

# THE CHURCH TRANSPLANTED TO AMERICA. TWO HISTORIOGRAPHIC DEBATES

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For Ildefonso Adeva (†2022), colleague and friend, *in memoriam*.

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## ABSTRACT

Over the last hundred years, five great historiographic debates have attempted to explain the rapid acceptance of the Christian faith in Mesoamerica and also in the Inca epoch. Of these five debates, two are studied, analysed and are subjected to criticism here: 1<sup>st</sup>) whether the first Franciscan evangelisation in the central valleys of New Spain was encouraged by “Joachimite” ideal; and 2<sup>nd</sup>) if a new spirituality penetrated New Spain, hand in hand with the writings of Erasmus, which would have facilitated the approach of the indigenous peoples to the Catholic faith and would have been a spiritual relaxation for the Spaniards transplanted to America, especially to *Tierra Firme*, in the first half of the sixteenth century.

## KEYWORDS

Joachim of Fiore, Joachimism, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Erasmism, Evangelisation of New Spain.

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Ioachim Florensis, Ioachimismus, Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, Erasmismus, Evangelizatio Novae Hispaniae.

## 1. General approach

The evangelisation of America really started with de Christopher Columbus' second voyage, which left Cádiz on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1493. Among this fleet of seventeen ships and around one thousand two hundred men, was fray Bernardo Boyl, papal representative and charged with the evangelisation (following the provisions of the two bulls *Inter cetera*, from May and June [backdated] 1493). He was at the head of a group of evangelisers, among whom the Jeromist hermit, Ramón Pané stood out, and who was in fact the first missionary among the indigenous Taíno.<sup>1</sup>

The beginnings of evangelisation among the native population of the Greater Antilles are known through the *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios*, written by Ramón Pané. It was the first book written in the New World, finished around 1498 and fortunately conserved between chapters 62 and 63 of the *Historia del Almirante*, prepared by Ferdinand Columbus, a great bibliophile and illegitimate son of Christopher Columbus.<sup>2</sup>

The spread of evangelisation, from its first steps in the Greater Antilles to its beginning on Tierra Firme, specifically in Mesoamerica, is well known. In broad strokes:<sup>3</sup> in 1510, the first boatload of reformed Dominican friars, whose prior was fray Pedro de Córdova, reached La Española. The friars immediately began to prepare a catechesis through discourses, later collected in a small tome titled *Doctrina cristiana para instrucción de indios*. Meanwhile, at the end of 1511, the Dominican Antonio de Montesinos preached the famous sermon that provoked both the conversion of Bartolomé de Las Casas and the Laws of Burgos, in 1512. In 1524, The first boatload of Observant Franciscans, whose prior was fray Martín de Valencia, reached Veracruz, and from there went on to Puebla and Tenochtitlan (nowadays Mexico City). Shortly after, the Dominicans also reached Mesoamerica, taking with them fray Domingo de Betanzos whose discourses had been preached in La Española. In December 1531, the *hecho del Tepeyac* occurred, that is, the appearances of the Virgin Mary to the native Juan

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1. On the origins, fundaments, motivation, significance and first reception of the bulls *Inter cetera*, there is an impressive bibliography, very well reported and systemised by: Rojas Bernat, Luis. "Papal Arbitration? Alexander VI and the Portuguese and Spanish Discoveries of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century". *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum*, 15 (2021): 363-385. The reception of these bulls, between 1800 and 1824, in a context of extreme Jansenist liberalism, was also important. Such a second reception originated an interesting theological-legal discussion on American soil, one that is little studied to date, in which Creolism attempted to justify the *moral legality* of their political-military uprising, in the framework of the "pontifical donation". On this subject: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. "Introducción". *Teología en América Latina, II/2. De las guerras de independencia hasta finales del siglo XIX (1810.1899)*, Josep-Ignasi Saranyana, ed., Carmen J. Alejos Grau, coord. Madrid-Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2008: 32-47, which refers to other places in the volume.

2. Colón, Hernando. *Historia del Almirante*, ed. Luis Arranz. Madrid: Historia 16, 1984: 205-229. The *Relación* consists of twenty-three brief chapters.

3. I only offer the milestones that I consider interesting regarding the themes that are developed in this essay. About the Franciscan presence at the beginning of the evangelisation, see: Borges Morán, Pedro. *El envío de misioneros a América durante la época española*. Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1977.



Diego, Zumárraga being only the bishop elect, in other words, designated, but still not consecrated. In 1534, on his return from the voyage he made to the metropolis, to be consecrated as a bishop and to respond to a series of charges that the Mexican Audiencia accused him of, Juan de Zumárraga imported the first printing press. In 1544, the *Doctrina de Pedro de Córdoba*, that is the discourses of the Dominicans in La Española, was printed in a bilingual Castilian-Nahuatl edition.<sup>4</sup>

These are the dates that frame the later great historiographic discussion, the reason behind this essay, which had at least five aspects:

- 1<sup>st</sup>. If the first Franciscan evangelisation in New Spain (and also in Peru) was emboldened by “Joachimite” ideals. In other words: whether the Franciscans, motivated by such ideals, aimed to build a “new church”, uncontaminated and outside the church of the Spaniards.<sup>5</sup>
- 2<sup>nd</sup>. If Erasmism entered New Spain through Juan de Zumárraga, and with him, a new way to experience Christian spirituality, in contrast with the traditional spirituality in force in the metropolis, well received by both the Mexican natives and the Spaniards transplanted to New Spain.
- 3<sup>rd</sup>. If the “Guadalupe event” was real or an illusion, in view of the fact that the act that Juan de Zumárraga, bishop elect of Mexico City, supposedly should have drawn up has not been found and the silence of the early chronicles by the evangelisers.<sup>6</sup>
- 4<sup>th</sup>. Whether the (real or supposed) historical and social process that a Santa Rosa into a political-religious symbol of the Peruvian viceroyalty, is comparable in importance to the Guadalupe process, which leads to questions about the origins of Andean-Creole nationalism.<sup>7</sup>
- 5<sup>th</sup>. If the early evangelisation in the Greater Antilles and Tierra Firme can be considered an antecedent of the so-called “liberation theology” or, on the contrary, whether such a hypothesis constitutes a clear anachronism.

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4. For more information, see: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. “La catequesis en el Caribe y Nueva España hasta la Junta Magna”, *Teología en América Latina, I. Desde los orígenes a la Guerra de Sucesión (1493-1715)*, Josep-Ignasi Saranyana, dir., Carmen J. Alejos Grau, coord. Madrid-Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 1999: 37-87; and: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. *Breve historia de la teología en América Latina*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2018: 3-37.

5. See a documented state of the question in: Sabaté, Flocel. *El fin del mundo y Nuevo Mundo*. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011: 11-16.

6. See: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. “La catequesis en el Caribe...”, 45-49 (ch. 1, 2a “Sobre las apariciones guadalupanas (1531) y el ‘Nican Mopohua’”); and Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. *Breve historia...*, 201-206 (ch. VI, 1c “Los nueve concilios provinciales posteriores al Vaticano I”), specifically the councils of Mexico City. See especially Saranyana, Josep Ignasi. *Breve historia...*, 204 (note 33), which narrates the historical context of the decree by the archbishop of Mexico, Pelagio Antonio Labastida y Dávalos, in 1883, in the framework of the anti-apparitionist opinion of the historian, Joaquín García Icazbalceta and that reports the later disposition of the I Council of Antequera (1892-1893).

7. See: Mujica Pinilla, Ramon. *Rosa Limensis. Mística, política e iconografía en torno a la patrona de América*. Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos - Fondo de Cultura Económica - Banco Central de Reserva del Perú, 2001.



