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NAHUA INTELLECTUALS, FRANCISCAN SCHOLARS, AND THE *DEVOTIO MODERNA* IN COLONIAL MEXICO

In 1570, the Franciscan friar Jerónimo de Mendieta bestowed a rare gift on Juan de Ovando, then president of the Council of Indies. Mendieta placed in Ovando's hands a small manuscript volume in superb Gothic script with illuminated initials and color illustrations, one of several important manuscripts he had brought to Spain for various prominent recipients. Were it not for its contents, one could have thought it a meticulous version of a breviary or a book of hours, but its contents were unprecedented. This tome contained a scholarly Nahuatl translation of the most popular devotional work in Western Europe in the previous century. It was Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, which caught Iberian Christians under its spell between the 1460s and the early sixteenth century by means of multiple Latin editions and translations into Portuguese, Catalan, and Spanish, including a version in *aljamiado* (Spanish in Arabic characters). Indeed, a decisive turning point in the Iberian reception of this work had taken place three decades earlier, through the 1536 publication of Juan de Ávila's influential Spanish-language adaptation.¹

I thank Barry Sell for his support at the outset of my work on the Nahuatl *Imitatio*. I am also indebted to Louise Burkhart, Susan Schroeder, Martin Nesvíg, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, John F. Schwaller, Maarten Jansen, Ilona Heijnen, and Martha Few for providing very valuable comments regarding this article. I also wish to acknowledge the substantial feedback provided by two anonymous reviewers, and the efforts of the editorial staff of *The Americas*.

1. See J. Tarsé, "La traducción española de la 'Imitación de Cristo,'" *Analecta Sacra Tarraconensis* 15 (1942), pp. 101–125, which attributes this 1536 Spanish translation to Ávila, although it had commonly been regarded as a work by Luis de Granada. See also Thomas à Kempis, *Imitación de Cristo por Tomas de Kempis y Devocionario por Andrés Pardo*, Francisco Martín Hernández, ed. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1975); Isabel Vilares Cepeda, *A linguagem da "Imitação de Cristo": versão portuguesa de Fr. João Álvares* (Lisboa: Instituto Alta Cultura, Centro de Estudos Filológicos, 1962); Thomas à Kempis, *La Imitació de Jesu-crist del venerable Tomas de Kempis. Traducció catalana de Miquel Perez, novament publicada per A. Miquel y Planas segons la edició de l'any 1482* (Barcelona: L'Avenç, 1911); and L. Harvey, "El Mancebo de Arévalo and his Treatises on Islamic Faith and Practice," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10:3 (1999), pp. 249–276. Some authors insist that Granada authored the 1536 translation of the *Imitatio*. See, for instance, *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia, eds. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 85.

Mendieta's gesture had a very ambitious objective. By giving Ovando the first Nahuatl translation of this work, he may have hoped to persuade him, and others close to Philip II, that the Franciscan educational projects begun five decades earlier in New Spain had undergone a transition from communal, rudimentary instruction to individual and reflexive spiritual improvement.² This gift also showcased the fruits of a remarkable intellectual collaboration, supervised by Franciscans but executed by the first generation of colonial indigenous scholars in the Americas. Nonetheless, Mendieta's hopes did not prevail, and the attempts to generate a corpus of *devotio moderna* works in Nahuatl between the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century were met with mounting concern and skepticism. In fact, the creation of a corpus of *devotio moderna* works in Nahuatl and the unleashing of an Erasmist approach to the Scriptures among literate Nahuas were objectives that challenged the boundaries of what was deemed appropriate for native Christians during the Counter-Reformation. This essay addresses the significance and extent of this bold experiment by introducing a first appraisal of one of the most remarkable tasks undertaken by Nahuas and Franciscans in the sixteenth century: two separate renderings into Nahuatl of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*. Three reasons may account for this choice: the *Imitatio* had no peers in terms of its popularity as a representative of the *devotio moderna* tradition; it was a devotional guide written in accessible language for audiences with no formal theological education; and it had become one of the first early modern best-sellers through its numerous editions and vernacular translations.

Although the Nahuatl *Imitatio* has been cited as an example of the diversity of sixteenth-century Nahuatl literature,³ such mentions have always been in passing, and no scholarly study of this work exists. The most substantial, but still incomplete, Nahuatl translation of the *Imitatio*—the one Mendieta brought to Spain—was probably written by the Franciscan Alonso de Molina and his close collaborator Hernando de Ribas and is now at the Royal Library of El Escorial. It advertised the abilities of Nahua scholars at the Franciscan Colegio de Santa Cruz⁴ and publicized the aims of a Franciscan educational avant-garde in New Spain. The second Nahuatl *Imitatio*, another incomplete translation, now at the John Carter Brown Library (henceforth JCB) at Brown University, has

2. See John F. Schwaller, "Conversion, Engagement, and Extirpation: Three Phases of the Evangelization of New Spain, 1524–1650," in *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age: Considering the Process in Europe, Asia, and the Americas*, Calvin B. Kendall, Oliver Nicholson, William D. Phillips Jr., and Marguerite Ragnow, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009), pp. 259–292.

3. See for instance Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, vol. 1 (New York: Fordham University Press), p. 517; and Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th–18th Centuries* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1993), p. 60.

4. Santa Cruz, established north of Mexico City in the *altepetl* (Nahua state) of Tlatelolco in 1536, was the first and most important educational institution open to natives in sixteenth-century New Spain.

important similarities with the Escorial *Imitatio*, but also some significant differences. Moreover, we know that there once existed a Nahuatl *Imitatio* jointly authored by the Nahua scholar Francisco Bautista de Contreras and the Franciscan Juan Bautista Viseo. This enigmatic edition was being readied for the press in 1606, but no copy is extant, and it is not known if it was ever printed. In any case, the relationship between the JCB *Imitatio* and the *Imitatio* edited by Bautista and Contreras remains unclear.

This essay begins with an overview of Nahua-Franciscan authorial collaborations in the late sixteenth century, continues with a historical and philological appraisal of the two extant Nahuatl renderings of Kempis's masterpiece, and closes with a brief examination of the reception of other works with ties to the *devotio moderna* in Spain and Mexico. This text is a first attempt to reflect on the importance of an extraordinary body of innovative and reflexive devotional works produced in Nahuatl at a time when such efforts attracted scrutiny and controversy in both Spain and the Indies. This attempt will eventually be followed by an analysis of the only surviving early colonial translation of the Scriptures into an indigenous language: a recently located Nahuatl version of the Proverbs of Solomon that was probably completed under the supervision of the Franciscan Luis Rodríguez.⁵

THE NAHUA-FRANCISCAN AUTHORSHIP COMMUNITY AT THE COLEGIO DE SANTA CRUZ

The Colegio de Santa Cruz at Tlatelolco, formally inaugurated on the feast of the Epiphany in 1536, provided education in the *trivium* (Latin grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music) to between 60 and 100 boys who entered the school around the age of 10 or 12, and were supposed to remain for three years before returning to their home communities. The education they received and the social networks they entered as young scholars gave them the opportunity to serve at the colegio or as assistants to religious or civil authorities, or to seek public office in indigenous *cabildos*. During its first two decades of existence, Santa Cruz was administered by its own alumni, but it lost its viceregal source of support in 1564 and was returned to Franciscan supervision in the early 1570s. In the sixteenth century, this institution attracted the most prominent Franciscan authors and educators in central Mexico, an impressive roster that included several Franciscans whose activities are discussed below: Alonso de Molina, Luis Rodríguez, Bernardino de Sahagún, Arnaldo de

5. David Tavárez, "A Banned Sixteenth-Century Biblical Text in Nahuatl: The Proverbs of Solomon," *Ethnohistory* 60:4 (2013), pp. 759–762.

Basacio, Juan de Gaona, Jerónimo de Mendieta, and Miguel de Zárate. Even after the establishment of the Colegio de San Gregorio for native students in Mexico City by the Jesuits in 1586 and the various achievements of Jesuit Nahuatl scholars like the mestizo grammarian Antonio del Rincón,⁶ Santa Cruz continued to serve during the 1580s and 1590s as a center for collaborative educational and scholarly work among presiding Franciscans such as Sahagún and Oroz, alumni hired as instructors, and young native scholars.⁷

A growing skepticism regarding the need to educate indigenous elites was a factor in the decline of Santa Cruz by the end of the sixteenth century. At the start of the Santa Cruz project, in spite of a reserve of distrust, there were defenders of the enterprise; among their number was the renowned Franciscan Alfonso de Castro, who wrote a Latin treatise defending the education of indigenous elites in 1543.⁸ Following the First Mexican Council (1555), manuscript copies of translations of doctrinal works in indigenous languages became the target of regulation—it was stipulated that all doctrinal works in native languages be removed from native hands, and that any new translations bear the approval of an ecclesiastical language expert and be signed with the author's name.⁹ The censorship of fray Maturino Gilberti's moral dialogues, written in Purépecha and intended for a native audience, exemplifies this shift. In 1559, Gilberti's work was seized by orders of the bishop of Michoacán, and the censors appointed by him decried substantial discrepancies between the Purépecha and Spanish texts, and "things impertinent and ill-sounding to our ears."¹⁰ The 1585 Third Council enforced control by threatening to excommunicate anybody involved in the circulation of doctrinal works translated into native languages without the authorization of a bishop.¹¹ Furthermore, during Pedro de

6. Rincón was the author of *Arte Mexicana*, a Nahuatl grammar printed in 1595 that served as an important precedent for the publication of Horacio Carochi's monumental *Arte de la lengua mexicana* in 1645. See Frances Karttunen, "La contribución del trabajo de Antonio del Rincón a la lexicografía náhuatl del siglo XX," *Revista Latina de Pensamiento y Lenguaje* 2-2B (1995-1996), pp. 391-405; Carochi, *Grammar of the Mexican Language with an Explanation of Its Adverbs (1645)* [1645], Vol. 89, James Lockhart, ed. and trans. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, UCLA Latin American Studies Series, 2001); and Ignacio Guzmán Betancourt, "Antonio del Rincón (1566-1601): primer gramático mexicano," *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 33 (2002), pp. 253-265.

7. Louise Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday: A Nahua Drama from Early Colonial Mexico* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 57-64. See also José María Kobayashi, *La educación como conquista: empresa franciscana en México* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1974).

8. See Martin Nesvig, *Forgotten Franciscans: Works from an Inquisitional Theorist, a Heretic, and an Inquisitional Deputy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).

9. Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, *Concilios Provinciales Primero y Segundo, celebrados en la [...] ciudad de México [...] en los años de 1555 y 1565* (Mexico: Imprenta del Superior Gobierno, 1769), pp. 143-144. See also John F. Schwaller, *The Church and Clergy in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

10. AGN Inquisición [hereafter AGN Inq.], vol. 43, no. 6, fs. 197r-230v.

11. Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, *III Concilium Mexicanus* (Mexico: Imprenta del Superior Gobierno, 1769), p. 14.

