

Institutional and Popular Religion in Quevedo's "Ya la obscura y negra noche"¹

In this study, I demonstrate the complex relationships between institutional religion and local, popular devotion in Quevedo's poem "Ya la obscura y negra noche". I argue that, through the application of the figure of Wisdom to Mary, Quevedo uses knowledge of liturgy and Scripture to dignify the local advocacy of the church of Santa María de la Antigua in Valladolid. I also explore how this figure's address to the local *cofrades* and encouragement of confraternal celebration uses orthodox scriptural interpretation to privilege popular devotion over institutional religion.

Francisco de Quevedo; Bible; Golden Age Poetry; Virgin Mary; popular religion

Este artículo presenta las complejas relaciones entre las doctrinas institucionales y la devoción popular en el poema "Ya la obscura y negra noche" de Quevedo. En primer lugar, el estudio demuestra que, a través de la interpretación de la figura de la Sabiduría como la Virgen, Quevedo utiliza el conocimiento de la liturgia y de la Sagrada Escritura para exaltar una devoción local, la de la iglesia parroquial de Santa María la Antigua en Valladolid. A continuación, se sostiene que, a través del apóstrofe de esta figura a los *cofrades*, se privilegian elementos de culto popular en el poema a través de la interpretación ortodoxa de la Sagrada Escritura.

Francisco de Quevedo; la Biblia; poesía del siglo de oro; la Virgen; la religión popular

Scholarship on popular religion has flourished in the last few decades; scholars have now discredited the assumption that popular belief is inferior or ignorant, as well as the false dichotomy between popular religion and that of elites and intellectuals. Rather, we have come to see the two as interdependent; as Edwards has it, "popular beliefs and practices could revise, nuance, or even negate official doctrine" (342). This is particularly the case with the veneration of the Virgin Mary. As Luria points out, the Church promoted cults of Mary

associated with central doctrines, but much Marian devotion was also tied to a particular place or shrine; in these cases, Mary was named “not for doctrines of the church, but for the community or local site at which people venerated her” (119). Recent studies have analysed this phenomenon with respect to specific cults to the Virgin: for example, in response to Stratton–Pruitt’s contention that “the belief in the Immaculate Conception filtered from Franciscan theologians to the monarchs of Spain to the nobility and finally to the people” (36–37), Hernández argues that the relationship between authority and popular religion is formed by dialectical bonds “that make possible the production of theological thought and devotional zeal from multiple sites, and that support the creative potentiality of national, communal, and individual religious imaginaries” (6).

In this study, I will demonstrate the complex relationships between institutionally supported doctrine and local, popular devotion in Quevedo’s poem “Ya la obscura y negra noche”. I demonstrate that the interpretation of the Scriptural figure of Wisdom as Mary is used to give a pedigree to the local Marian advocacy of the Virgen de la Antigua based at the church of La Antigua in Valladolid. I also argue that this figure’s address to the local *cofrades* and encouragement of confraternal celebration uses orthodox scriptural interpretation to privilege popular devotion over institutional religion.

The Figure of Personified Wisdom in the Old Testament

The figure of Wisdom personified as a woman who speaks in the first person appears in the biblical books of Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. As Newman explains, there were three stages in the exegetical interpretation of this figure (190–244). In the first, the Church Fathers applied the descriptions of Wisdom to Christ. This was problematic since, at various points, Wisdom asserts that she was created:

Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum antequam quidquam faceret a principio.

Ab aeterno ordinata sum, et ex antiquis antequam terra fieret.

Nondum erant abyssi, et ego jam concepta eram: necdum fontes aquarum eruperant,

necdum montes gravi mole constiterant: ante colles ego parturiebar.

Adhuc terram non fecerat, et flumina, et cardines orbis terrae.

Quando praeparabat caelos, aderam; quando certa lege et gyro vallabat abyssos;

quando aethera firmabat sursum, et librabat fontes aquarum . . .

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made any thing from the beginning.

I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made.

The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived. neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out:

The mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth:

He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world.

When he prepared the heavens, I was present: when with a certain law and compass he enclosed the depths:

When he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters [...]

(Prov. 8. 22–28)²

Ego ex ore Altissimi prodivi, primogenita ante omnem creaturam . . .