In view of the questions listed is it worth asking why such discussions took place and what triggered them. Considering things in an academic setting, I believe that the emergence of such debates could have been determined by prejudices dating back to the Enlightenment. The long shadow is perceived of *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, the important Kantian booklet of 1793. Felipe Martínez Marzoa began the prologue of the Castilian translation of this work, with some words that illustrate what I want to say palabras, when I refer to the prejudices that have fed the above-mentioned Americanistic debates:

*Que la Religión llegue a ser un verdadero tema del pensar es posible si se admite una dimensión propia, específica, en cierto modo irreductible, de la Religión. El pensar acerca de la Religión atiende a la determinación esencial de esta dimensión. En Kant, tal determinación tiene lugar en la Razón, y no frente a la Razón, ni aparte de ella, ni previamente a ella; y, sin embargo, la especificidad de la dimensión religiosa no solo no es negada, sino que precisamente por ello es -a la manera de Kant- vigorosamente establecida.<sup>8</sup>*

Indeed, assuming the surprising and rapid conversion of the natives of New Spain and also of the Inca, although the incorporation of the southerners to Christianity was slower and with notorious phenomena of religious syncretism and even religious recurrences, and discarded any providential and transcendent vision of history, the causes of such an amazing and massive phenomenon must be explained in other ways, which appear “reasonable”. This is how stories have *emerged* that, although presented with a large collection of bibliographic and even archival documentation, do not always consider -in my opinion- the substance of the matter, nor do they understand it correctly. The “second historical navigations”, especially if they are brilliant, are usually well received in manuals. And when they enter those literary fields, they become undisputed places (τόποι) and, therefore, very difficult to refute.

Another warning, as far as religious recurrences are concerned. The term “recurrence”, taken from medicine, refers here to outbreaks of a pre-Columbian religion, which would have remained alive, although hidden under the layers of a mere Christian formalism. Those embers, hidden and concealed, would have been maintained by means of nocturnal or secret practices or confined to the family environment, so that conversion would have been nothing more than a simulation, like many of the forced conversions of Judaisers and Moors

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8. “That Religion becomes a true subject of thought is possible if a proper, specific, and somehow irreducible dimension of Religion is admitted. Thinking about Religion attends to the essential determination of this dimension. In Kant, such determination takes place in Reason, and not against Reason, nor apart from it, nor prior to it; and, nevertheless, the specificity of the religious dimension is not only not denied, but precisely for this reason it is -in the manner of Kant- vigorously established”. Martínez Marzoa, Felipe. “Prólogo”, Immanuel Kant, *La religión dentro de los límites de la mera razón*, ed. and trans. Felipe Martínez Marzoa. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1969: 7.



in Spain in the 1400s. Without denying that there have been recurrences in some cases, it would be possible to speak here of religious syncretism, because Christian praxis would have taken shape on a primitive religious background, still latent, that was gradually assimilated.<sup>9</sup> It is evident that a new faith is not fully assumed until it becomes a culture; and that cultural changes take time.

In the lines that follow I will try to present the first two major controversies (Joachimism and Erasmism), leaving the remaining three for another occasion.

## 2. The question of 'Joachimism'<sup>10</sup>

### 2.1. Joachim de Fiore and Joachimism

The main works of the Calabrian abbot, Joachim de Fiore (ca. 1130-1202), published in Venice between 1517 and 1527, have been reprinted by Minerva Verlag.<sup>11</sup> The critical edition of the *Opera omnia*,<sup>12</sup> which includes tracts by the abbot discovered more recently, is underway.

I began to take an interest in the theology of Joachim de Fiore and his later influence, when the first edition of Joseph Ratzinger's qualification thesis fell into my hands. In this, the German theologian studied the possible influences of the writings of the abbot Joachim in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* by Saint Bonaventure.<sup>13</sup> This is how I learned about the monographs of some scholars who had been interested in the influence of the Calabrian abbot in the Late Medieval period, like Raoul Manselli,<sup>14</sup>

9. The bibliography is extensive. See, as an example: García, Juan Carlos. "¿Por qué mintieron los indios de Cajatambo? La extirpación de las idolatrías en Hacas entre 1656-1885". *Revista Andina*, 14 (1996): 7-52.

10. See: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi; Zaballa, Ana de. *Joaquín de Fiore y América*. Pamplona: Ediciones Eunat, 1995. See also: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. *Joaquín de Fiore y Tomás de Aquino. Historia doctrinal de una polémica*. Pamplona: Ediciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1979.

11. Other treatises have been discovered recently and these have been published in specialised journals.

12. A critical edition of the full works, by the Centro Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti and the Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, is underway. Nine works have already appeared (Latin text, critical section and preliminary study), since the editing began in 1995. For this project see: Selge, Kurt-Victor. "La edición crítica de las *Opera omnia* de Joaquín de Fiore". *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 11 (2002): 89-94. For a list of what has already been edited critically (there is also another series with the Italian translation), see: Centro Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti. "Publizaioni". *Centro Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti*. 22 June 2022 <<https://www.centrostudigioachimiti.it/testi/>>.

13. Ratzinger, Joseph. *Die Geschichtstheologie des heiligen Bonaventura*. Munich-Zurich: Schnell und Steiner, 1959.

14. Manselli, Raoul. "L'attesa dell'età nuova ed il Gioachimismo", *III Convegno del Centro di Ricerca per gli Studi della Spiritualità Medievale*. Todi: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1960: 145-170.



Marjorie Reeves,<sup>15</sup> Bernard McGinn,<sup>16</sup> Delno C. West,<sup>17</sup> Henri de Lubac,<sup>18</sup> among others.

Reviewing the bibliography, I was concerned whether the authors mentioned had not attributed Joachim de Fiore with the musings of his supporters, confusing the genuine Joachim with Joachimism. Such a distinction should not bother historians. In fact, it is not the first time that an author's works have undergone an evolution on being read by the following generation. The reception is not easy. Historical criticism offers some notorious examples, like the distinction between the true Luther and Lutheranism, or between Kant and the post-Kantian, or between Hegel and the Hegelianisms, or between Marx and the Marxisms.

Before the completion of the critical edition of the abbot's *opera omnia*, it will be difficult to establish exactly what his authentic theological theses were.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, we know quite well what the Joachimites thought, both for their surviving treatises and for the criticisms they received.

Therefore, I would dare formulate the essence of Joachimism in five propositions:

1. An interpretation of secular history as *historia salutis*.
2. An exegesis of both Old and New Testaments based on concordances.
3. A division of history in three *status* or eras affirmed bi-univocally of each of the three divine Persons, though the third *status* or the last one will be more or less common to the Son and the Holy Spirit.
4. A new and full spiritual comprehension of the Scripture known as "eternal gospel" which appears in the third *status*.
5. A new economy of salvation, without either signs or figures (a Church without sacraments and without hierarchy) to be established before the *eschaton* or the end of history.

These five theological propositions presume:

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15. Reeves, Marjorie. *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

16. McGinn, Bernard. "The abbot and the doctors: scholastic reactions to the radical eschatology of Joachim of Fiore". *The Church History*, 40 (1971): 30-47; McGinn, Bernard. "Joachim of Fiore's Tertius Status: some Theological Appraisals", *L'età dello Spirito e la fine dei tempi in Gioachino da Fiore e nel gioachinismo medievale. Atti del III Congresso Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti*. Antonio Crocco, ed. San Giovanni in Fiore: Centro di Studi Gioachimiti, 1988: 222 and following.

17. West, Delno C. *Joachim of Fiore in Christian thought. Essays on the influence of the Calabrian prophet*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1975.

18. Lubac, Henri de. *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore, I. De Joachim à Schelling*. Paris: Éditions Lethielleux, 1979.

19. That is why it is difficult to determine if the *Damnamus ergo* decree from the IV Lateran Council, in 1215, condemned the true Joachim or instead proscribed Joachimism: *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, eds. Josepho Alberigo; Josepho A. Dosseti; Perikle P. Joannou; Claudio Leonardi; Paulo Prodi; Huberto Jedin. Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 1973: 231 (lines 6-39); *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, eds. Henricus Denzinger; Adolphus Schönmetzer. Barcelona - Freiburg - Rome: Herder, 1976: 261 (n° 893). In any case, this decree *De errore abbatis Joachim* censured the abbot for interpreting the doctrine of Peter Lombard, as if the Parisian theologian had defended that in God there is "quaternity": the divine essence on one hand, and the three Persons, on the other.