Moya y Contreras's tenure as archbishop of Mexico (1573–1591), several factors resulted in a more sustained scrutiny of educational projects for broad audiences, indigenous or not. Among these were the consolidation of the newly established Mexican Holy Office, the proliferation of secular ministers, and the eventual application of directives issued by the Council of Trent and previous Mexican councils.¹² Nonetheless, various anonymous Nahuatl texts show that literate indigenous Christians composed translations and adaptations of Christian narratives and sections of the Scripture in the late sixteenth century.¹³

Paradoxically, the most detailed source that describes Franciscan-Nahua collaborative work at Santa Cruz was written more than half a century after the fact, and it occupies only a few pages in a Nahuatl sermonary from 1606. This work, *Sermonario en lengua mexicana*, was the last in a long list of publications attributed to the Franciscan Juan Bautista Viseo. A kinetic author, Bautista compiled, edited, or authored at least 18 manuscripts and printed doctrinal works in Nahuatl and Spanish,¹⁴ an oeuvre that includes only eight extant imprints: *Confesionario en lengua mexicana y castellana* (1599), *Huehuetlah-tolli* (1600), the two volumes of *Advertencias para los confesores de indios* (1600), *Libro de la miseria y brevedad de la vida del hombre: y de sus quatro postrimerias* (1604), *Vida y milagros del bienaventurado Sanct Antonio de Padua* (1605), and the two volumes of the *Sermonario* (1606).¹⁵ According to Bautista, this last work was the culmination of the 28 years he invested in his study of Nahuatl *por el arte* (by means of a grammar). He emphasized the intergenerational transmission of knowledge about doctrinal Nahuatl through an acknowledgment of the intellectual debts he owed to several Franciscan

12. For a detailed discussion of these factors, see Stafford Poole, *Pedro Moya de Contreras: Catholic Reform and Royal Power in New Spain, 1571–1591* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

13. For a brief Nahuatl text on the conversion of Paul, produced before 1560, see Mark Z. Christensen, "The Tales of Two Cultures: Ecclesiastical Texts and Nahua and Maya Catholicisms," *The Americas* 66:3 (2010), pp. 353–377. For a Christian narrative and a translation from sections of the Scriptures, see Louise Burkhart, "The Voyage of Saint Amaro: A Spanish Legend in Nahuatl Literature," *Colonial Latin American Review* 4 (1995), pp. 29–57.

14. Juan Bautista Viseo, *Sermonario en lengua mexicana* (Mexico: Casa de Diego López Dávalos, 1606), fs. xii r-v.

15. Bautista's career can be traced in part through and from the introductions he wrote for three of his works: the *Confesionario*, the *Libro de la miseria*, and the *Sermonario*. Born around 1555 in New Spain, Bautista took the habit of Saint Francis in 1571 in Mexico City and trained as a scholar of Nahuatl under Miguel de Zárate and Jerónimo de Mendieta. His activities as author and compiler were supported in institutional terms by his distinguished career in the Santo Evangelio Franciscan province. By 1597, he was named guardian of the Tetzoco convent, and he also served as guardian of the convent of Tlatelolco between 1598 and 1603, rising to the position of *definidor* (councilor in a province) in 1603–1605. In 1605–1607, he served as guardian of the convent of Tacuba, and by 1607 he was back again in Tlatelolco as a reader in theology. Bautista probably died between 1607, the date of his last known collaborative work, the *Comedia de los reyes*, and 1613—the date of completion of Torquemada's *Monarquía Indiana* ([1615] 1969), which mentions Bautista's death. See also Román Zulaica Gárate, *Los franciscanos y la imprenta en México en el siglo XVI* [1939] (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1991), pp. 217–221.

scholars. Besides honoring Miguel de Zárata and Jerónimo de Mendieta as his teachers and presenting Juan de Torquemada as his own disciple, Bautista also praises Alonso de Molina, Bernardino de Sahagún, Arnaldo de Basacio, Andrés de Olmos, Alonso de Trujillo, and Juan de Ribas.¹⁶

In an age when New Spain Franciscans wrote about their predecessors primarily to extol their order's enterprises, and in a time when collective authorship was rarely acknowledged in detail, Bautista's much-cited *Sermonario* prologue stands out as a thumbnail biography of Nahua intellectuals. He mentions a group of eight Nahua writers, copyists, and teachers who provided him and his Franciscan predecessors with hard-won insights about the difficulties of translating Christian terms into Nahuatl: Don Juan Bernardo, a "good Latinist" born in Huexotzinco and resident of Cuauhnahuac who became a church cantor; Pedro de Gante, a Tlatelolca who taught for many years at Santa Cruz and helped Bautista translate the lives of the saints; Agustín de la Fuente, another Tlatelolca who was "one of the best scribes" and a teacher at Santa Cruz, assisted Sahagún and Oroz, and prepared drafts of all the works that Bautista printed before 1606; and Diego Adriano, a Tlatelolca skilled in Latin translation and a proficient typesetter. This group also included Hernando de Ribas, don Francisco Bautista de Contreras, Esteban Bravo, and don Antonio Valeriano, whose works are referenced below.¹⁷ This group of Nahua scholars was active in the middle years of the sixteenth century as scholars, teachers, and likely co-authors of works printed under the names of some of the most prominent Franciscan authors in New Spain. By the early seventeenth century, four of them had passed away: Bernardo in 1594, Ribas in 1597, and Valeriano and Gante in 1605.

To this group of native scholars one should add a group of Sahagún's students at Santa Cruz who worked as his assistants as he drafted the *Historia General*, and who are named in the prologue to Book II of that work. Besides the ubiquitous Valeriano, Sahagún mentions two Cuauhtitlan natives—Alonso Vegerano, a Latin teacher at Santa Cruz circa 1574, and Pedro de San Buenaventura—as well as the Tlatelolca Martín Jacobita, who served as rector of Santa Cruz in the 1560s and early 1570s. Three scribes—the Xochimilca Mateo Severino and the Tlatelolcas Diego de Grado and Bonifacio Maximiliano—are also known by name.¹⁸ This group of Nahua scholars and scribes, along with their Franciscan teachers and editors, were members of a scholarly community active

16. Bautista, *Sermonario*, fs. vii r; ix r-xi r.

17. *Ibid.*, fs. vii r-ix r.

18. Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer, *Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, 1499-1590* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), pp. 33, 36, 40; Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday*, p. 66.

in Tlatelolco and other towns in the Basin of Mexico between the 1550s and the early seventeenth century.¹⁹

Furthermore, Santa Cruz was deservedly renowned for its Latinists, the first of whom were trained by the French Franciscan Arnaldo de Basacio. Among early alumni, special mention should be of three: the aforementioned Valeriano and Ribas, and Pablo Nazareo. Valeriano, an Azcapotzalco native who served as governor of his hometown for eight years and as indigenous governor of Mexico City for 23 years, was lauded by Bautista as “such a great Latinist that he spoke *ex tempore* (even during his last years) with such propriety and elegance, that he seemed a Cicero or a Quintilian.”²⁰ Nazareo is best known for penning three Latin letters to the Spanish crown between 1556 and 1566. In these letters, as Louise Burkhart remarks, he describes his work as a teacher and translator of Christian doctrinal works, depicts himself and his fellow Santa Cruz students as *noui homines*, “new men,” and requests privileges owed him by the monarch due to his noble origins.²¹ Finally, the *Sermonario* also stresses the role of Ribas as a Nahua co-author of works attributed to Molina, Gaona, and Bautista:

I have been assisted in my labors by several natives who are very skilled and fluent in Spanish. In particular, there is a Hernando de Ribas (one of the first sons of the Colegio Real de Sancta Cruz, which was established at the monastery of Santiago Tlatelolco in Mexico), a native of the city of Tetzco, a great Latinist who would translate with great facility anything from Latin or Spanish into the Mexican language, attending to its import and not to its literal sense. He wrote and translated various works, which comprise more than thirty hand-widths of paper, and he died in [1597], on September 11. I do believe that Our Lord repaid him for his loyal works, as he was a very Christian Indian who was very interested in our Holy Catholic faith, and in teaching the religious the Mexican language for the honor and service of Our Lord. With his help, the Father fray Alonso de Molina composed the *Arte* and the *Vocabulario Mexicano*, as Father fray Juan de Gaona did his *Dialogos de la paz y tranquilidad del alma*, and I have composed the *Vocabulario ecclesiastico* (which, I think, is very necessary for the preachers), and most of the *Vanidades* by Estel[1]a, the *Flos Sanctorum* or lives of the saints, the *Vidas de Santos*, the explanation of the Ten Commandments, and many other treatises and books that I will endeavor to publish.²²

19. For a recent discussion of indigenous scholars associated with Santa Cruz, see SilverMoon, “The Imperial College of Tlatelolco and the Emergence of a New Nahua Intellectual Elite in New Spain (1500–1760)” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2007).

20. Bautista, *Sermonario*, f. viii r. For Valeriano’s successful political career, see William F. Connell, *After Moctezuma: Indigenous Politics and Self-Government in Mexico City, 1524–1730* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), pp. 65–89.

21. Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday*, p. 61.

22. Bautista, *Sermonario*, f. vii v.

Hence, Ribas was Gaona's collaborator in his 1582 *Colloquios de la paz*, and Bautista's co-translator for several works that included, most notably, the only known attempt to render into an Amerindian language a work by the influential Franciscan author Diego de Estella, *Libro de las vanidades del mundo* (1562). Moreover, Ribas is a likely co-author of one, or both, of Molina's two major lexicographic works, *Aquí comienza un Vocabulario en lengua Castellana y Mexicana . . .* (1555), and the *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana* and *Vocabulario en lengua mexicana y castellana* (1571). As we will see, the fruitful collaboration between Molina and Ribas also yielded a Nahuatl translation of the *Imitatio*.

THE *IMITATIO CHRISTI* AND THE *DEVOTIO MODERNA*

The belief in the need for an intimate, individual, and reflexive encounter between Christian subjects and God's wonders was a theme that linked the spiritual interests of the early Franciscans in Mexico with the meditative devotional practices advocated by the *devotio moderna*. This movement was begun by Geert Groote (1340–1384), a renowned preacher and scholar who founded the Brothers of the Common Life, a monastic society that was consolidated shortly after Groote's death in Windesheim in the Netherlands, and whose members were Canons Regular of the Augustinian monastery of Saint Agnietenberg, near Zwolle. A century later, about 100 houses linked to the Brothers existed, including 20 nunneries.²³ Besides Groote, other Brothers such as Florence Radewijns (1350–1400), Thomas van Kempen (or á Kempis, ca. 1379–1471), Gerard Zerbolt, John Brinckerinck, Henry Mandé, and Gerard Peters wrote extensively on devotions that bridged the gap between monastic life and secular piety.²⁴

The Latin text now known as *De imitatione Christi* or *Imitatio Christi* was written between 1424 and 1427 by a member of the Brothers of the Common Life. Many contemporary scholars believe that Thomas à Kempis was the author, although some believe that Groote could be its author or a co-author.²⁵ This work appeared in manuscript and print form throughout Europe, as it soon was recognized as one of the most eloquent and accessible devotional texts in circulation. Between 1470 and 1520, at least 800 surviving manuscripts and 120 print editions of this work were produced in Latin,

23. Ross Fuller, *The Brotherhood of the Common Life and Its Influence* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 81–93.

24. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 314–342, 521–525.

25. A more distant possibility is that it was written by Giovanni Gersen, a poorly known Italian abbot. For details about this authorship debate, see R. Post, *The Modern Devotion*, pp. 525–531.