Ab initio et ante saecula creata sum, et usque ad futurum saeculum non desinam: et in habitatione sancta coram ipso ministravi.

I came out of the mouth of the most High, the firstborn before all creatures [...]

From the beginning, and before the world, was I created, and unto the world to come I shall not cease to be, and in the holy dwelling place I have ministered before him.

(Ecclus. 24. 5, 14)

In order to avoid falling into the heretical assertion that Christ was created by God, rather than having existed from eternity as one of the persons of the Godhead, the Church Fathers made a careful distinction between the passages which pertained to Christ's divinity and those which pertained to Christ's humanity.

However, with time, readings referring to the figure of Wisdom began to be used for Marian feasts such as the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (8 September) and the Immaculate Conception (8 December). They were also used in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a shortened form of the common office of the Blessed Virgin, which had been used at least since the tenth century (Graef and Thompson, 180–81; O'Carroll, 219–20). Finally, theologians followed liturgical practice and started to develop a sapiential Mariology to justify the choice of readings. Once again, while the text was *applied* to Mary in these cases, it was not a straightforward equivalence, since the Church did not believe that Mary was created before time. It is true that Mary's predestination from eternity was part of orthodox Catholic theology: in the thirteenth century, Duns Scotus had taught that God predestined the Incarnation prior to Adam's fall, not as a response to it. In his writing on Mary, Francisco

Suárez followed Scotus in arguing that, since God willed the Incarnation from eternity, the Virgin must also have been predestined to be Christ's mother from eternity (Boss, 220–21, 257–61). Nevertheless, this is not to say that Mary was actually created before the rest of Creation, and a Golden Age author would have been aware of the distinction.

One way in which Golden Age theologians dealt with the application of the sapiential texts to Mary can be seen in an extract from a sermon by Juan de Ávila:

Ella dice que desde ab initio et ante saecula fue criada (Eccus 24. 14); porque, aunque en el ser real fue en el tiempo criada, mas en la mente divina ante todo tiempo lo fue. Y aunque también lo fue todo lo demás que Dios crió en tiempo, mas esta Señora fue antepuesta a todas en ser más amada y elegida para mayor dignidad y para mayores bienes; y por eso se llama la primera engendrada ante toda criatura (Eccus 24. 5), porque en los ojos y corazón de Dios es la más dotada de gracias que todo el restante de lo criado.⁴

Ávila glosses the Ecclesiasticus reading by explaining that Mary was not created first in time, that is, in the physical creation, but in God's mind before time; however, he then affirms that, in fact, all of creation was in God's mind before time. He therefore interprets her primacy ('antepuesta a todas') as due to her importance, an idea which, as we shall see, Quevedo also uses in his poem.

Francisco de Quevedo: "Ya la obscura y negra noche"

Quevedo's poem celebrating the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin was published as part of the *Musa Urania* in the second posthumous volume of his collected works, *Las tres musas últimas castellanas* (1670). One of its immediately striking aspects is its form. Quevedo's religious poetry is almost exclusively composed in *italianizante* metres: his *Heráclito*

cristiano (1613) contains sonnets, *silvas* and *cuartetos*;³ the cycle *Lágrimas de un penitente*, contained in *Urania*, is made up of a subsection of the poems from *Heráclito cristiano* plus two new sonnets; *Urania* also includes a section of forty-three *sonetos sacros*.⁵ The remaining poems in *Urania* consist of one *madrigal*, two *silvas*, three *ovillejos*, two poems in *octavas reales* and two *romances*. This poem is one of the *romances*, which makes it one of the few poems written in “popular” metres and suggests a link to *lo popular*. Indeed, the first line, with its reference to the ‘obscura y negra noche’, recalls the openings of *romances viejos* such as ‘Media noche era por filo’ (Díaz Roig: 228; 238). The poem’s form may also suggest a performance context: throughout the seventeenth century, learned poems composed in “popular” forms and in the vernacular became increasingly popular in liturgical contexts, and it is possible that this poem would have been sung during the feast (Knighton and Torrente 9).