First, that the “appropriations”<sup>20</sup> in the Trinity equate the “personal properties”<sup>21</sup> so that the “appropriations” become true operations *ad extra* of the Persons considered “separately.” For instance, Creation has been seen traditionally as the “common” work of the three Persons since it is an operation *ad extra*, even though it is appropriated to the first Person. However, if Creation is considered as a “personal property” of the Father (and not a mere “appropriation”) then, it would be equivocally understood that only the Father is Creator. Thus, identifying “appropriations” with “properties” would deny the essential unity of the divine Persons; it would be a mere moral unity.

Second, that in some respects, the *Ecclesia in terris* is confused with the *Ecclesia in Patria*, at least in the third *status*.

Third, that the New Law is considered expired, which implies a “newest law” that substitutes the New Law.

In the case of Joachimism, in addition to the technical analysis, the dogmatic question must be considered, because the five notes of Joachimism are out of tune (each one specifically, and not only taken as a whole) with the genuine Catholic tradition. This fact acquires a special relief when it comes to finding out the hypothetical or real penetration of Joachimism in the implantation of the Church in the Indies, as explained below.

## 2.2. On the presence of Joachimism in the ‘founding evangelisation’

What I was unaware of when I began to take an interest in the synthesis of abbot Joachim, was that there had also been an important historiographic debate about the real or supposed influence of Joachimism in the early evangelisation of America. Outstanding as pioneers among the authors who introduced this theme into Americanism are John L. Phelan,<sup>22</sup> Marcel Bataillon,<sup>23</sup> José Antonio Maravall,<sup>24</sup> and Georges Baudot.<sup>25</sup>

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20. “Appropriation” means a special mode of predicating of one divine person an attribute or divine operation common to the three Persons as it is “ad extra”.

21. “Property” points to a specific attribute which belongs uniquely to one divine Person and thus distinguishes it from the other two.

22. Phelan, John L. *El reino milenarismo de los franciscanos en el Nuevo Mundo*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1972 (the English original dates from 1956).

23. Bataillon, Marcelo. *Erasmus y España. Estudios sobre la historia espiritual del siglo XVI*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966: 807-831 (the French original is from 1957).

24. Maravall, José Antonio. *Utopía y reformismo en la España de los Austrias*. Madrid: Historia/Siglo XXI, 1982 (chapter 2, in which he deals directly with the subject is question, was first published in 1948).

25. Baudot, Georges. *Utopía e Historia en México. Los primeros cronistas de la civilización mexicana (1520-1569)*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1983 (the French original is from 1977). The most recent monograph dedicated to the supposed or real Hispanic and Luso-American utopias is: Cantù, Francesca. *La Conquista spirituale. Studi sull’evangelizzazione del Nuevo Mundo*. Rome: Viella, 2007 [2008]. Although it contains a vast bibliography, this work by Professor Cantù, which covers all the areas that were, according to a sector of historiography, able to develop some kind of utopia within the framework of American evangelisation,



Georges Baudot summarised well the nucleus of the historiographic hypothesis, that uncovers traces Joachimism in Hispano-America, and to which I refer. The central thesis of Baudot's book –which has had so much influence in Americanist circles– is the following: the Franciscan missionaries, on whom the responsibility, almost exclusive, of evangelising Mesoamerica fell, especially in the first fifty years, in New Spain would have tried to capture their utopian ideas, of a political-religious nature. Such ideals, of Joachimite inspiration, would have previously been incubated in the observant Province of San Gabriel (in Extremadura in Spain), between 1505 and 1519, and would also have been the reason for the departure of these Franciscans to the recently discovered lands.

Once overseas, particularly after 1524, when the *Doce apóstoles* (Twelve apostles) arrived in Tenochtitlan, and in view of the good nature of the natives and their extraordinary receptiveness to the Catholic faith, the Franciscans would have sought, by all means, to constitute a kind of republic with only the natives, keeping them separate from the Spaniards, in order to avoid contamination.<sup>26</sup> One of the means used to safeguard the separation between natives and *conquistadores* would have been the promotion of evangelisation in the Amerindian languages, especially in Nahuatl, which, to some extent, when they reached these latitudes, was already the lingua franca for trade and politics, being understood by the ruling classes in nearly all peoples who were more or less vassals of the Mexicas. Thus, not only would they have used it in their preaching, as a natural vehicle for communication and to capture their benevolence and facilitate their religious instruction, but also to favour the creation of a Catholic Mesoamerican community and separate from the Spanish. The metropolitan authorities would have warned to the danger of dismemberment that was hidden behind the utopian-religious ideas of *Descalcez*

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generally neglects those publications that disagree with her point of view. For example, it does not include the publications by the Peruvian, Ramón Mujica Pinilla (essential for the study of the theme of Rosario, that is, the devotion to Santa Rosa de Lima); nor the works by Teresa Gisbert, recently deceased (capitals for Andean iconography and, specifically, for the interpretation of the famous painting in which are found winged Saint Francis, the Sibyl, Joachim of Fiore, Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Bonaventure, of which there are three copies: Cuzco, Ocopa and Santiago de Chile); nor does it take into account the basic book on Vasco de Quiroga and his *Información en Derecho* by Paulino Castañeda. Neither does she refer to the magnificent treatise *Evangelio y conquista* by Lino Gómez Canedo, nor consider the monumental five-volume *Historia de los alumbrados*, by Álvaro Huerca, one of which is dedicated to American Alumbradismo in the early years of the conquest.

26. The early Christianisation of the Mexicas and other nearby tribes astonished the evangelisers and was interpreted as a favour from divine providence, which compensated the Church for the losses suffered due to the Protestant split. Some historians have considered the information the mendicants of Tierra Firme sent to the metropolis could have influenced the *Décadas del Nuevo Mundo (De Orbe Novo)*, written by Pedro Mártir de Anglería (1457-1526) and, through Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), a reader of Anglería, in the origins of the myth of the "noble savage". However, such a hypothesis is not very likely. Anglería never travelled to America and was inspired by the stories of Christopher Columbus, who only knew the Antilles and the Pearl Coast (Margarita and Trinidad). Moreover, Anglería finished his *Décadas* before the arrival of the Franciscans on the mainland (only the eighth *Década* is from 1525, a few months after the arrival of the *en pocos meses al arribo de los "Twelve Apostles"* in Tenochtitlan). See: for the basis for this hypothesis: Cro, Stello. "Montaigne y Pedro Mártir". *Revista de Indias*, 50 (1990): 665-685.



(Barefootedness) or Observance and would have acted energetically against this attempt at inculturation, especially after 1577. This persecution would have been particularly prevalent in the ethnographic chronicles written by the Franciscans, the translations into Nahuatl of books of prayer and the Holy Scriptures. Likewise, the failure of the Tlatelolco University College should be attributed, ultimately, to the misgivings of the Crown.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.3. Criticism of the hypothetical presence of Joachimism in the ‘founding evangelisation’

The discussion of this hypothesis must be situated in the framework of the relations between the “Franciscan spiritualists”, who certainly followed some of the Joachimist approaches, and the origins and development of the Franciscan province of San Gabriel, assigned to the *Observancia* or *Descalcez*.<sup>28</sup>

The Franciscan spiritual current originated with the death of Saint Francis, in 1226, when a very active but minority group wanted to adhere to the *Primera Regla* and the *Testamento* of the holy founder, abandoning the following of the order’s constitutions, approved by Pope Honorius III. To understand this, it is worth remembering that there was a *Primera Regla* or *Propositum* (1210), which is not preserved, a *Regla no bulada* (1220) and a *Segunda Regla* or *Regla bulada* (1223). The existence of three normative texts greatly complicated the itinerary of the Franciscan Order, because the Seraphic left it written in his *Testamento*, dictated shortly before his death: “And when God gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Almighty revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. I had this written down simply and in a few words, and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me”. It is obvious that he was referring to the *Primera Regla*. Compared with the spiritualists, who adhered to the *Propositum*, the conventuals opted for the *Regla bulada*.