Spanish, Catalan, French, German, English, and Italian, among other languages.²⁶ Some of these versions did not mention an author; some publishers attributed the *Imitatio* to the French theologian Jean Gerson, one of the most prolific and celebrated authors of his time. As noted by Marcel Bataillon, sixteenth-century Spanish readers of Kempis' *Imitatio* would have referred to this work as *Contemptus mundi*, and may have attributed it to Gerson.²⁷ A 1441 Latin autograph manuscript at the Royal Library in Brussels that bears Thomas à Kempis's signature is a canonical version of this text, which is divided into four books. Book I (*Admonitiones ad vitam spiritualem utiles*) has 25 chapters, Book II (*Admonitiones ad interna trahentes*) has 12, Book III (*De interna consolatione*) has 59, and Book IV (*De devota exhortatione ad sacram Corporis Christi communionem*) has 18. Since this work circulated both as individual chapters and as a whole, various incunabula and other early editions have a variable number of chapters for Book III, which focuses on a dialogue between Jesus and a believer.²⁸ Hence, there is a discrepancy of five chapters in Book III between these editions and the 1441 Brussels manuscript. As we will see, the Escorial *Imitatio* was based on one of these less canonical works, as it has a five-chapter discrepancy with the Brussels text.

The Franciscan project that resulted in two surviving translations into Nahuatl of the *Imitatio Christi* was an astute evangelization strategy. In choosing to translate into Nahuatl one of the most eloquent and accessible Latin devotional texts, the Franciscans may well have taken advantage of the rhetorical strength of an already popular and effective work to disseminate it among an emerging indigenous readership. The translation was also motivated by a deep investment in contemplative and mystical practices among the Mexican Franciscans.²⁹ Furthermore, the abiding popularity of Kempis' *Imitatio* among a heterogeneous group, including prominent authors and mystics like Luis de Granada, Diego de Estella, Ignatius of Loyola, and Juan de Valdés³⁰ may also

26. Brad Gregory, "Persecutions and Martyrdoms," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. 6, *Reform and Expansion 1500–1660*, R. Po-chia Hsia, ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 268; William C. Creasy, *The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis: A New Reading of the 1441 Latin Autograph Manuscript*. (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2007), p. xiii.

27. Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmus y España: estudios sobre la historia espiritual del siglo XVI* [1937] (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica 1966), p. 48.

28. For an edition of the *Imitatio* featuring a Book III with 64 chapters, see for instance a 1496 Spanish-language version entitled *Libro de remedar a Christo*, printed in Seville and attributed to Gerson, at Houghton Library, Harvard University, Incunabula. 9523.5

29. See Francisco Morales, "New World Colonial Franciscan Mystical Practice," in *A New Companion to Hispanic Mysticism*, Hilaire Kallendorf, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 71–102.

30. Bataillon (in *Erasmus*, pp. 213, 359) discusses Ignatius Loyola's preference for the *Imitatio* over Erasmus's *Enchiridion*, and notes that the *Imitatio* is one of the vernacular devotional works highly recommended by Valdés to his readers.

explain the high regard in which these Franciscans held this work and why they chose it to bring attention to their educational advances among natives.

There are only two known copies, both manuscript, of Nahuatl versions of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*, one currently kept at El Escorial in Spain and the other at the John Carter Brown Library in the United States. The Escorial *Imitatio* is filed under the call numbers RBE d-IV-7 along with other documents and objects gifted to or acquired by Philip II, including the *Relación de Michoacán* (RBE c-IV-5). The volume's rhetorical style, the fact that it is a superb Nahuatl-language manuscript edition produced not for a printer but to be held as a prized possession, and the style and quality of the script are strong suggestions that it is the work of Nahua scholars trained at Santa Cruz, for no other group of individuals could have authored such a work before or during the reign of Philip II. Indeed, as documented by Mendieta in his *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, it was this very manuscript that he himself took from Mexico to Spain in 1570:

I took in the year of seventy [1570], when I went to Spain, a *Contemptu mundi* volume translated into the Mexican language and written by an Indian scribe in well-formed, even, and gracious lettering. . . . When I showed this book to don Juan de Ovando, who was then the president of the Council of Indies, he was so taken by it that he kept it, saying that he would give it to King Philip [II].³¹

What led Mendieta to present Ovando with such a singular gift? As Antonio Rubial García observed,³² Mendieta had several reasons for his 1570 journey to Spain. He planned to attend the general chapter of his order in Florence, and he hoped to tell Ovando about abuses linked to the collection of tithes from natives. More importantly, he brought to Spain some important manuscripts written by Sahagún, including a summary of his *Historia General* for Ovando, and his *Breve compendio de los ritos idolátricos*, for Pope Pius V. Hence, Mendieta's gift of the Nahuatl *Imitatio* to Ovando may have been one of several exhibits in his campaign to extol the Franciscan enterprise in Mexico by presenting what he regarded as the most convincing evidence of such efforts at Madrid and the Vatican. Mendieta may also have thought that this was his last Atlantic crossing, given his troubled health. Nevertheless, he was persuaded by his superiors to return to Mexico in 1573.

It should be noted that, in the sixteenth century, Kempis's *Imitatio* also circulated as *De contemptu mundi*, a title that references its opening sentence. This

31. Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica Indiana*, Antonio Rubial García, ed. (Mexico: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 74–75.

32. Mendieta, *Historia*, Vol. 1, pp. 32–33.

second appellation could lead to confusing this text with two well-known works that sometimes circulated under the same title: a poem written by Saint Bernard of Cluny in the early twelfth century, and a work authored by Pope Innocent III by the end of that century. In a further twist, a popular fourteenth-century Spanish work attributed to the Mester de Clerecía and entitled *Libro de miseria de omne* is an adaptation of Innocent III's *Contemptu*,³³ and thus predates Kempis's work. Moreover, as noted below, a work inspired in part by Kempis's *Imitatio* was published by Diego de Estella in 1562 under the title of *Libro de las vanidades del mundo*; that work also circulated under the title of *Contemptus mundi*. However, since there are no known works other than the Escorial *Imitatio* that correspond to the description given by Mendieta and also have an association with Philip II, it follows that Mendieta was responsible for bringing to Spain the Escorial Nahuatl *Imitatio*.

While Mendieta did not wish to record the authorship of the Escorial *Imitatio*, there are two likely candidates, both Franciscans: the renowned author and lexicographer Alonso de Molina, and his colleague Luis Rodríguez. As noted by Bautista, Molina had the advantage of having come to New Spain as a boy "of a tender age," which led to his learning Nahuatl among other children, and to his recruitment by the Franciscans as a young boy who stood out for his near-native fluency in that language.³⁴ Molina's authorship is supported by a section of the *Códice Franciscano*, written by an anonymous Franciscan, which address Molina's skill:

Without offense to anyone, [he] is the best speaker of the Mexican language among the Spaniards. He has worked for many years to translate into said language some works that are quite necessary for the erudition of any Christian nation, such as the Epistles and Gospels that are sung in church throughout the year, the book of *Comptentu Mundi* [sic], the Hours of Our Lady with their prayers, devotions, and other useful treatises that he has refined and perfected in order to have them printed, which has not been done or is being done for want of the favor, as fray Alonso himself has it, of the archbishop, who has not volunteered a reason other than that there is no need for the Franciscan friars to improve upon these matters, although his endeavors may have other motivations.³⁵

Based on this statement, the Escorial library catalogue attributes RBE d-IV-7 to Molina.³⁶ Rodríguez's candidacy is supported by Mendieta's well-known

33. See Gregorio Rodríguez Rivas, "El *Libro de miseria de omne*, versión libre del *De contemptu mundi*," *Livius* 4 (Leon: Universidad de León, 1993), pp. 177–191.

34. Bautista, *Sermonario*, f. x r.

35. *Códice Franciscano*, J. García Icazbalceta, ed. (Mexico: Editorial S. Chávez Hayhoe, 1941), p. 60.

36. F. Javier Campos y Fernández de Sevilla, *Catálogo del fondo manuscrito americano de la Real Biblioteca del Escorial* (San Lorenzo de El Escorial: Ediciones Escorialenses, 1993), pp. 59–66.

accounting of both Molina's and Rodríguez's works in another section of his *Historia*, which he compiled in Huexotla between 1595 and his death in 1604:³⁷

Fray Alonso de Molina was the one who left most of his work as printed editions, because he had printed his *Arte de la lengua mexicana*, a *Vocabulario*, a *Doctrina cristiana mayor y menor*, a *Confesionario mayor y menor o más breve*, a set of instructions for receiving the Holy Sacrament at the altar, and the life of our father Saint Francis. Besides these works, he also translated into said language the Gospels for the entire year and the Hours of Our Lady, although the latter were confiscated because it was forbidden to have them in the vernacular. He also translated many prayers and devotions for the benefit of the natives, so they would progress in the spiritual and Christian life.

Fr. Luis Rodríguez translated the Proverbs of Solomon in a very elegant manner, and the four books of the *Contemptu mundi*, except that the last 20 chapters of Book III were missing, and those were recently translated by Juan Bautista, who is currently guardian of the monastery at Tetzco, and he has polished all four books, correcting many mistakes made by the scribes who had copied them, and he has them ready to be printed.³⁸

Mendieta's description of the work of Molina and Rodríguez is repeated almost verbatim about a decade later in Juan de Torquemada's *Monarquía Indiana* (1615).³⁹ Since Mendieta describes Rodríguez's *Contemptu* as having (like the *Imitatio*) four books and a lengthy Book III, this work must have been Kempis's masterpiece, rather than any other work known as *Contemptu mundi* in the sixteenth century.⁴⁰ Both Mendieta and Torquemada took for granted the existence of several copies of the Nahuatl *Imitatio*, as they refer to the work of copyists who went over this translation several times. Elsewhere, Mendieta briefly reflects on Rodríguez's career by stating that he was "a great speaker of the Mexican language, and a very honest and courteous friar" who, after being elected as the twelfth Franciscan provincial in New Spain in 1560,⁴¹ called for a new chapter in 1562 in order to return to Spain⁴²; there, he was eventually elected provincial of the Franciscan province of San Miguel.⁴³

Rodríguez was also the author of an impressive Nahuatl translation of the Proverbs of Solomon that, unlike the *Contemptu*, was investigated by the Inqui-

37. Mendieta, *Historia*, Vol. 1, p. 34.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 74–75.

39. Juan de Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana* [1615] (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1969), p. 436.

40. The aforementioned Diego de Estella's 1562 *Libro de las vanidades del mundo*, also known as *Contemptus mundi*, comprised only three books.

41. This fact is also recorded in *Códice Franciscano*, 1941, p. 131.

42. Agustín de Vetancurt, *Teatro Mexicano* [1698] (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1982), p. 150.

43. Mendieta, *Historia*, vol. 2, p. 228.

sition as part of an effort to impede the circulation of the vernacular Scriptures in Mexico. This translation, which was examined by the historian Joaquín García Icazbalceta in the 1860s, has recently resurfaced, and its analysis will provide further information about the ways in which Franciscan and Nahuatl scholars promoted an understanding of the Scriptures in an indigenous vernacular.⁴⁴ As Martin Nesvig has noted, the inquisitors Alfonso Granero Dávalos and Alfonso Fernández de Bonilla in 1577 banned Rodríguez's translation of the Book of Proverbs in 1577. In that same year, a questionnaire regarding the wisdom of allowing a translation of Ecclesiastes into an "Indian language" was circulated among a group that included, besides the Dominican provincial Juan de la Cruz, three important authors of Nahuatl doctrinal works: the Franciscans Molina and Sahagún and the Dominican Domingo de la Anunciación.⁴⁵

Although this source did not specify the authorship or language of the Ecclesiastes translation in question, this work might have been a Nahuatl one authored by Luis Rodríguez. According to José Beristáin, Rodríguez composed such a translation, which was reportedly kept in the library of the Jesuit Colegio de San Gregorio in Mexico City⁴⁶ along with other potentially controversial manuscripts on indigenous idolatry, such as Ruiz de Alarcón's *Tratado*, Serna's *Manual de ministros de indios*, and Ponce de León's *Relación*.⁴⁷ In a mystifying turn, Mendieta, who was knowledgeable about the works of his fellow Franciscans, does not mention Molina's authorship of a Nahuatl *Imitatio*. Given Mendieta's coyness regarding the authorship of the Nahuatl *Imitatio* that he brought from Santa Cruz to El Escorial in 1570, this apparent omission must be elucidated through a philological and rhetorical analysis.