In the poem, there are various references to the Virgin’s antiquity (the word “antigua” occurs in lines 10, 51, 53 and 70). This links it to a specific cult: that of La Virgen de la Antigua, and specifically the church of Santa María la Antigua in Valladolid (Chiappini 225; Davis 170).⁶ This is one of the most historical buildings in the city, already existing by 1080 (González García 377). By the time Quevedo wrote his poem, the church stood only metres away from the impressive (though unfinished) new cathedral of Santa María la Mayor designed by Juan de Herrera (González García, pp. 362–64). Since both places of worship were in first instance dedicated to Mary, they appear to have been known respectively as “la Antigua” and “la Mayor” to distinguish them, something which will be important to our study (Martí y Monsó 345; González García 377). Quevedo’s familiarity with the church can be seen in a joke made in *El Buscón*: “Dios es mi padre, que no come un cuerpo más presto el montón de la Antigua de Valladolid, que le deshace en veinte y cuatro horas, que yo despaché el ordinario” (Quevedo 1990: 193). Since he was at Court in Valladolid between 1601 and

1606 (Crosby 167 n. 34), this gives us a likely range of dates for the composition of the poem.⁷

However, as well as this connection to a specific local cult, there is also a strong scriptural and liturgical element in Quevedo's poem. This has often been overlooked by critics, despite the fact that Quevedo is considered to be "uno de los escritores del Siglo de Oro que mayor presencia de la Biblia evidencian en su obra" (Arellano Ayuso 46). In his poem, Mary speaks in the first person using many biblical images such as the closed garden ("claustro cerrado", l. 65). Most importantly, in lines 9–24 the Virgin once again refers to herself symbolically, drawing on the sapiential books:

Y aunque me miráis tan niña,
soy más antigua, que el tiempo,
mucho más que las edades,
y que los cuatro elementos.

Del principio fui criada,
que es el Sumo Dios eterno,
y el primero lugar tuve
después del sagrado Verbo.

Infinitos siglos antes,
que criara el firmamento,
ya Él a mí me había criado
en mitad de aquel silencio.

Su Primogénita dice

que soy el Santo y Perfecto,
 de su propia boca oí
 este divino requiebro. (ll. 9–24)⁸

The allusion to the passages from Ecclesiasticus and Proverbs in these lines is clear, particularly in their assertion that the speaker was created before everything else. In fact, the word “Primogénita” (l. 21) is the same word used by the Vulgate (“primogenita”) in Ecclesiasticus 24. 5. Quevedo’s reference to being created before the “firmamento” (l. 18) alludes to Wisdom’s assertion of having been created before the heavens and the sky (Prov. 8. 27–28). In a few instances, Quevedo alters his allusions. For example, the Wisdom of Proverbs declares that the Lord possessed her in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything from the beginning (Prov. 8. 22); the words used by the Vulgate for “beginning” are respectively “initio” and “principio”. This is picked up in Quevedo’s use of the word “principio” (13). However, Quevedo adds an extra theological dimension: rather than having his speaker as simply created *in* the beginning, she says that she was created *by* the beginning, that is, by God (ll. 13–14). He also adds a clarification based on John 1: Wisdom may have been created first, but not antedating the Word (ll. 15–16). Similarly, Quevedo’s speaker declares that she heard the assertion of her primacy in creation from God’s own mouth (“de su propia boca”, l. 23), which recalls the declaration of Wisdom that she came out of God’s mouth (Ecclus. 24. 5). The intertexts also explain why the *romance* is in the first person which, as Davis notes, is unusual in a hymn to Mary (163).

The influence of Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus can also be seen at other points in the poem. For example, Quevedo’s reference to the “santa habitación / Del limpio y santo Cordero” (35–36) does not allude just to the *topos* of Mary as tabernacle, but to a specific verse in Ecclesiasticus: “and he that made me, rested in my tabernacle” (Ecclus. 24. 12).

Likewise, although lines 41–48 certainly are a reference to the Assumption (Davis 167–68) the specific allusions to both a palace and a mountain also recall Ecclesiasticus: “I dwelt in the highest places, and my throne is in a pillar of a cloud . . . And so was I established in Sion, and in the holy city likewise I rested, and my power was in Jerusalem” (Ecclus. 24. 7, 15).