It seems undeniable, according to the surviving literary sources, that the spiritualists included elements of Joachimism in their writings. Saint Bonaventure, general of the Order and so rigorous with the spiritualists at first, later incorporated some themes that the spiritualists had made their own in the *Legenda maior*, which he wrote around 1260, where he presents Saint Francis as the angel of the sixth seal, the *alter angelus* who had the mark of the living God (Rev. 7:2). It is also evident that Saint Bonaventure describes the founder as so closely identified with Christ that it is not possible to live more configured with Christ than Saint Francis (*Christo*

27. See: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. “Review of the book Georges Baudot, ‘Utopía e Historia en México. Los primeros cronistas de la civilización mexicana (1520-1569)’”. *Scripta Theologica*, 18 (1986): 935-938.

28. The bibliography is very extensive. See: Lejarza, Fidel de; Uribe, Ángel. “Orígenes de la reforma franciscana. El retorno al ideal primitivo”. *Archivo Ibero-Americano*, 17 (1957): 17-64. More recent and very well documented: Gómez Canedo, Lino. “La reforma interna de la Orden franciscana como antecedente para la evangelización de América”, *Primer Congreso Interamericano de Historia del Medio Milenio. Actas*. Mexico: Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas - Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987: 35-42.



*conformiter vivere*). In any case, these are hagiographic presentations of the founder, perfectly orthodox.<sup>29</sup>

Despite Bonaventure's good intentions, bridging the gap with the spiritualists, the *fraticelli*, continuators of the spiritualists, reaffirmed their extremist and visionary points of view, taking advantage of the benevolence their general master had shown. In any case, the eschatological figuration of Saint Francis (taken from John's Apocalypse) remained alive in the late Joachimist tracts. Finally, duly corrected and purged, as Saint Bonaventure had already tried, they entered in the volume *De conformitate vitæ beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu*, written by friar Bartholomew of Pisa between 1385 and 1399, a book widely read in the Spanish Observance, especially in the new province of San Gabriel.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, it is undeniable that there are some coincidences between the *De conformitate* and the bibliography, although only formal ones, since the underlying approaches are different. Bartholomew of Pisa expressly cites the *Concordia* by Joachim of Fiore and adheres to the concordistic exegesis, but with claims that distance him from the *fraticellos*. It does not seem that real Joachimist contamination of the tract by Bartholomew of Pisa can be concluded from these coincidences. This is a simple hagiographic exaltation of the Seraphic, greatly exaggerated in some of its assertions, that was only intended to stimulate the devotion of the Observant Franciscan. These Observants, who should not be confused with either the spiritualists or the *fraticelli*, finally formed an orthodox branch that sought a greater rigour of life than that practiced by the Conventual Franciscans. The *Observancia* (or *Descalcez*) was approved by Pope Leo X in 1517. In the bull of approval, the pontiff characterised Saint Francis as *angelus ille ascendens ab ortu solis, habens signum Dei vivi*, according to the text of the Apocalypse (Rev. 7:2), validating one of the apocalyptic figures that were attributed in the Observance of the holy founder.

It is known that the *De conformitate* reached America with the Franciscan expedition of 1517,<sup>31</sup> and it is certain that Fray Martín de Valencia, prior of the Franciscan "twelve apostles" who arrived in Mexico in 1524, had read it as Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta testified.<sup>32</sup> However, a few quotes exalting the figure of

29. Da Campagnola, Stanislao. *L'angelo del sesto sigilo e "l'alter Christus". Genesi e sviluppo di due temi francescani nei secoli XIII-XIV*. Rome: Laurentianum-Antonianum, 1971: 170-173, 230-235, 280-284.

30. There is a modern version of this work, written at the end of the fourteenth century in the *Analecta Franciscana*: Pisa, Bartolomeo di. *De conformitate vitæ beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu*. Quaracchi: Collegio San Bonaventura, 1906-1912: vols. IV and V. A good description of this work in: Corsi, Elisabetta. "De la utopía a la locura. El Asia en la mente de los franciscanos de la Nueva España: siglo XVI al XIX", *Órdenes religiosos entre América y Asia. Ideas para una historia misionera de los espacios coloniales*, Elisabetta Corsi, coord. Mexico: El Colegio de México-Centro de Estudios de Asia y América, 2008: 67-68. I consulted the *De conformitate* in the library of the Convento de Capuchinos de Extramuros, in Pamplona-Iruña. The *Conformidades* by Bartholomew of Pisa should not be confused with other *Conformidades*, written earlier by Pedro Juan Olivi. Olivi's tract was censored at the Council of Vienne in 1312. See *Enchiridion Symbolorum...*: 285 (nº 908).

31. See: Borges, Pedro. *El envío de misioneros...*: 428.

32. *Siendo novicio [fray Martín de Valencia] leyó el libro de las conformidades del padre S. Francisco, en cuya leyenda fue muy alumbrado su espíritu, y comenzó a gustar y conocer la virtud de la pobreza, y a concebir ferventísimo celo por ella y deseo de perfección* ("Being a novice [fray Martín de Valencia] read the book of the conformities



the founder, taken from the Book of Revelation, and some purely ornamental references received from the spiritualists, or even from Joachim of Fiore himself, are not enough, in my opinion and that of other better-informed specialists, to sustain the thesis inaugurated by John L. Phelan, consecrated by Georges Baudot, continued, with much erudition, by the Spanish Juana Mary Arcelus Ulibarrena<sup>33</sup> and finally uncritically accepted by Francesca Cantù. There is no sure clue that the first Franciscan boatload, led by Martín de Valencia, intended to create a Catholic Mesoamerican republic separate from the Spaniards. The hypothesis of Phelan and Baudot seems more *ein Konstrukt*, in other words, a fact not recognisable empirically within a scientific theory, a merely intellectual creation not proven. I refer, for a more elaborate criticism, to the historian Lino Gómez Canedo.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. On Erasmism in New Spain and Mesoamerica

#### 3.1. What is understood by Erasmism

To begin this section, let us use a few words the historian José Goñi Gaztambide used to define the characteristics of the Erasmist movement:

*La palabra erasmismo fue acuñada, al parecer, por Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo [Historia de los heterodoxos españoles]. Por erasmismo se entiende 'el movimiento suscitado por Erasmo en su tiempo'. Se trata de un movimiento rico y complejo, más religioso que cultural, que aspiraba a eliminar los abusos existentes en la Iglesia y a reformar la vida cristiana, la pastoral y la teología. Según Bataillon, se caracteriza por su espiritualismo y su evangelismo. El espiritualismo o culto en espíritu trae consigo la desvalorización de las ceremonias, de las prácticas rutinarias, de las devociones sin alma y del ritualismo de las observancias monásticas. Es un tema central del Elogio de la locura. Es sobre todo el mensaje del Enchiridion militis christiani, el libro erasmiano por excelencia. El evangelismo, que preconiza la vuelta a la Sagrada Escritura, especialmente al evangelio, tiene como contrapartida la desvalorización de la escolástica. La teología erasmiana se centra en el conocimiento directo de la palabra divina, sobre todo del evangelio y de las epístolas de san Pablo en su texto original. De ahí la necesidad de las tres lenguas: latín, griego y hebreo. Pero el evangelio no debe reservarse a los*

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of Father St. Francis, in whose legend his spirit was greatly enlightened, and he began to taste and know the virtue of poverty, and to conceive a very fervent zeal for it and a desire for perfection"). Jerónimo de Mendieta. *Historia eclesiástica indiana*. Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1971: V, chapter 1 [BAE 261, 133].

33. See: Arcelus-Ulibarrena, Juana María. "La esperanza milenaria de Joaquín de Fiore y el Nuevo Mundo. Trayectoria de una utopía". *Floresnia. Bolletino del Centro Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti*, 1 (1987): 47-75.