AN INITIAL COMPARISON OF THE ESCORIAL AND JCB NAHUATL *IMITATIO* MANUSCRIPTS

The Escorial *Imitatio* is a 172-folio manuscript whose pages are 10.3 cm x 14.8 cm. Its opening page is reproduced in Figure 1. It is clear that the original man-

44. Tavárez, "A Banned Sixteenth-Century Biblical Text in Nahuatl."

45. Martin Nesvig, *Ideology and Inquisition. The World of the Censors in Early Mexico* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 153–157. The reference to Ecclesiastes appears in the questionnaire (AGN Inq., vol. 43, no. 4, fs. 133–136). These authors were split according to their order: while Molina praised Rodríguez's translation of the Proverbs and argued that it was not fair to deprive natives of "the spiritual consolation of devotional books for their souls and salvation" and Sahagún shared his views, Anunciación felt that a ban of the Ecclesiastes translation would not be detrimental to indigenous evangelization. Anunciación's Nahuatl-language *Doctrina Christiana breve y compendiosa* was printed in 1565.

46. Conde de La Viñaza, *Bibliografía española de lenguas indígenas de América* (Madrid: Sucesores de Ribadeneyra, 1892), p. 255. See also José Mariano Beristáin de Souza, *Biblioteca hispano-americana septentrional* (Mexico: A. Valdés, 1816–1821).

47. David Tavárez, *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 93.

uscript was cut and bound after its arrival in the library, since its current leather binding bears the grill of San Lorenzo on the front, and a fire mark reads “7 E DE IMITATIONE CHRI.” The contents of the work are explicitly described in its first lines as an *exhortatio*, a brief section that often appeared at the beginning of a larger work⁴⁸ and frequently employed allegorical language:

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ begins the first book of this golden little treatise, and an exhortation to the reader about the usefulness of the true and perfect imitation of Christ.⁴⁹

The text, composed in highly accomplished manuscript letters that conform to ruled lines, features illuminated initials for each chapter heading and three beautiful color illustrations, in the manner of a book of hours. The first image (1v) presents a Crucifixion scene with Mary, Mary Magdalene, and a third figure (perhaps Saint John the Evangelist); the second (110v), portrays Saint Jerome in the desert accompanied by a lion; the final illustration, at the end of the manuscript, depicts a rose of the winds. The volume contains a complete translation of Books I and II, and a partial translation of Book III, which runs through the end of Chapter 41, *Contra hominum vana iudicia*, which corresponds to chapter 36 in the 1441 Kempis manuscript. Given the five-chapter discrepancy between the canonical Kempis manuscript and the Escorial *Imitatio*, the authors of the latter translation must have been working from one of the Latin *Imitatio* editions that featured a Book III with 64 chapters.⁵⁰

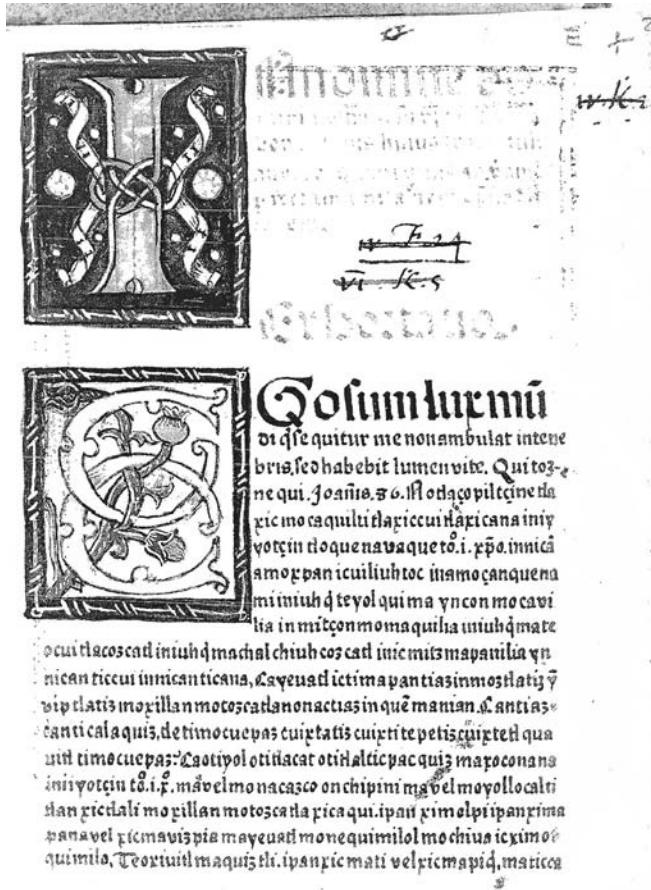
The only other extant version of a Nahuatl *Imitatio* survives as the 165-folio manuscript now kept in the John Carter Brown Library as Codex Indorum 23. This work is a complete translation of the *Imitatio*'s Book I and of the first 11 chapters in Book II. The JCB *Imitatio* comes to an abrupt end in the middle of Book II, chapter 12, with a Nahuatl commentary on the phrase *Erras, erras si aliud queris quam pati tribulationes* (You are mistaken, quite mistaken, if you seek anything but to suffer). While the Escorial *Imitatio* is a highly polished, final manuscript version with no marginalia, the JCB *Imitatio* has all the hallmarks of a working draft, as it features various interlinear and marginal Spanish glosses of the Nahuatl main text. The Spanish marginalia, which provide a rather generic

48. The term *exhortatio* also referred to brief, simple speeches commonly used by Franciscan preachers. See Bert Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); and Neslihan Senocak, *The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209–1310* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012).

49. Real Biblioteca del Escorial [hereafter RBE] d-IV-7, 1r: “In nomine domini nostri iesu xpi incipit liber primus huius tractatuli aurei et quam vilis ad v[er]am et p[er]fectam imita.[ti]onem xpi. ad lectorem.”

50. However, the absence of the last 23 chapters of Book III in the Escorial *Imitatio* does bring to mind Mendieta's assertion that the *Contemptu mundi* authored by Rodríguez lacked the last 20 chapters of Book III.

FIGURE 1
The Escorial Nahuatl Translation of the Imitatio Christi: Opening Page



Source: RBE d-IV-7, 2r. Illustration courtesy of the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain.

gloss of various sections of the manuscript, seem to have been produced so that a non-native Nahuatl reader—perhaps a Franciscan editor—could read through the manuscript. There are also numerous interlinear corrections and changes to the Nahuatl text, and many Nahuatl terms have been crossed out.

Indeed, the JCB *Imitatio* was created or appropriated as a working draft, as it was subjected to an orthographic correction of its Nahuatl text. This work was originally composed using a Nahuatl orthography that employs the graphemes *hu* to transcribe the glide /w/, *ll* to mark an /l/ in many verbs, and *h* to mark

the glottal stops that were called *saltillos* in Spanish. There is also the occasional marking of glottal stops with a grave accent, a notation later employed in the works of the Jesuit lexicographer Horacio Carochi.⁵¹ At some point, a corrector went over the JCB *Imitatio* and crossed out almost every *h* that corresponded to either the *hu* transcription of /w/ or a glottal stop and also drew lines through the first of the two *l*'s transcribing the /l/ phoneme in verbal forms, thus bringing the text into conformity with the Nahuatl orthography prominently featured in both the Escorial *Imitatio* and Molina's 1571 *Vocabulario*.⁵² Since no codicological analysis of either manuscript has been carried out, it is not known whether the JCB *Imitatio* was produced before or after 1570, which is the *terminus ante quem* for the Escorial *Imitatio*. Only a sustained comparison of the Escorial and JCB texts will allow us to reach a more definitive conclusion.

Both the Escorial and the JCB manuscripts are non-literal Nahuatl glosses of the *Imitatio Christi*, with added commentary that includes metaphors, similes, and idioms directed toward a Nahua readership. The manuscripts' structure is comparable to the tradition of the *catena*, a scholarly commentary on the meaning of Scripture verses, drawn from the work of *auctoritates* (authoritative theologians and scholars); the best known example of this genre is Thomas Aquinas's *Catena Aurea*. Like the *catena*, the JCB *Imitatio* was crafted by copying a phrase from a Latin text to be commented upon—in this case, not from the Scriptures or *auctoritates* but from the text of the *Imitatio*—followed by a gloss and commentary in Nahuatl. The JCB *Imitatio* features a systematic approach, as it presents first a Latin phrase from the *Imitatio* written in red ink, followed with a Nahuatl-language gloss and commentary in black ink—a structure that, paradoxically, mirrors the received preconquest Nahuatl metaphor for writing, *in tlilli in tlapalli*, “the black and the red.” In contrast, the Escorial *Imitatio* presents the Nahuatl text by itself, with virtually no introductory Latin citations drawn from Kempis's *Imitatio*.

CONVEYING CHRIST'S WORD IN THE ESCORIAL NAHUATL *IMITATIO*

Table 1 shows my translation of folios 2r-3r of the Escorial *Imitatio*,⁵³ with a heuristic division into eight themes. In this selection, the implicit speaker is a

51. See Carochi, *Grammar of the Mexican Language*.

52. I thank one of my anonymous reviewers for noting that in the JCB *Imitatio* the reduction of double *l*s into single ones is done only for verbal forms, thus bringing it into conformity with Molina's orthography.

53. I thank Barry Sell for sharing with me his transcription of some sections of RBE.IV.7. I revised and checked Sell's transcription against a microfilmed copy of this document. Given the manuscript's tight binding, some letters are difficult to transcribe. I have used the character pair < > to indicate transcription doubts, and the pair [] to transcribe most abbreviations. This is my own translation, and it favors the lexical choices that appear in Molina's 1571 *Vocabulario*.

Franciscan friar who, in addressing a Nahuatl Christian, outlines the meaning of John 8:12, the Scripture with which Kempis' *Imitatio* begins, and employs evocative metaphors to convey the preciousness of Christ's word and the importance of taking Christ as a model.

