scranton, PA: Scranton University Press, 2010.
- Eich, Jennifer. *The Other Mexican Muse: Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)*. New Orleans, LO: University Press of the South, 2004.
- Espín, Orlando. *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.
- . "Traditioning" in *Futuring Our Past: Explorations in the Theology of Tradition*. Orlando O. Espin and Gary Macy, eds. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.

- Gonzalez, Michelle Gonzalez. *Sor Juana: Beauty and Justice in the Americas*. Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2003.
- Ibsen, Kristine. *Women's Spiritual Autobiography in Colonial Spanish America*. Miami, FL: University of Florida Press, 102.
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2007.
- . *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992.
- Kirk, Pamela. *Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz: Religion, Art and Feminism*. New York, NY: Continuum, 1999.
- LaCugna, Catherine Mowery. *God for Us*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1976.
- Lavrin, Asunción. *Brides of Christ*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- . "The Church: Institution and Spirituality in New Spain" in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 17 no. 2 (2001): 403-412.
- Macy, Gary. "The Iberian Heritage of US Latino/a Theology" in *Futuring our Past*. Orlando Espín and Gary Macy, eds. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.
- Miles, Margaret Miles. *A Complex Delight*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008.
- Nanko-Fernández, Carmen. *Theologizing en EspanGLISH: Context, Community and Ministry*. New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2010.
- Rappaport, Pamela Kirk. *The Classics of Western Spirituality: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Selected Writings*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2005, 249-253.
- Routt, Kristen Eva. *Authoring orthodoxy: The Body and the Camino de Perfeccion in Spanish-American Colonial Convent Writings*. Indiana University, 1998.

- Thompson, William M. *Fire & Light*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Stagaman, David J. *Authority in the Church*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999.
- Walker Bynum, Caroline. *Jesus as Mother*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982.
- Kilian Walsh, OCSO, translator *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux Volume Two: On the Song of Songs I*. Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1971.
- Williamson, Beth. "The Virgin Lactans as Second Eve: Image of the Salvatrix" *Studies in Iconography* 19 (1998): 105 – 138.

## VITA

Neomi DeAnda was born and raised in Texas. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, she attended St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and Psychology in 1997. She graduated with distinction with a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership in 1999 also from St. Mary's University. In 2005, she earned a Master of Arts in Theology from Oblate School of Theology.

While at Loyola, Neomi served as Vice President-Social for the Graduate Theology Caucus. She also was awarded a Hispanic Theological Initiative Doctoral, Doctoral Renewal and Dissertation Fellowship.

Neomi plans to pursue funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a complete translation and critical commentary of *Las Marabillas*.