34. See: Gómez Canedo, Lino. "Milenarismo, escatología y utopía en la evangelización de América", *Evangelización y teología en América*, Josep-Ignasi Saranyana, Primitivo Tineo Tineo, Anton M. Pazos, Miguel Lluch-Baixaui, María Pilar Ferrer, eds. Pamplona: Ediciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1989: 1399-1409.



*sabios. Debe ponerse al alcance del hombre de la calle por medio de traducciones a todas las lenguas vernáculas, de la predicación y de la catequesis*.<sup>35</sup>

After Menéndez Pelayo, the French Hispanist Marcel Bataillon dealt with this topic with great erudition, and published his emblematic work, entitled *Erasme et l'Espagne*, in 1937 translated into Spanish in 1950.<sup>36</sup> On the occasion of the fifty years of the appearance of the French original, there was a colloquium at the International University of Santander, to discuss and update Bataillon's thesis.<sup>37</sup> Finally, and on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the original, a new volume has appeared in which some specialists in the field have collaborated.<sup>38</sup>

*Habent sua fata libelli*: every book has its destiny. With this phrase, inspired by the Latin poet Terentianus, the historian Manuel Revuelta Sañudo began his intervention in his introductory article to the volume that was published on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of *Erasme et l'Espagne*. It is indisputable that Marcel Bataillon's work has had great dissemination, a surprising reception and an extraordinary influence.<sup>39</sup> The French original circulated widely among the Spanish Republican exiles banished to Latin America; and, when translated, it was also widely read in the Peninsula, especially after the *Enquiridion o Manual del caballero cristiano*, perhaps the most widespread work of Erasmus, was republished in Madrid with the *Elogio de la locura*.

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35. "The word Erasmism was apparently coined by Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo [*Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*]. Erasmism means "the movement raised by Erasmus in his time". It is a rich and complex movement, more religious than cultural, which aspired to eliminate existing abuses in the Church and to reform Christian life, pastoral care and theology. According to Bataillon, it is characterised by its spiritualism and evangelism. Spiritualism or worship in spirit brings with it the devaluation of ceremonies, routine practices, soulless devotions and the ritualism of monastic observances. It is a central theme of *Elogio de la locura* ("In Praise of Folly"). It is above all the message of the *Enchiridion militis christiani*, the Erasmian book par excellence. Evangelism, which advocates a return to the Holy Scripture, especially the Gospels, has as its counterpart the devaluation of scholasticism. Erasmian theology focuses on direct knowledge of the divine word, especially the gospel and the epistles of Saint Paul in their original text. Hence the need for three languages: Latin, Greek and Hebrew. But the gospel should not be reserved for the wise. It must be made available to the common man through translations into all vernacular languages, through preaching and catechesis". Goñi Gaztambide, José. "El erasmismo en España". *Scripta Theologica*, 18 (1986): 117-155. The *Enchiridion* was published in latin in 1503 and translated into Spanish in 1528.

36. Bataillon, Marcelo. *Erasmus y España...: XIII-XVII* (these pages contain the prologues of the French edition, which is from 1937, and the first and second Spanish editions, which date, respectively, from 1949 and 1965).

37. Revuelta Sañudo, Manuel; Morón Arroyo, Ciriaco, eds. *El erasmismo en España. Ponencias del coloquio celebrado en la Biblioteca de Menéndez Pelayo del 10 al 14 de Junio de 1985*. Santander: Sociedad Menéndez Pelayo, 1986, with presentations by the two editors and also by Álvaro Hueriga, Silvana Seidel Menchi, José Ignacio Telechea, Melquiades Andrés, etc.

38. Serrano Martín, Eliseo, coord. *Erasmus y España. 75 años de la obra de Marcel Bataillon (1937-2012)*. Saragossa: Instituto Fernando el Católico, 2015. With presentations by Agustín Redondo, Enrique Hernán García, Guillermo Serés and Antoine Fabre among others.

39. On Bataillon's intellectual itinerary and the reception of his book in the field of Hispanic studies, See: Serrano Martín, Eliseo, "Presentación...": 9-15; and: Redondo, Agustín. "La recepción del *Erasmus y España* de Bataillon (1937-1950)", *Erasmus y España. 75 años de la obra de Marcel Bataillon (1937-2012)*. Saragossa: Instituto Fernando el Católico, 2015: 17-51.



In fact, the *Enchiridion militis christiani*, which appeared in Latin in 1503, was translated into Spanish in 1528 by the Palencian priest, Alonso Fernández de Madrid (1474-1559), Archdeacon of Alcor, and republished by the CSIC in 1971.<sup>40</sup> The translation of 1528 was a version adapted to a Spanish-speaking public that circulated quickly through the court of Charles V. The modifications introduced by the Archdeacon of Alcor, to make Erasmus' text more digestible to the Inquisition of Castile still have to be studied theologically. Dámaso Alonso highlighted these changes and additions in italics in the 1971 version. In any case, at first it passed the censorship, although years later the inquisitor Valdés included it in his *Índice* of 1569.

Erasmus intended to make an affordable Christian ideal available to the "Christian gentleman", that is, the man of the court, the soldier, the nobleman, the merchant (that is, the upper and middle-upper classes). Erasmus, who was after all an Augustinian friar, and who had had his problems adapting to the rigour of Augustinian rule since his studies in Paris, and who lived a little on his own and without habit, tried to accommodate the rigour of the cloister to ordinary family and business life, the military and the nobility. However, he not only remained with that, but criticised scholastic philosophy, only cultic spirituality and merely external devotions, confronting in some way, along lines of maximums, with the religious state and its reason for being.

Bataillon masterfully summarised the context of the *Enchiridion*:

*Cuando Erasmo publicó el Enchiridion, tenía poco menos de cuarenta años, y llevaba diecisiete de vida clerical o monástica. Sus años de fraile en el monasterio de Steyn (1487-93) no habían sido más que una experiencia negativa. Lo mismo cabe decir de su carrera teológica en la Sorbona. Tedio e insatisfacción eran los frutos que engendraba la religión al uso. De repente, en 1499, se orientó su vida, hasta entonces sin rumbo, mal avenida con el ambiente eclesiástico, atraída vagamente por el humanismo sin profundidad que introducían en la Sorbona los Andrelini y los Gaguin. Llevado a Inglaterra por su discípulo y mecenas William Brount, encontró en Oxford a John Colet, que, a su vuelta de Italia, explicaba literal y fervorosamente las Epístolas de San Pablo, haciendo patente en ellas lo original, lo eternamente vivo del cristianismo. Entonces se le reveló una religión puramente espiritual, tan distinta del formalismo monástico y de los silogismos sorbónicos como la ley nueva de la antigua. A cuantos clérigos o seglares tenían sed de fe viva, se les descubría en San Pablo el manantial cuyas aguas se habían empantanado cada vez más durante siglos. Para ellos la primitiva religión del espíritu había degenerado en un nuevo judaísmo, con un sinnúmero de ceremonias, con imposiciones alimentarias o indumentarias que sólo en la compilación diferían de las del Levítico.*<sup>41</sup>

40. Erasmo. *El Enquiridion o Manual del caballero cristiano*, ed. Dámaso Alonso. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas - Instituto "Miguel de Cervantes", 1971. Note that in Latin it is written *Enchiridion*, while in Castilian it is translated as *Enquiridion*.

41. "When Erasmus published the *Enchiridion*, he was just under forty years old and had been in clerical or monastic life for seventeen years. His years as a friar at Steyn Monastery (1487-93) had been nothing more than a negative experience. The same can be said of his theological career at the Sorbonne. Boredom and dissatisfaction were the fruits that traditional religion engendered. Suddenly, in 1499, he oriented his life, which until then had been aimless, unsuited to the ecclesiastical environment, vaguely attracted by the depthless humanism that Andrelini and Gaguin introduced into the Sorbonne.



At the end of the 1520s, there were two important centers in Spain for devotion to Erasmus: one at the University of Alcalá and another at the emperor's court, although Charles V never had a special fondness for Erasmus. We must distinguish, therefore, between the court and the sovereign, and perhaps also, between Erasmus and Erasmism, as shown below.