TABLE 1

Folios 2r-3r of the Escorial Imitatio: Author's Translation from the Nahuatl

[1: On the preciousness of Christ's word]	
[2r] Ego sum lux mu[n]di q[ui] sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris. sed habebit lumen vite. Quitoz nequi. Joan[n]is. 86.	<i>I am the light of the world, whoever follows me does not go about in darkness, but will have the light of life. [John 8:12]. It means, John 8:6 [sic]</i>
Notlaçopiltçine tla xicmocaquilti tla xicui tla xicana in iyyotçin tloque navaque to.o i. xo. in nica[n] amoxpan icuiliuhtoc	<i>My dear child: Listen to, take, and hold the breath of the Owner of the Near and the Nigh, our lord Jesus Christ, which is painted in this book.</i>
in amo çan quenami in iuhq[ui] teyolquima yn conmocavilia in mitçonmomaquilia in iuhq[ui]ma teocuitlacoçcatl in iuhq[ui]ma chalchiuhcoçcatl inic mitzmapanilia	<i>It is a very worthy thing, like something very dear that he bequeaths and gives to you like a gold necklace, like a precious stone necklace that he places on you.</i>
yn nican ticui in nican ticana. Ca yeuatl ic timapantiaz in moztlatiz y[n] viptlatiz	<i>Here you take and hold it, for you will put it on tomorrow or the next day [very soon].</i>
moxillan motoçcatlan onactiaz in que[n]manian	<i>It will soon come to stay on your belly, on your neck.</i>
[2: On returning to idolatry]	
Can tiaz can ticalaquiz, tle timocuepaz	<i>Where will you be, where will you go in, what will you turn back to?</i>
cuix tatiz cuix tetepetiz	<i>Maybe you will return to the water, to the hills, [the altepetl]</i>
cuix tetl quauitl timocuepaz?	<i>to the stone, the wood? [idols]</i>
[3: On placing the word of Christ inside oneself, and wearing it like a jewel]	
Ca otiyol otitlacat otitlalticpacquiz ma xoconana in iyyotçin to.o i. x.o	<i>You who were bred and born and emerged onto the earth, take the breath of our lord Jesus Christ;</i>
ma vel monacazco onchipini ma vel moyollocaltitlan	<i>May it drip into your flesh and bowels;</i>

xictlali moxillan motozcatla xicaqui.	<i>Wear it, place it upon you, honor it well,</i>
ma yeuatl monequimilol mochiua ic ximoquimilo. Teoxiuitl maquiztli.	<i>May you tie on your wrap, made for you. It is a turquoise, a bracelet.</i>
ipan xicmati vel xicmapiq[ui], ma ticca[2v]uh. ipan xoonotiuuh itech ximopilo itech ximocototzlalli	<i>Pretend that you grab it firmly, take it away, do all that you can, persevere, kneel before it.</i>
ynmacaçan xopalehuac quetçalli ic ximotimalo	<i>It is like a green and precious feather; be honored by it.</i>
[4: On the Nahuatl Christian's free will]	
ic movic ninoquixtia: ic nixonexca ic nitlamatçoua	<i>With it, I fulfill my obligation toward you, and thus I warn and advise you,</i>
tiçatl ivitl tlapalli: nicchihua.	<i>I make white varnish, feathers and colors [I give advice that is good for you].</i>
yece ticmati aço toconcuiz aço toconanaz, acanoçomo	<i>But you know it; maybe you will take and grasp it, is that not so?</i>
aço çann ipantocontlaçaz aço çan toconmapeuaz: aço çan toconicxixopeuaz. yece ma iuh ye moyollo.	<i>Or maybe you will only cast it aside or throw it away; maybe you will give it a kick, but that is how your heart is.</i>
[5: On how rejecting Christ's word results in damage]	
yeh iccenma[n]y[an] toconmocauilia ye iccenma[n]yan mixcoyan monevian toc[on]mottitia toconmonamicitia in atlauhtli tepexitl:	<i>But you always leave it aside; it is always your own will to seek the ravine and the crag, as they suit you well. [By your own will you seek your own ruin].</i>
yn tochtli yn maçatl iyoui ayoc titlacaneciz ayoc titlacacemeletiez,	<i>Like a rabbit or a deer [like a rebel] that suffers, you will no longer seem human or be peaceful</i>
ça iuhquinma tetl ivinti quauitl timochiuaz	<i>It will be as if you were drunk and hit yourself with stones and sticks.</i>
timotçotçonaz, timocahcapaniz ayoccan tauiaz ayoccan tiuellamatiz tohtonevaz chichinacaz in moyollo monacayo.	<i>You will strike yourself, you will make a cracking noise, you will not rejoice or be happy; your heart and flesh will be in pain; they will sting.</i>
Ompa onquiçaz in t[alitic]p[a]c timaliuiz in icnopillotl icnotlacayotl	<i>Poverty and need come out and swell on Earth.</i>

ayoccan ahuiaz, ayoccan vellamatiz in moyollo mopan monamiquiz mopan mocenyacatz in cococ teopouhqui.	<i>Your heart no longer rejoices or is happy; it comes across, and is overcome, by illness and affliction.</i>
[6: On Christ's radiant word]	
Av in atitlamocnopil in atitlamomaceual: hatoconcuiz hatoconanaz in iyotç[in] itlatoltçin tloque navaque to.o i. xo.	<i>And you are not worthy, you do not deserve it. You will not grasp, you will not take the breath, the word of the Owner of the Near and the Nigh, our lord Jesus Christ,</i>
in iuhquima teoxiuhyotoc. yn iuhquima maquizyotoc cucueyocatot tonameyotoc in itopco in ipetlalcaco in oncan mani in coyauac tezcatl necoc xapo	<i>which lies as if full of turquoise, as if full of bracelets, like radiance and splendor, in the woven cover, the chest [a secret] in which there is a wide mirror polished on both sides.</i>
in oncan onnetto in oncan ontlachialo in ilhuicac in mictlan.	<i>It is seen and observed there, in heaven and in the underworld.</i>
Av in oncan icac in tlaulli in ocotl: yn oncan icac in iuhqui pochotl avevetl in sancta cruz	<i>And there stand the brightness and the torch; there stands like the silk cotton tree and the cypress [the authorities], the Holy Cross,</i>
in iuhqui malacayoticac cehualloticac ecauhyoticac iceuallotitlan iyecauhyotitlan necacalaquilo.	<i>like a tree canopy, or something that throws or makes a shadow; people go under its shadow and shelter.</i>
Que[n]mach vel teuatl que[n]mach tami	<i>How can it be that it is you, who are you?</i>
canmach mocnopil canmach momaceual canmach mit<ç>icnoma in tloque nahuaque	<i>How are you worthy and deserving, how does the Owner of the Near and the Nigh find you worthy?</i>
in ye toconmaviçoua in tlavili in ocotl in ye tontlachiaz in tezcac in imiyauayoca[n] tonameyotl.	<i>You marvel at the brightness, at the torch, you will observe the ray of sun atop the mirror.</i>
Av in axcan tla xiquitztimotlali ca izca in nelli: teoxivtl in nelli maquiztli:	<i>And now be prudent: here is the true turquoise, the true bracelet</i>
yzca in coyauac tezcatl necoc xapo, y[n] noviampa naltonatimani. ye momac noconmana yevatl,	<i>Here is the wide mirror polished on both sides. There is clarity everywhere, and I place it in your hands.</i>

[7: Nahuatl gloss of John 8:12]	
[3r] <c>a cemanauac nitlanextli. nintlauil nimocouh nintla<ne>x in t[altic]p[a]c tlaca	<i>I am the light of the world, I am the brightness, the torch, the light of the people on Earth.</i>
in aquin nechtoctaiuh in nechnemilizto<ca> in notech cana qualli machiotl. amo tlayouayan amo <mix>tecomac in yatiuh amo motlayovanaquia,	<i>Whoever goes following me and follows me in life and takes a good example from me does not go about in darkness or shadow, night does not fall on him.</i>
çan itech <ti>uh, quitimalotiuh in yoliliztlanextli in yoliliztona<me>yotl.	<i>He will be near to, he will be filled with the light of life, the sun ray of life.</i>
[8: Christ's word, like a sun ray that awakens the Nahua Christian]	
O tla xiquitta in mixtitlan ayauhtitlan oquiça omomanaco [i]n tonatuih iuhquin otlapetlan. oxapotti<m>oquetz omatçayan in ilhuicatl.	<i>Look among the clouds and fog, where the sun comes out and spreads out, as if there had been lightning, and the sky had broken up and cleared up</i>
oquiçaco omomana<co> in yoliliztonatuih. i. x.o	<i>there, where the sun of life, Jesus Christ, comes out and spreads out.</i>
Oncan in mamaça intlaqua<y>an omoquetçaco in tlauiill in ocotl in tlauiçcalli in tona<m>eyotl in iiyotçin itlatoltçin. i. x.o in oquimotemachtili <mo?>nemico t[altic]p[a]c,	<i>There in the manger, it rose: the brightness, the torch, the dawn, the sun ray, the breath, the word of Jesus Christ, which he taught. He came to live on Earth.</i>
inic icenquizcaqualnemiliztica. yvan tla<ma>viçoltica oquintlauilico in c[e]m[anaua]c tlaca.	<i>Through his entirely good life and by this marvel, he came to illuminate the people of the world.</i>
Av in axcan tla xi<cc>hia tla ximixçayana,	<i>And now look at it: may it [Christ's word] tear you asunder.</i>
cuix cenca aya temico titlachia <vel> cenca aya temico ticmati cuix cenca aya ivin temico <tla>poui in mix in moyollo.	<i>Maybe you are drowsy or sleepy, maybe you are drunk with sleep, and your face and heart are opening up</i>
Canmach in mitec canmach yn <m>onacazco	<i>Where is it [Christ's word] in your stomach, in your flesh?</i>
quenmach in tiyolloquimil. quenmach yn ti<n>acaztapal quenmach in tixtepetla. in maca çan ticochi,	<i>How can you be such a dullard, so deaf, so blind, as if you slept?</i>
q[ue]n<m>ach in atiça.	<i>How can you not wake up?</i>

This *exhortatio* deploys highly evocative rhetorical choices to compel a Nahua believer to accept Christ's "breath," or word. Christ is given a title drawn from Nahua cosmology—*tloque navaque*, "Owner of the Near and the Nigh"—which appears in other doctrinal texts. The authors of this translation profit from a fortuitous convergence between Jesus's assertion in John 8:12 that he is "the light of the world" and a common trope in doctrinal Nahuatl that depicts Christ as a bright sun.⁵⁴ He is called *yoliliztonatiuh*, "the sun of life," and the revelation of this word to the native believer is depicted as sun breaking through the clouds after a storm. In a further twist, Christ's word is described here using two received *difrasismos* (couplets): *in tlauiilli in ocotl* "the brightness, the torch" and *in tlauiizcalli in tonameyotl*, "the dawn, the sun ray." The section begins by stating that the word of Christ is *in iuhq[ui]ma teocuitlacozcatl in iuhq[ui]ma chalchiuhcozcatl*, "like a gold necklace, like a precious stone necklace" the Christian should wear,⁵⁵ and this is later identified as *teoxiuitl maquiztli*, "the turquoise, the bracelet" to be held firmly in the believer's hands. Following the conventions of the exalted Nahua dialogues known as *huehuetlahtolli*, the implied speaker questions whether the Nahua neophyte may have a better alternative by asking the latter if he truly wishes to return to the customs of the *altepetl* and to *tetl quauitl*, the stone and the wood—a synecdoche that, following Scriptural tradition, refers to idols crafted with such materials.⁵⁶ In an evocative turn, Christ's word is described as something that must penetrate believers' bodies: *ma vel monacazco onchipini ma vel moyollocaltitlan*, "may it drip into your flesh and bowels." While the believer may exercise his free will by throwing or even kicking away the good word, he is warned that he will only hurt himself, as specified by two memorable idiomatic tropes: *yeh iccenma[n]y[an] toconmocauilia ye iccenma[n]yan mixcoyan monevian toc[on]mottitia toconmonamictia in atlaubtli tepexitl*, "But you always leave it aside, it is always your own will to seek the ravine, the crag, as they suit you well"; and *ça iuhquinma tetl ivinti quauitl timochiuaz*, "It will be as if you were drunk and hit yourself with stones and sticks." In another turn rhetorically reminiscent of the *huehuetlahtolli*, the speaker is asked what makes him worthy and deserving of Christ's word.