The theological debate that took place at the Junta de Valladolid in 1527, to elucidate the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of Erasmus, seems anachronistic to us today. It is true that there are some expressions and ironies in Erasmus' writings that could have offended the religious state and a certain sector of the Catholic establishment of the time. Furthermore, his interest in making Holy Scripture available to ordinary Christians, in direct translations from Greek, was imprudent in the religious climate of the time (think of the hermeneutical difficulty offered by some prophetic books, the bad examples that appear in some historical books and the eroticism that the *Cantar de los cantares* distils, if it is not interpreted allegorically). Erasmus' enthusiasm for the *Pauline corpus*, as an authentic expression of some fundamental traits of Revelation, produced perplexity, in view of the use that Martin Luther made in those same years of various passages of the Pauline Epistles. Erasmus, in effect, returned its ecclesiological centrality to the *figure* of the Mystical Body of Christ, revealed in the great Pauline epistles, at a time when Luther emphasised the charismatic and invisible aspect of the Church, contrasting it with the visible and hierarchical aspect, which also made him suspicious in the distrustful atmosphere of the time.

However, this was not all. With his *Enchiridion*, Erasmus seemed to initiate a new spirituality, which produced astonishment, although much of it was inspired (knowingly or not) by the *devotio moderna*, which had already made some progress in Flemish lands. In any case, a major theological issue was at stake at the time: whether monasticism was the pinnacle of Christian perfection. Alonso de Virués, a great Erasmus enthusiast, but also perplexed, had glimpsed it when he wrote to Erasmus in 1525:

*Tú nos relegas [a los frailes y monjes] frente a las clases de vida civil: artesanos, soldados, etc. Nosotros sostenemos que el monacato encierra la cumbre de la perfección y que, tanto la*

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Taken to England by his disciple and patron William Brount, he met John Colet in Oxford, who, upon his return from Italy, literally and fervently explained the *Epístolas* of Saint Paul, making evident in them the original, eternally living nature of Christianity. Then a purely spiritual religion was revealed to him, as different from monastic formalism and Sorbonic syllogisms as the new law from the old. To all those clerics or laymen who thirsted for a living faith, a spring whose waters had become increasingly bogged down for centuries was discovered in Saint Paul. For them, the primitive religion of the spirit had degenerated into a new Judaism, with an endless number of ceremonies, with impositions on food or clothing that only differed from those of Leviticus in their compilation". Bataillon, Marcel. "Prólogo...": 8-9. It is important not to confuse the spiritual experience of Erasmus, when he discovered, with the help of Colet, the *corpus paulinum*, with the experience of Luther, which occurred in 1519, when, after struggling for various years with the Epistle to the Romans, he reached a "revolutionary", interpretation, so to speak, of the passage: *Rom* 1:17; a discovery that brought him great peace, according to his own testimony. The divergence between Luther and Erasmus about how to read Romans was revealed in the great diatribe on freedom they held in 1524/25. See: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. *Historia de la teología cristiana (750-2000)*. Pamplona: Ediciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2020: 167-168.



*institución [del estado religioso] como la doctrina y [estas] saludables enseñanzas, las hemos recibido, no de cualquier hombre, sino de Cristo mismo.*<sup>42</sup>

Alonso de Virués' letter reveals the ecclesiological confusion that had already been reached at the beginning of the sixteenth century regarding the supposed "revealed" origin of the superiority of the religious state with respect to those who were simply baptised. This confusion would not subside after Trento but would instead increase.

I believe that Bataillon (and with him the followers of the great French historian) have exaggerated Erasmus' claims. The *Enchiridion* is a spiritual guide for lay people, certainly important, but not a programme for renewing the Church, contrasting it with its medieval past. Erasmus sensed that the harsh ascetic practices of the cloister did not fit with the life of the ordinary Christian. Hence, he tried to redirect the spirituality of churchmen towards a spirituality for the people "of the world" and outlined a moral theology distant from rigorism. Starting from a known and tested matrix, he worked hard to tweak and adapt it. With this I do not claim, because it would be anachronistic, that Erasmus discovered, in his *Enchiridion*, an authentically lay spirituality. This renewal would still have to wait several centuries.

Goñi Gaztambide concludes his long and erudite essay, with a hint of exaggeration, with the following words:

*La acción renovadora de las ideas erasmianas se manifestó en la Iglesia española en un reclutamiento más esmerado de los candidatos al sacerdocio y en un espíritu más apostólico por parte de los preladados. En la formulación de un nuevo ideal episcopal y sacerdotal [...]. En el desarrollo de los estudios bíblicos y en la difusión de la Biblia en lengua vulgar. Pero el erasmismo no produjo ninguna obra maestra en el campo de la teología bíblica y mezcló sus aguas con otras corrientes bíblicas indígenas. [...]. [Sí, en cambio,] en la difusión de un nuevo ideal de santidad laica, en la renovación de la predicación, en el nacimiento de la escuela española de oración y en el florecimiento de la literatura ascético-mística.*<sup>43</sup>

Given the above, there is no doubt that the study of Erasmus and his later influence requires good theological, and not only literary, knowledge. José Ignacio Tellechea and Álvaro Huerca lamented, with reason, when commemorating the

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42. "You relegate us [the friars and monks] to the classes of civil life: artisans, soldiers, etc. We maintain that monasticism contains the summit of perfection and that we have received both the institution [of the religious state] and the doctrine and [these] salutary teachings, not from any man, but from Christ himself". Goñi Gaztambide, José. "El erasmismo en España...": 137. This letter from Alonso de Virués was published in 1541, when Erasmus was already dead.

43. "The renewing action of Erasmian ideas was manifested in the Spanish Church in a more careful recruitment of candidates for the priesthood and in a more apostolic spirit on the part of the prelates. In the formulation of a new episcopal and priestly ideal [...]. In the development of biblical studies and in the dissemination of the Bible in the vernacular. But Erasmianism did not produce any masterpieces in the field of biblical theology and mixed its waters with other indigenous biblical currents. [...]. [However, in contrast,] in the dissemination of a new ideal of lay holiness, in the renewal of preaching, in the birth of the Spanish school of prayer and in the flowering of ascetic-mystical literature". Goñi Gaztambide, José. "El erasmismo en España...": 143.



fiftieth anniversary of Bataillon's magnum opus, that the theology of Erasmus had been treated so superficially from the theological point of view.<sup>44</sup>

### 3.2. *The Manual of a Christian Knight*

It is apt to mention the subject matter of the *Enquiridion*, according to the main statements in it. The work consists of eight chapters, followed by twenty-two rules. The formulation of the chapters has the military tone that is consistent with the title of the work in its sixteenth-century Castilian version: *Enquiridio o Manual del cavallero christiano*. The first chapter *muestra la necesidad quel christiano tiene de estar siempre armado, pues toda su vida ha de pelear; con qué armas se han de vencer los enemigos del cavallero christiano y la necesidad que ay de ellas*.<sup>45</sup> It is pointed out in the second chapter *con qué armas se han de vencer los enemigos del cavallero christiano y la necesidad que ay de ellas*.<sup>46</sup> The third chapter indicates *que la principal filosofia y más cierta sabiduría del christiano ha de ser conocerse a sí mesmo*.<sup>47</sup> The fourth chapter, of a more speculative nature, reveals *las dos partes que ay en el ombre, ánima y cuerpo, que llamamos ombre interior y ombre exterior, y de la monarchía o república que ay dentro dél, según dos maneras del alma, que son; razón superior y inferior, o espíritu y ánima*.<sup>48</sup> The fifth chapter is dedicated *a la diversidad y contrariedad de afecciones [aficiones] y pasiones que ay en el ombre, con otras cosas que hazen a este propósito, y cómo algunos vicios son más o menos apropiados a los ombres, según las naciones y complexiones*.<sup>49</sup> The sixth chapter is devoted *a la contienda que es entre el espíritu y la carne*<sup>50</sup> (in other words, between the inner and exterior man). The seventh, very interesting if related to the fourth, *colige de todo lo dicho, según Orígenes, que ay tres partes en el ombre, conviene a saber: carne, ánima y espíritu, y trátase de los officios de cada una de éstas con sus exemplos, consideran que hay dos maneras de ánima, como se dijo en el IIII capítulo*.<sup>51</sup> The eighth and last chapter is of a practical nature: *De la necesidad que ay de dar reglas de bivar, como adelante se ponen, y el*

44. For example, in: Revuelta Sañudo, Manuel; Morón Arroyo, Ciriaco, eds. *El erasmismo en España...*: 346.

45. "shows the need for a Christian to be always armed, because he must fight all his life". Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 106-107.

46. "which arms are required to defeat the enemies of the Christian knight and the need for these". Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 106-107.

47. "that the main philosophy and most certain wisdom of the Christian must be to know oneself". Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 106-107.

48. "the two parts that exist in the man, soul and body, which we call the interior man and exterior man, and of the monarchy or republic that exists within him, according to two ways of the soul, which are: higher and inferior reason, or spirit and soul". Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 106-107.

49. "to the diversity and contrariety of affections [interests] and passions that exist in men, with other things that serve for this purpose, and how some vices are more or less appropriate to men, according to their nations and complexions". Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 106-107.

50. "the contest between the spirit and the flesh". Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 106-107.

51. "infers from everything said, according to Origen, that there are three parts in the man, namely: flesh, soul and spirit, and it deals with each the offices of each one with their examples, and they consider that there are two types of soul, as was said in the IIII chapter". Erasmus, *El Enquiridion...*: 106-107.



*provecho que dellas resulta para curar las tres reliquias que en el ombre quedaron del pecado original, que son: çeguedad, carne y flaqueza o poco esfuerço.*<sup>52</sup>

It can be seen that Erasmus is a tributary of the anthropological trichotomism (*corpus, anima, spiritus*), and the psychological binary (*ratio superior / ratio inferior*).<sup>53</sup> Trichotomism has a moral intention moral; dichotomism (body and soul), more common now in the treatises of theological anthropology, places man in the world and facilitates the development of the treatise *De eschatologia*.<sup>54</sup> In the three-member structure of man (*corpus, anima, noûs*), the latter two elements constitute (in some sense) the psychological binary, which the Latins also translated as *anima* or *animus* and *mens*. So, this way, the *animus* or *anima* would be the *ratio inferior*, and the *mens* or *noûs*, the *ratio superior*.

According to the mid-Platonic interpretation of the three-member structure, *noûs*, which means the higher intelligence, has almost a divine consideration and, therefore, in some fourth-century Christologies, to offer a more or less intelligible interpretation of the mystery of the personal unity of Christ in the duality of natures, appeal was made to the three-member structure: the divine Verb would be the *noûs* of Christ; an explanation that obviously denaturalised Catholic faith and that was censored, because according to such an explanation Christ would neither be a true man nor true God.

Following the three-member anthropology, Erasmus writes that: *en el ombre ay dos maneras de ánima, una divina y immortal, y otra que es quasi mortal, porque está sujeta a diversas perturbaciones, como es primeramente a deleyte [...] Otra turbación es dolor, que suele venir de quitársenos o estorvársenos algún bien.*<sup>55</sup> In other terms: the *anima* or *animus*, which, according to dichotomism, is the *ratio inferior*, is sensitivity in rational beings, a faculty where passionate movements or emotions take root, which, because they are related to the body, always produce a bodily transmutation, more or less violent. Because it is corporeal, although in relation to the *ratio superior*, the *ratio inferior* is corruptible and disappears with death (which *diximos ser mortal*, comments Erasmus),<sup>56</sup> while the *ratio superior* (*una cosa como divina*)<sup>57</sup> is immortal.

52. "On the need to give laws for living as set out below, and the benefit that results from these for curing the three relics that remain in man from the original sin, which are: blindness, weakness or lack of effort". Erasmus. *El Enquiridion*...: 106-107.

53. Origen and Saint Augustine seem to have taken trichotomism from the Greek world, given that it was already found in Philo of Alexandria, who received it from Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle and transmitted it to Plotinus: *sóma, psygé, noûs* (*basar, nefesh, ruah*, among the Hebrews, *corpus, anima* [*animus* or *mens*], *spiritus*, among the Latins). See: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. *La discusión medieval sobre la condición femenina (siglos VIII al XIII)*. Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1997: 31-32.

54. Verbeke, Gerardus. *L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma du stoïcisme à S. Augustin*. Paris - Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1945; Verbeke, Gerardus. *The Presence of Stoicism in Medieval Thought*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1983.

55. "in man there are two kinds of soul, one godlike and immortal, and other not far from mortal, and subject to various disorders, such as voluptuousness [...] Next was grief, an avoidance of and impediment to good". Erasmo. *El Enquiridion*...: 161.

56. Erasmus. *El Enquiridion*...: 162.

57. Erasmus. *El Enquiridion*...: 163.



All the rest of Erasmus' treatise consists of pointing out the way to subject the *ratio inferior* to the *ratio superior*, which is the *rey par excellence*, where eternal law is imprinted. He does not ignore that the struggle between the passions is complex and difficult in the *ratio inferior* but encourages us not to falter nor to lose hope.<sup>58</sup> All the advice to overcome bad inclinations is framed in a principle, formulated in chapter II: *Estas dos armas principales que digo, son la oración y la ciencia de la ley y la palabra de Dios. [...] Verdad es que destas dos hermanas la oración es la más principal, porque habla con Dios y se entiende con él. Más también de la ciencia tenemos grande o no menos necesidad,*<sup>59</sup> to know what we have to ask for.

There is no specific treatise dedicated to sanctifying grace, but the entire context is based on the principal that we are members of Christ, who is the head of his mystical Body.

### 3.3. Erasmus in America

It is important to note that Bataillon was also interested in the influence of Erasmus in America and detected literal quotes from him in the works that Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico had printed. Specifically, in the *Doctrina Breve*, a catechism printed in 1543/44, there are frequent references to the *Paraclesis* and the *Enquiridion del caballero cristiano*, according to the translation by the Archdeacon of Alcor, already corrected, which Zumárraga again corrects, perhaps as a precaution. The fact that he revised the most strident Erasmian theses must be taken into consideration, as it proves that the Mexican bishop wanted to distance himself from the Flemish humanist, not only because by the time he printed the *Doctrina Breve*, both the Junta de Valladolid (1527), and first prohibition of the Erasmian *Coloquios* (1537) had taken place,<sup>60</sup> but also because Zumárraga was a mendicant friar, and could not allow the religious state to be discredited. Thus, Erasmus is usually corrected in those topics in which he appears more distant from late-medieval Christian traditions: for example, in his criticism of scholasticism, the way of life of the friars, exaggerated popular devotions, mortification and extreme penance, etc.<sup>61</sup>

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58. *Nunca el christiano pierda la esperança de vencer, aunque alguna vez sea vencido* ("The christian should not lose the hope of victory, even if sometimes he might be defeated"). Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 366 (Regla XVI). And also Regla XVII: *Que el más eficaz remedio para todas las tentaciones es la cruz y la pasión de Jesu Christo Nuestro Redentor* ("... against every type of adversity or temptation, the cross of Jesus is by far the [remedy] most potent"). Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 368.

59. "These two main weapons that I say are prayer and the science of God's law and His word. [...] It is true that of these two sisters, prayer is the most important, because it speaks with God and communicates with him. We also have great or no less need for science". Erasmus. *El Enquiridion...*: 127-128. In round letters is a small interpolation that the Archdeacon of Alcor introduced into his translation, to protect Erasmus' text against the Inquisition of Castile, and prevent it from being interpreted that the science that helps overcome temptations is mere *filosofía cristiana*, that is, a kind of only human wisdom.