This section contains several allegories, a device that would well serve the aims of an *exhortatio*, according to the Franciscan scholar William of Ockham.⁵⁷ For

54. See Louise Burkhart "The Solar Christ in Nahuatl Doctrinal Texts of Early Colonial Mexico," *Ethnohistory* 35:3 (1988), pp. 234–256.

55. This trope resembles a later description of the *persignum crucis* as a feathered headband that Nahua Christians place on their heads in Sahagún's *Psalmódia Christiana*.

56. See Isaiah 40:18–20, 44: 9–20; Jeremiah 10:1–5; and Habakkuk 2:18–19. For analysis of this trope in Nahua and Zapotec doctrinal texts, see Tavárez, *Invisible War*, p. 15.

57. See Alastair J. Minnis, "Material Swords and Literal Lights: The Status of Allegory in William of Ockham's Breviloquium on Papal Power," in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in*

instance, the text employs two arresting tropes to refer to Christ's word, one preceding and the other following a literal translation of John 8:12. The first one depicts the Word as residing *in itopco in ipetlcalco in oncan mani in coyauac tezcatl necoc xapo*, "in the woven cover, the chest [a secret] in which there is a wide mirror polished on both sides," a metaphorical mirror visible both in heaven and on earth. The Franciscan speaker then states he is placing this mirror in the believer's hands. The second depicts Jesus Christ, the sun of life, as it appears "among the clouds and fog, where the sun comes out and spreads out, as if had there had been lightning, and the sky had broken up and cleared up." Finally, Nahua believers, said to be "drunk with sleep," are asked why they have not yet awakened to Christ's word.

Another provocative rhetorical strategy is the use of the phrase *in coyauac tezcatl necoc xapo*, "the wide mirror polished on both sides," which Molina would render as "the [wide] two-sided mirror"⁵⁸ to refer to the word of Christ. This phrase is also employed in Book 6, chapter 9, of Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* to refer to a mirror associated with one of the most powerful Nahua deities, Tezcatlipoca, a veritable "Smoking Mirror."⁵⁹ This section transcribes an oration given after his installation by a *tlahtoani*, or Nahua ruler, with the purpose of acknowledging Tezcatlipoca and seeking his help and illumination. In this prayer addressed to Tezcatlipoca, the ruler states that "you place before them the wide mirror polished on both sides where we commoners appear" (*in vncan tiqujnmanjlia in coiaoac tezcatl, in necoc xapo, in vmpa tonneci in timaceoalti*) for those who "offer you their faces and hearts" (*in vel mjtzmaca in jmjx, in jiollo*).⁶⁰ This phrase is thus linked to the qualities attributed to Tezcatlipoca as seer and diviner, which he bestowed on his followers, including the

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 292–308.

58. Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua Castellana y Mexicana y Mexicana y Castellana* [1571] (Mexico: Porrúa, 1992), p. 65r, renders *tezcatl necoc xapo* as "espejo de dos haces," where *xapo* is the passive form of a verb. Sahagún's translation of this phrase in the *Historia General*, "espejo luciente y pulido de ambas partes," implies that this verb is "to polish," although its shape does not resemble any attested Nahuatl verbs with that meaning. See also Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex: Book Ten*, Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, trans. and eds. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1961), p. 87. I follow Sahagún in my translation. Miguel León-Portilla, in *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1959), pp. 65–66) prefers to render the phrase as "espejo agujereado por ambos lados." This view was supported by Arthur J. Anderson, who interprets *xapo* as the passive of *xapotla*, "to bore or break through something," and translates this phrase as "the broad mirror pierced through." See Sahagún, *Bernardino de Sahagún's Psalmody Christiana* [1593], Arthur J. O. Anderson, trans. and ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), p. 41.

59. For an interpretation of this prayer to Tezcatlipoca, see Guilhem Olivier, *Mockeries and Metamorphoses of an Aztec God: Tezcatlipoca, "Lord of the Smoking Mirror"* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 2003), p. 251.

60. Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex: Book Six*, Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, trans. and eds. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969), p. 54.

new ruler. In Book Ten of the *Florentine Codex*, Sahagún compiled two other examples that suggest that “the wide mirror polished on both sides” was also a metonymical designation of wisdom. In chapter 3, the “good old person ... places before people the wide mirror polished on both sides” (*quitemanilia in coiaoac tezcacatl in necoc xapo*); in chapter 8, the wise person is characterized as “the wide mirror polished on both sides” (*coiaoac tezcacatl, in necoc xapo*).⁶¹ Hence, the Escorial *Imitatio* takes a metonym used by Sahagún to convey the wisdom that Tezcatlipoca granted to those who believed in him.

There is a twist here, however. In the *Imitatio*, it is the Franciscan speaker who places himself in the role that Tezcatlipoca had in the aforementioned oration by a new ruler; and the mirror trope refers not to the wisdom of the Smoking Mirror, but to that of Christ’s word. Perhaps the authors of the Escorial *Imitatio* borrowed the metonym from Sahagún when he and his assistants worked on the *Florentine Codex*. What we know is that there is only a seven-year gap between the Escorial work’s *terminus ante quem* (1570) and that of Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex* (1577). In any case, this metaphor had evidently entered the doctrinal register built by Sahagún and his co-authors: their 1583 *Psalmodia Christiana* states that Jesus is *in coiaoac tezcacatl in necoc xapo*, “the wide mirror polished on both sides.”⁶² Furthermore, the prominent place granted to this trope and the fact that Christ is presented as a solar entity⁶³ suggest that Sahagún’s lexicon had an impact in the drafting of this Nahuatl *Imitatio*.

Who composed the Escorial *Imitatio*? A tentative answer based on philological data, and supported by the *Códice Franciscano*, is that Alonso de Molina and his close collaborator Hernando de Ribas were among the main writers or editors of this work. This thesis does not exclude a collaboration between the two men and Rodríguez, either side by side, or in their continuing work on an earlier translation authored by Rodríguez before his departure from Mexico in 1562. Thirteen separate metaphors and idiomatic phrases that appear in folios 2r through 3r of the Escorial *Imitatio* provide an important line of evidence in favor of Molina and Ribas’s authorship. As shown in Table 2, every one of these phrases appears in Molina’s 1571 *Vocabulario en lengua mexicana y castellana*, and each recurs with minimal morphological or syntactic modifications in the Escorial manuscript. The catch is that the Escorial *Imitatio* was produced before Molina’s 1571 *Vocabulario*; moreover, these phrases are first

61. Sahagún, *Book Ten*, pp. 11, 29. A final, nonmetaphorical and partial recurrence of this phrase is found in Book Ten, chapt. 24, p. 87. It states that the *tezcánamacac*, “mirror seller,” *quinamaca in tezcacatl, in iaoalinhqui, in iaoltic necoc xapo* “sells mirrors, round ones, round and polished on both sides.”

62. Sahagún, *Psalmody Christiana*, p. 40.

63. The relationship between Sahagún and the “solar Christ” in doctrinal Nahuatl texts is discussed in Burkhart, “Solar Christ.”

attested in Molina's 1571 dictionary, and not in his 1555 *Vocabulario*.⁶⁴ While these phrases could have been identified by a Franciscan scholar other than Molina, the appearance of 13 set expressions in both Molina's dictionary and in folios 2 and 3 of the Escorial *Imitatio* cannot be explained as merely a coincidence. Since the Escorial *Imitatio* was completed by 1570 and Molina published his two-part *Vocabulario* in 1571, it is possible that Molina and Ribas, or someone associated with them, were at work on both a Nahuatl translation of the *Imitatio* and the lexicographic entries for the 1571 *Vocabulario* at the same time. One enterprise—the collection of Nahuatl metaphors, similes, and idiomatic phrases for the 1571 *Vocabulario*—may have included, as a subset, another one with a different pragmatic aim: the crafting of an introduction for Nahua readers of the *Imitatio*.⁶⁵

THE JCB NAHUATL *IMITATIO* AND BAUTISTA'S LOST WORK

The similarities and differences in the opening sections of the Escorial and the JCB manuscripts are apparent. Each of them is an *exhortatio* to the Nahua reader that begins with John 8:12 and precedes the explanation of the *Imitatio*'s first chapter. In general terms, the JCB introduction reads like a simpler version of its Escorial counterpart. As shown in Table 2, the opening of the JCB text deployed only eight of the 13 metaphors or idioms found at the beginning of the Escorial work. These works also have somewhat different introduction strategies. While the Escorial text opens with a Latin version of John 8:12 and then describes the preciousness of Christ's word, the JCB *Imitatio* proceeds directly to a literal Nahuatl translation of John 8:12, omits the first section found in the Escorial text, and then goes directly to a simplified section regarding the Nahua believer's return to idolatry. Some elements are removed entirely in the JCB text; for instance, while the Escorial *Imitatio* links Christ's cross to traditional authority through the formula *pochotl avevetl*, "the silk cotton tree and the cypress," and mentions Christ's manger, *mamaça int-laqua<y>an*, as a source of radiance, the JCB text bears no mention of these two symbols. Some sections in the Escorial *Imitatio* are simplified considerably

64. Molina's 1555 Spanish-Nahuatl *Vocabulario* is narrower in scope than his 1571 work, and the metaphors and idioms that accompany some of the entries for his 1571 dictionary rarely appear in the 1555 text. I have not yet analyzed any links between the Escorial *Imitatio* and Molina's 1571 *Arte*.

65. In a different context, Sell has noted the connection between two Nahuatl linguistic projects associated with the Jesuit author Horacio Carochi, and with his most important collaborator, the Nahuatl-speaking author and curate Bartolomé de Alva. On the one hand, Alva deployed intricate samples of polite speech in his Nahuatl rendition of Lope de Vega's play *The Animal Prophet and the Fortunate Parricide*; on the other, some of these phrases appear as grammatical examples in Carochi's 1645 *Arte de la lengua Mexicana*. Barry Sell, "Two Eminent and Classical Authors of the Discipline: Father Horacio Carochi SJ, and Don Bartolomé de Alva, Nahuatl Scholars of New Spain," *Nahuatl Theater, Volume 3: Spanish Golden Age Drama in Mexican Translation*, Barry Sell, Louise Burkhart, and Elizabeth R. Wright, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), pp. 26–34, esp. p. 31.