60. Subsequent prohibitions and other works took place in 1551 and, especially, 1559.

61. See: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. "La catequesis en el Caribe...": I, 50-51 (cited in note 4).



The theme of Zumárraga's alleged Erasmism (not only literal quotes, but effective background influence) was later developed by the Mexican professor José Almoína, when he published the critical edition of the Mexican bishop's *Regla cristiana breve*, printed in 1547. This work is the most extensive and original by the prelate from New Spain.<sup>62</sup> However, in a new critical later edition,<sup>63</sup> Ildefonso Adeva showed that, in this case, Zumárraga was a simple compiler, who took from the books he had read, or that he had at hand, those passages that best suited his purpose, without special doctrinal pretensions. Zumárraga was, according to Adeva, *un compilador empedernido*.<sup>64</sup>

In any case, the question of Zumárraga's supposed Erasmism is not a trivial issue if one considers, with Bataillon, that *del erasmismo español se derivó hacia América una corriente animada por la esperanza de fundar con la gente nueva de tierras nuevamente descubiertas una renovada cristiandad. Corriente cuya existencia no llegó a imaginar Erasmo*.<sup>65</sup> This thesis by Bataillon opened a monumental historiographical debate about what the first evangelisation of New Spain was. Followers of the French historian have affirmed that the success of the first evangelisation among the Aztecs would have been due precisely to the fact that the mendicants opted for Erasmus, preferring the rigourism of the late medieval reforms. In other words: it has been written that Erasmus (understood in Bataillon's way) was more in tune with the good nature of the Aztecs than the harsh Hispanic Christianity, and that, for this reason, the mendicants made use of that Erasmian kindness and proximity, at least initially, to make the Christian faith known to the indigenous people, especially in Mesoamerica, before the first signs of religious syncretism were detected in the mid-sixteenth century.

What is more: Erasmism would not only have facilitated the conversion of the Mesoamericans but would have kept the conquerors themselves in the faith. In the appendix accompanying the Spanish translation of *Erasmo y España*,<sup>66</sup> Bataillon describes how the Erasmian *longa manus* helped the conquistadors with their faith:

*Entre los españoles y portugueses que se embarcaban para tierras lejanas, había seglares aficionados a leer libros de Erasmo porque, para su voluntario destierro, hallaban mejor alimento espiritual en las lecturas devotas, morales e históricas que no en las novelescas, y*

62. Juan de Zumárraga. *Regla cristiana breve*, ed. José Almoína. Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1951.

63. Fray Juan de Zumárraga. *Regla cristiana breve*, ed. Ildefonso Adeva, prologue by Josep-Ignasi Saranyana. Pamplona: Ediciones Eunat, 1994.

64. "an inveterate compiler". Adeva, Ildefonso. "Erasmo, Venegas y Bataillon". *Revista Española de Teología*, 44 (1984): 397-439 (Thomas Aquinas, Ludolph of Saxony, Jean Gerson, Alonso de Madrigal, Denis the Cartusian, Domingo of Valtanás, etc.). See: also: Adeva, Ildefonso. "Observaciones al supuesto erasmismo de fray Juan de Zumárraga. Edición crítica de la *Memoria y Aparejo de la buena muerte*", *Evangelización y teología en América (siglo XVI)*, Josep-Ignasi Saranyana, Primitivo Tineo Tineo, Anton M. Pazos, Miguel Lluch-Baixauli, María Pilar Ferrer, eds. Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1990: 811-845.

65. "a current was derived from Spanish Erasmism towards America animated by the hope of founding with the new people of newly discovered lands a renewed Christianity. [A] current whose existence Erasmus never imagined". Bataillon, Marcel. *Erasmo y España*...: 816.

66. Bataillon, Marcel. *Erasmo y España*...: 807-831.



*porque Erasmo, entre la literatura moral y religiosa de su tiempo, daba una nota de piedad ilustrada y libre, grata a aquellos hombres desgarrados de su ambiente nativo.*<sup>67</sup>

Bataillon understands that the Erasmian ways offered more comfort to the *conquistadores* than books on spirituality composed by other clergy which were already beginning to circulate. Those fierce adventurers who, far from their lands and their families, and in the midst of great difficulties (both geophysical and moral), tried to live Christianity the best they could, could not be required to fulfil almost impossible demands. It is probable that he may be right. I consider, however, that Erasmus' intentions, on writing his *Enchiridion*, went in another direction.

After the preceding historical and literary review, the researcher into the late-medieval and early renaissance spiritual currents perhaps wonders: will Erasmus not have guessed, immersed as he was in the current of *devotio moderna*, that the civil Christian world (if one can say so) needed a spirituality that could not be a simple *ad casum* adaptation of the spirituality of the monks and friars, but rather something different, truly lay? It is already known that breaking moulds always awakens resistance and implies conflict. If this working hypothesis is true, the persecution that was unleashed on Erasmus and his works, especially in Spain, would have other motivations, that those that historical criticism has indicated over the last hundred years, mainly through Marcel Bataillon.

In any case, to affirm, as some have suggested that, if Erasmus' proposals had triumphed, based mainly on a reform through culture and supported by a balanced ascetic, far from both penitential extremisms and moral rigorisms, the Lutheran rupture would have been avoided and the Tridentine counter-reform would have been unnecessary, apart from an uncertainty, does it mean an approximation too superficial to what Lutheran theology really was? It should be noted that between Erasmian and Lutheran anthropology there was, since the beginning, an impassable abyss, as evidenced by the diatribe about freedom, which both sustained in the years 1524/25.

#### 4. Final remarks

There have been (at least) five important controversies related to the implementation of the Church in Indies over the hundred years from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first. Of the five, listed at the beginning of this essay, I have developed two of them, leaving the other three for another occasion. Specifically, I have studied whether there was an influence

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67. "Among the Spaniards and Portuguese who embarked for distant lands, there were laymen who were fond of reading books by Erasmus because, for their voluntary exile, they found better spiritual nourishment in devotional, moral and historical readings than in novels, and because Erasmus, among the moral and religious literature of his time, gave a note of enlightened and free piety, pleasing to those men torn from their native environment". Bataillon, Marcel. *Erasmo y España...*: 807.



of Joachimism on the founding evangelisation of America (mainly in the central valleys of Mexico), and what the scope and claim of Erasmism detected in New Spain was, mainly during the episcopate of Juan de Zumárraga and the subsequent decades.

It is not necessary to repeat the technical details of the two debates, but rather the moment of aiming at a consideration of greater scope. The two cases studied evoke the alternative between supporters of complete positivism and descriptivism on the one hand, and speculation, more or less founded, on the another.<sup>68</sup>

The criticism from descriptivism is that the two stories analysed here have avoided, on one hand, the theological aspect, essential to the topic considered in itself, and, on other, they have ignored the consideration of the mystery of the Church.<sup>69</sup> Assuming these two deficits, the historical accounts (at the level of a second navigation) that have prevailed in the historiography are far from reality. The events are reinterpreted in the light of apriorisms, alien, in my opinion, to what really happened.

*Se non è vero, è ben trovato*, one could say with the Italian aphorism, which alludes to something that, although not true, is told so well that it should have happened. As Ortega pointed out, it is true that the historian is not satisfied with the mere and clear description of the facts and that he seeks an explanation. But he must avoid at all costs that his conclusions are a “construct”.

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68. As a middle way, Ortega introduced “historiology”. See: Ortega y Gasset, José. “La ‘filosofía de la historia’ de Hegel y la historiología”. *Revista de Occidente*, 19 (1928): 145-176. See the presentation of this theme offered by: Ferrater Mora, José. *Diccionario de Filosofía*, Josep Maria Terricabras, ed. Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 1994: II, 1667, col. a-b.

69. See: Saranyana, Josep-Ignasi. “La Historia de la Iglesia entre el positivismo y el historicismo”, *Qué es la Historia de la Iglesia. XVI Simposio Internacional de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra*, Josep-Ignasi Saranyana, Enrique de La Lama, Miguel Lluch-Baixaui, eds. Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1996: 139-161.