TABLE 2
*Selected Metaphors and Idioms from Molina's 1571 Nahuatl Dictionary
 Employed in the Escorial and JCB Imitatio Manuscripts*

	Molina's Gloss: 1571 <i>Vocabulario</i>	Molina's Nahuatl Terms: 1571 <i>Vocabulario</i>	RBE d-IV-7; JCB Codex Ind. 7
1	hago el deuer contigo, y cumplo con lo que soy obligado	mouicpa ninoquixtia [61r]	ic movic ninoquixtia [<i>Escorial</i> , 2r]
2	ausisar a alguno y aconsejarle lo quele conuiene.	iuítl, tlapalli, tizatl nictlalia [44r]	tiçatł ivitł tlapalli: nicchihua [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v]
3	de tu voluntad y con toda determinacion te echas a perder, metaphora.	iccemayan mixcoyan moneuian tocomottitia toconmonamicitia ynatlauhtli [32r]	iccenma[n]yan mixcoyan monevian toc[on]mottitia toconmonamicitia in atlauhtli tepexitl [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v] Ca ye ic cenmanyán, in ixcoyan monehuiyan Toconmochauiliz: atlauhtli. tepexitl ticmottitiz, yc ticmonamicitiz [<i>JCB</i> 1r]
4	no parecer ni tener ser ni arte de hombre	tlacaneci aocni. aocnitlacanez [115v]	ayoc titlacaneçiz [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v] aocmo titlacaneçiz [<i>JCB</i> , 1v]
5	monstruo, o persona de buena conuersacion y pacifica	tlacacemele [114v]	ayoc titlacacemeletiez [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v] aocmo titlacacemelletiez [<i>JCB</i> , 1v]
6	seras assi como el que toma palos o piedras para se matar. i. haras mucho mal a ti mismo. metaphora. ⁶⁶	ihquimma tetlyuinti quauitlyuinti ictimochiuaz [43v]	ça ihquinma tetl ivinti quauitl timochiuaz [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v] Ça ihqui y[n] ma tetl y h uiti [sic] quauitl y h uinti yc timochiuaz [<i>JCB</i> , 1v]
7	padecer gran necessidad	ye ompa onquiça ynicnopillotl inicnotlacayotl [35v]	Ompa onquiçaz in t[laltic]p[a]c timaliuiz in icnopillotl icnotlacayotl [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v] ompa onquiçaz in t[laltic]p[a]c, timalihuiz inic nopillotl, ynic notlacayotl [<i>JCB</i> , 1v]

66. See also Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón, *Treatise on the Heathen Institutions that Today Live Among the Indians Native to this New Spain (1629)*, J. Richard Andrews and Ross Hassig, trans and eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), pp. 114, 165, 185.

8	venir sobre mi muchos trabajos	cococ teopouhqui nopan omoyacati [23v]	moyollo [...] mopan mocenyacatiz in cococ teopouhqui [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v] cococ, teopouhqui ticmonamictiz [<i>JCB</i> , 1v]
9	de donde mereciste el beneficio que el señor te a hecho?	cammach mitzicnoma intloque in nauaque? [12r]	canmach mit<ç>icnoma in tloque Nahuaque [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v] can mitzicnoma in tloque nauaque [<i>JCB</i> , 1v]
10	ay claridad por todas partes	nouiampa naltonatimani [74r]	y[n] noviampa naltonatimani [<i>Escorial</i> , 2v]
11	aun miras las cosas como modorro? [...] aun estas como modorro lleno de sueño?	cuicenca ayatemico titlachia? [...] cuicenca aya temico ticmati? [26v]	cuix cenca aya temico titlachia <vel> cenca aya temico ticmati [<i>Escorial</i> , 3r] Cuix cenca ayac ticmati, cuix cenca aya motemico titlachia [<i>JCB</i> , 1v]
12	boto o rudo de entendimiento, o descuidado.	yolloquimil [40v]	tiyolloquimil [<i>Escorial</i> , 3r]
13	como eres tan ciego. s. que no vees lo que te conuiene	cammach intixtepetla [12r]	quenmach in tixtepetla [<i>Escorial</i> , 3r]

in the JCB text; this is the case for one that discusses free will, and for the final section, which likens the Word to sunlight breaking through clouds.

On folio 165r of the JCB *Imitatio*, which is bound together with a collection of Nahuatl sermons, one finds the signature of the Franciscan Agustín de Vetancurt (ca. 1620–1700). The fact that this very manuscript ended up in his hands is recorded in a section of this friar's 1698 *Teatro Mexicano* in which he, taking his cue from Mendieta and Torquemada, lists the works of prominent early Franciscans:

[Father] fray Luis Rodríguez translated into the Mexican language the Proverbs of Solomon and the four books of the *Contemptus mundi*, which he left unfinished. [Father] fray Juan Bautista completed them, and corrected the improprieties and errors of the scribes, and though Torquemada says in Book 9, folio 436 [of *Monarquía Indiana*] that [Bautista] printed them, and said Bautista states in his prologue to Advent that they are about to be printed, I have not seen them

printed, and I have them as a manuscript in good writing, with a brief treatise on the Via Crucis.⁶⁷

Four comments should be made about Vetancurt's statement. First, he derives Rodríguez's authorship of the *Contemptu* from Torquemada, who took it from Mendieta's *Historia*. Second, the text Vetancurt mentions here must be the JCB *Imitatio*, since this manuscript bears Vetancurt's signature on its last folio, 165r. Given that Vetancurt refers to a work containing both the *Contemptus mundi* and a short text on the *Via Crucis*, the latter reference probably corresponds to the very last *Imitatio* chapter in the JCB manuscript, which Vetancurt may have perused: chapter 12 in Book III, entitled *De regia via sanctae crucis*.⁶⁸ Third, Vetancurt assumed that the text he owned and signed was Bautista's draft of the *Imitatio*. Finally, Vetancurt's statement suggests that, although Bautista labored on his *Imitatio* with the intention of publishing it, either this work was never printed, or no copies remained in circulation by the late seventeenth century. Such a stark endpoint stands in contrast with Bautista's wildly optimistic tone in his 1606 *Sermonario*:

Don Francisco Bautista de Contreras (who is currently governor of the city of Xochimilco), a son of said Colegio [de Santa Cruz] and a native of the town of Quauhnahuac, is very skilled, particularly regarding penmanship, and he writes in our Castilian tongue letters so well composed, that very proper men, upon reading them, marvel at them and derive great enjoyment. He also has been of great assistance regarding the completion of many works, including the *Contemptus mundi* (whose printing has already begun), and the translation of the *Libro de las vanidades del mundo*, both of which will soon come out, if favored by divine will.⁶⁹

Bautista does not state here the name of the author of the Nahuatl *Imitatio* (called here *Contemptus mundi*) that he and Bautista de Contreras completed. Nonetheless, Bautista may have known about Mendieta's attribution of this work to Rodríguez in the *Historia*, and Rodríguez is the most likely author of the *Imitatio* on which Bautista and Bautista de Contreras worked. The close relationship between Bautista and Mendieta led the latter to entrust the former with the manuscript of the *Historia* with the intention of having it printed.⁷⁰

67. Vetancurt, *Teatro Mexicano*, p. 140.

68. A less likely possibility is that Vetancurt conflates here the JCB *Imitatio* with a very different work. Vetancurt authored a Nahuatl work on the Via Crucis; it is said to have been printed twice by Francisco Rodríguez Lupercio, but survives only as a copy made in 1738 from a 1680 original. See John F. Schwaller, "Fray Agustín de Vetancurt and the 'Via Crucis en mexicano,'" a paper presented at the 53rd meeting of the International Congress of Americanists, Mexico City.

69. Bautista, *Sermonario*, f. viii r. In the following paragraph, Bautista also names Esteban Bravo as a Nahuatl Latinist who was a contributor to "this labor," a phrase that could refer either to the *Contemptus mundi*, or to Bautista's works in general.

70. *Ibid.*, f. xi r.

What we have before us is a complicated history of manuscript production and circulation in the sixteenth century, one that led to an understandable confusion by the late seventeenth century. On the one hand, I have presented above philological evidence, supported by a statement in the *Códice Franciscano*, that Molina and his collaborator Ribas were among the authors of the Escorial *Imitatio*, which was produced before 1570 and then taken to Spain by Mendieta. Some philological evidence suggests a close relationship between the contents of this Escorial manuscript and the JCB *Imitatio*; moreover, the JCB *Imitatio* appears to be a more streamlined version of the Escorial *Imitatio*, with a different structure, and a dense set of marginalia that was added after its production. Furthermore, the JCB *Imitatio* comprises only Book I and the first twelve chapters of Book II, so it does not have the last 20 chapters that were missing in Rodríguez's Nahuatl *Imitatio*, according to Mendieta. Although Vetancurt did own and sign the JCB *Imitatio*, we have no evidence that he engaged in a close reading of its contents, as he takes its last chapter to be a separate treatise. Hence, the only link between the JCB *Imitatio* and Bautista's *Imitatio* is Vetancurt's identification of it as a Bautista manuscript, which he derived from Mendieta and Torquemada. It seems that Vetancurt took the JCB *Imitatio* to be Bautista's work, given the information that was available to him as he worked on his *Teatro Mexicano*, and because he did not know that the Escorial *Imitatio* even existed. Bautista's *Imitatio* never made it to print, and while it is tantalizing to think that the JCB *Imitatio* was one of the drafts on which Bautista worked, only future studies may be able to confirm this claim. It is also only further research that will cast light on two important issues: whether Rodríguez collaborated with Molina on a Nahuatl *Imitatio* before his departure for Spain in 1562, and whether the JCB *Imitatio* was produced as a draft prior to or after the completion of the Escorial manuscript.

BEYOND THE NAHUATL *IMITATIO*: THE *DEVOTIO MODERNA* IN SPAIN AND MEXICO

The Franciscan and Nahua scholars at Santa Cruz attempted to bring the *devotio moderna* to an indigenous audience not only by means of the *Imitatio* works discussed above, but also by translating into Nahuatl works by two important Spanish devotional authors who expanded on the central themes of the *Imitatio* in the second half of the sixteenth century: the Franciscan Diego de Estella, and the Dominican Luis de Granada. These choices may be explained through an overview of the impact of Kempis's masterpiece in Spain. As Pierre Groult argued, the reception of the *Imitatio* in Spain went through three stages: a period between the late fourteenth century and 1536, when the first printed versions of the *Imitatio* circulated in Spain in Latin, Spanish, and

Catalan; a second period that began in 1536 through the diffusion of a popular translation of the *Imitatio* into Spanish verses, which is now attributed to Juan de Ávila rather than to Luis de Granada; and a third period that marked the “proliferation” of imitators of the *Imitatio*, which began with Estella’s very popular work *Libro de las vanidades del mundo*, a work divided into three books and 120 chapters that was first printed in Toledo in 1562, and then edited and reprinted in Salamanca in 1574.⁷¹ Indeed, Estella’s *Vanidades* was soon competing in popularity with the *Imitatio*, for it was translated and printed in Italian in 1573 and 1581, in Latin in 1585, in English in 1584, in French in 1580 and 1587, in German in 1586, and in Polish in 1611.⁷² The Nahuatl version of it in the early seventeenth century further reflected its enthusiastic reception elsewhere. As Groult contends, while the *Libro de las vanidades* is not a literal rendition of the *Imitatio* in Spanish, it is a close rephrasing of the latter, and it also contains broad correspondences with eight other works attributed to Kempis.⁷³ In the end, Groult finds that Kempis’s work resonates in and is amplified by Estella, and that it eventually influences the work of two later important devotional works by Saint Francis de Sales, the *Introduction à la vie dévote* (1608) and the *Traité de l’amour de Dieu* (1615).⁷⁴

While Bautista’s and Ribas’s version of Diego de Estella’s *Libro de las vanidades* was probably never printed (no copy survives), Bautista did manage in 1604 to commit to print the only known translation into an Amerindian language of the work of Luis de Granada. This volume, titled *Libro de la miseria y brevedad de la vida del hombre* and boldly characterized by Bautista as his literary “firstborn,” is a Nahuatl gloss and reinterpretation of Granada’s *Libro de la oración y meditación*. Bautista’s imprint, divided into five treatises, corresponds to five of Granada’s seven nocturnal meditations, each assigned to a day of the week.⁷⁵ It is surprising, indeed, that Bautista was given a *licencia del ordinario*, or the archbishop’s approval, to print a work that was essentially a

71. Pierre Groult, “Un disciple espagnol de Thomas a Kempis: Diego de Estella,” *Les Lettres Romanes* 5 (1951), Part I, pp. 287–304; 6 (1952), Part II, pp. 23–56; and Part III, pp. 107–128. Unfortunately, Groult continues to attribute this 1536 Spanish translation to Granada, in spite of a growing consensus that identifies Juan de Ávila as its author. See Tarsé, “La traducción española.”

72. See Pío Sagüéz Azcona, *Fray Diego de Estella (1524–1578). Apuntes para una biografía crítica* (Madrid, 1950); and Juan M. Bujanda, *Diego de Estella (1524–1578). Estudio de sus obras castellanas* (Rome, 1970).

73. Groult, “Un disciple espagnol.” The eight works by Kempis that also had an impact on Estella’s volume are *Libellus de recognitione propriae fragilitatis*, *Sermones ad novicios*, *Recommendatio humilitatis*, *Disciplina claustralium*, *De solitudine et silentio*, *Libellus spiritualis exercitii*, *Vallis liliorum*, and *Brevis admonitio spiritualis exercitii*.

74. Groult, in “Un disciple espagnol,” also argues that the work of another Dutch devotional author, Brabançon Harphius, was reworked and adapted by the Franciscan authors Bernardino de Laredo y Juan de los Ángeles, who in turn made an impact on Santa Teresa de Jesús.

75. Juan Bautista Visco, *Libro de la miseria* (Mexico: Emprenta de Diego López Daulos, 1604), pp. 146–148; Luis de Granada, *Libro de la oración y meditación* (Madrid: Andrés García, 1676), pp. 13–14.

Nahuatl translation of a popular work by Granada that carefully avoided any reference to its source.⁷⁶

Two other works not directly related to Kempis or his interpreters are also important elements in the Nahuatl reception of the *devotio moderna*. Notably, both works are modeled as exemplary dialogues, following the structure of Book III of the *Imitatio*. The earlier work is the *Colloquios de la paz y tra[n]quilidad Christiana*, printed in 1582 under Juan de Gaona's name, but with the ever-popular Hernando de Ribas as co-author. This work, framed as a dialogue between a friar and a student, contains 20 chapters originally drafted by Gaona and Ribas and later edited by the Franciscan Miguel de Zárata, who also added citations from Biblical and theological auctoritates. Moreover, a nineteenth-century copy of a translation of this work into an Otomanguan language is kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.⁷⁷ The second work is the Augustinian fray Juan de Mijangos's *Espejo divino*, printed in 1607, which features dialogues between a father and a son. As noted by Barry Sell, this 550-page work resonates with the exalted rhetoric of the Nuhua *huehuetlahtolli*, and it was edited and corrected by the Santa Cruz alumnus Agustín de la Fuente.⁷⁸ The fact that this lengthy and costly volume was reprinted in 1626 suggests that it had a very successful reception.

Although we know little about the indigenous reception of the Nahuatl *devotio moderna*, there are terse but tantalizing hints confirming that native elites participated with enthusiasm in this intellectual trend. As shown by Nadine Béliand, a 1601 will written on behalf of Baltasar de San Juan, of San Agustín Metepec, lists eight different *amatl* (papers) he owned and which he forbade his heirs from selling, as they were intended for his grandsons or godsons. San Juan enforced compliance with church regulations as *alguacil de doctrina*, a post that may explain his interest in doctrinal works. While the term *amatl* may refer to either imprints or manuscripts, San Juan did manage to assemble a small but respectable collection of works that included—besides a *doctrina* by Pedro de Gante, a *confesionario mayor* (perhaps Molina's), a *santoral*, a Nahuatl *Arte y arteyo*, a book of hours, the prayers of the Rosary in Nahuatl, and unspecified works by Sahagún, Bautista, and fray Elías de San Juan Bautista—a *contentus mundi mexicana tlatoa*, or “*Contemptus mundi* in the Mexican lan-

76. This work bore licenses from the viceroy, the general commissary of the Franciscans in New Spain, and a chair in Theology at the Royal University of Mexico, in addition to the approval of Mendieta, who was Bautista's mentor. It was dedicated to Santiago del Riego, a member of the audiencia of Mexico.

77. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Fonds Mexicain 410, pp. 122 ff.

78. Barry Sell, “Perhaps our Lord, God, Has Forgotten Me’: Intruding into the Colonial Nahua (Aztec) Confessional,” in *The Conquest All Over Again: Nahuas and Zapotecs Thinking, Writing, and Painting Spanish Colonialism*, Susan Schroeder, ed. (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), pp. 191, 202.

guage.”⁷⁹ Since, besides the *Imitatio*, there are no attested Nahuatl-language translations of works that could have been identified as *Contemptus mundi*, it is likely that San Juan owned a Nahuatl *Imitatio*. In Mixtec territory, the 1591 will of don Gabriel de Guzmán, who had been cacique of Yanhuítlán since 1558, listed various Christian images and relics along with several books, including a *Contemptus mundi*. Don Gabriel’s case represents a particularly swift transition from Mixtec deities to the *devotio moderna*, since his uncle don Domingo, who served as regent before don Gabriel took office, had been one of three Mixtec noblemen investigated for idolatry and sacrifices between 1544 and 1547 by the apostolic inquisitor Tello de Sandoval.⁸⁰

CONCLUSION

At first glance, the two Nahuatl translations of Kempis’s *Imitatio Christi* may seem to merit only a historical footnote, and that is how they have fared so far. Nevertheless, in this essay I have argued that these two works are essential to our understanding of the depth, significance, and reach of an extraordinary process of collaboration between Franciscan doctrinal authors in New Spain and Nahua scholars in an authorship community that revolved around the Colegio de Santa Cruz and the Franciscan house in Tlatelolco. Furthermore, the two *Imitatio* translations open up the possibility of a sustained historical and philological inquiry into the nature of Nahua-Franciscan collaboration efforts at Santa Cruz in its heyday. This community prospered between the 1550s and the early 1600s, and it included not only a large number of prominent Franciscans, such as Molina, Rodríguez, Sahagún, Zárate, Gaona, Trujillo, Oroz, and Bautista, but also about a dozen Nahua scholars, among whose contributions one should stress those of Valeriano, Ribas, Bautista de Contreras, Fuente, and Bravo. Although there were vast differences between the Windesheim house of the Brothers of the Common Life and the Tlatelolco Franciscan establishment, both communities were linked by their desire to practice, expand upon, and divulge a more reflexive and meditative engagement between believers and Christ. This apparently simple idea had potentially troubling implications, as evidenced by the inquisitorial scrutiny

79. Nadine Béligand, “Lecture indienne et chrétienté: La bibliothèque d’un alguacil de doctrina en Nouvelle-Espagne au XVI siècle,” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 31 (1995), p. 70. The original testament is in AGN Tierras, vol. 2222.

80. Ronald Spores, *The Mixtec Kings and Their People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), pp. 241–244; Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 284, 464. Terraciano suggests that the *Contemptus mundi* owned by don Gabriel could be a version of Diego de Estella’s popular *Libro de las vanidades del mundo*. Given the broad diffusion of the *Imitatio* in the sixteenth century and the fact that it went by the title listed in this will, it is also possible that don Gabriel’s book was an *Imitatio*.

that fell upon two of the most prominent authors who brought the animating principles of the *devotio moderna* to Spain: the Dominican Luis de Granada and the Franciscan Diego de Estella. As Nesvig contends elsewhere in this journal, the Spanish Counter-Reformation indeed came to Mexico in the 1570s, and eventually the printing and diffusion of the collaborations between Nahua and Franciscan scholars were deeply impacted by a growth in skepticism and censorship.⁸¹

The two Nahuatl works chronicled here were not mere imitations of the *Imitatio*. Both works showcase the Nahua role in the intellectual and cultural appropriation of a critical apparatus for the translation and commentary of the Scriptures that had been widely employed by academics in early modern Europe. Furthermore, these works were the centerpiece of a sustained intellectual attempt by leading Franciscan authors in Mexico to have a full intellectual participation in the reception of the *devotio moderna* in Spain by bringing it to an increasingly sophisticated Nahua literate audience. On the one hand, both translations elevated the humble *Imitatio* to the place of Scripture or of a received commentary on it, following the model of the catena in medieval and early modern scholarly texts. On the other, authors such as Gaona, Zárate, and Mijangos followed suit by producing two Nahuatl works—the 1582 *Colloquios de la paz y tranquilidad* and the 1607 *Espejo divino*—that amplify some of the themes found in the *Imitatio*. Furthermore, Bautista, without attribution, appropriated and printed a Nahuatl translation of meditations drawn from the popular *Libro de la oración* written by Granada, another author closely linked to the response to Kempis's work in Spain. Bautista also managed to receive permission to print an unacknowledged translation of the *Libro de las vanidades*, an acclaimed work that Estella derived from the *Imitatio*. Finally, the Nahua intellectual Hernando de Ribas emerges as the single most important writer and philologist in the adoption of the *devotio moderna* in Nahuatl. Not only did he apparently work on the Escorial *Imitatio* under the supervision of Molina, but he also co-authored Gaona's *Colloquios* and Bautista's version of Estella's *Libro de las vanidades*. As shown by a heated debate between Franciscans and Dominicans on the proper translation of the notion of the Trinity into Nahuatl in the early seventeenth century, the emphasis on the *devotio moderna* was accompanied by a revisionist spirit regarding doctrinal translations by earlier generations of mendicant lexicographers.⁸²

81. Martin Nesvig, "The Epistemological Politics of Vernacular Scripture in Sixteenth Century Mexico," *The Americas* 70 (2013), pp. 165–202.

82. See David Tavárez, "Naming the Trinity: From Ideologies of Translation to Dialectics of Reception in Colonial Nahua Texts, 1547–1771," *Colonial Latin American Review* 9:1 (2000), pp. 21–47.

Perhaps the Franciscans were inveterate optimists who, as Stafford Poole has it, “were still trying to live the 1520s in the 1580s.” In their view, “the present and the future were to be more humdrum, because they belonged to the bishops and the institutional church.”⁸³ While one text with important links to the *Imitatio*—Bautista’s version of Granada’s *Libro de la oración*—and two texts credited to Gaona and Mijangos do make it into print, the earlier *Imitatio* ends up buried in the bookshelves of El Escorial. Despite Bautista’s zeal, the Nahuatl *Imitatio* was never published, and we do not know whether the project was abandoned due to censorship or to the death of its editor. Nonetheless, the manuscript versions of the Nahuatl *Imitatio* would have placed indigenous readers in a position comparable to that of literate readers on either side of the Reform who sought to learn about contemplation, meditation, and individual forms of Christian devotion in novel and transformative ways. Furthermore, the availability of Biblical texts in Nahuatl and other indigenous vernaculars would have given indigenous Christians a more direct and intimate knowledge of the Scriptures—an objective that came to be regarded with alarm and suspicion after the establishment of the Mexican Inquisition in the early 1570s, and the instructions of the Third Mexican Church Council. In the end, the Nahua-Franciscan authorship community at Tlatelolco boldly tested the shifting boundaries that delimited the diffusion of religious works in New Spain in the late sixteenth century. In doing so, this group generated a prescient, meticulous, and scholarly Nahuatl literature whose time had not yet arrived.

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83. Poole, *Moya de Contreras*, p. 213.