However, this has been misinterpreted by many critics, who claim that in Quevedo’s poem Mary is asserting that she herself was created before time.⁹ For example, Davis writes:

the reader is made to reflect on Mary’s primordial quality. . . . It even looks like the poet would like to overstep the limits of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. . . . Mary claims, in fact, that her creation antedates that of the earth, and says that God called her by the name of “primogénita”, first-born daughter. (Davis 165–66).

Likewise, Chiappini attempts to resolve this non-existent issue by explaining that the Virgin is said to have existed before time because of her maternal connection to Christ:

La misma Virgen que habla en primera persona deja asomar cómo su nacimiento – un hecho eminentemente histórico – al mismo tiempo se pone como fuera del tiempo . . . como perteneciente al mismo proyecto que la “encarnación” del Hijo . . . lo que aquí importa destacar es primeramente la *trascendencia* que coloca a María en un lugar privilegiado con Jesucristo, gozando de la misma luz si se la entiende como consiguiente, . . . en el *principio de la maternidad*. (Chiappini 230)

Nevertheless, Quevedo is not asserting that the Virgin was created before time which, as we have seen, would be contrary to Church teaching. Rather, he is simply drawing on another Old Testament text which had come to be interpreted as a prefiguration or symbol of Mary, like the walled garden and tabernacle.

1. La Virgen de la Antigua

It has now become apparent that the poem has a strong scriptural and liturgical component. However, this does not mean that its popular elements should be seen as inferior; rather, the two are co-existent. This is because the allusions to Wisdom are used not to defend a central dogma of the Church, but to create the impression of a long-standing tradition for a local appellation of Mary which was not to be found in litanies, hymns, or the official Church calendar. This is not surprising; as Medianero Hernández has noted of the Sevillian Virgen de la Antigua, theories attempting to dignify the advocacy abound, including the assertion that it has its origins during the Paleo-Christian period and came about under Pope Sylvester I, or that it refers to Mary's prefiguration in the Old Testament. However, these theories all appear to have been created *a posteriori* (Medianero Hernández 94). Likewise, as we have seen, the church seems to have been given the sobriquet "la Antigua" simply to distinguish it from the newer and larger "Santa María la Mayor". However, in Quevedo's poem Mary lists her various virtues as a means of justifying the appellation "la Antigua":

Por antigua en la creación,
y en ser de virtud ejemplo;
por la primera en vencer
al demonio torpe y feo.

Y porque fui la primera,
que me vestí el ornamento
de la limpia castidad,
e infinitos me siguieron; (ll. 53–60)

Like Ávila, Quevedo overcomes the difficulty of the concept of Mary's antiquity by equating it with her superiority (she is both *antigua* and *primera*).

Quevedo's use of the Wisdom reading to dignify the advocacy of the Virgen de la Antigua may have been partly inspired by a visual manifestation of the local cult, namely, the altarpiece executed by Juan de Juni for the church of La Antigua between 1545 and 1562 (currently housed in the cathedral). There, the Virgin is depicted as holding a book which could be interpreted as the Book of Wisdom. Most importantly, the inscription beneath the Virgin is from Ecclus. 24:9, and reads "Ab initio et ante saecula [sic] creata sum" (Stratton–Pruitt 55). This links the poem even more closely with the devotion of the parish church.

Quevedo's attempt at dignifying the local cult is in keeping with his assertions elsewhere on popular devotion. Indeed, some of his endorsements of popular beliefs, such as his conviction that St James and St Paul came to Spain, caused earlier scholars to see him as uncritical. For example, Mérimée criticised him for following the credulous masses: "il accepte les legends que l'imagination crédule des foules se plaît à inventer, ou du moins il montre pour elles une indulgence qui louche à la complicité" (Mérimée 272). This kind of criticism once again sees popular belief and anyone who endorses it as ignorant, but this is to misunderstand Quevedo's much more nuanced attitude. Particularly relevant are his comments on the devotion of the people of Messina, Sicily, contained in his *Vida de San Pablo Apóstol*. According to tradition, St Paul arrived in Messina in 42 AD to preach the Gospel. As a result, the inhabitants of the city sent ambassadors to the Virgin Mary in Jerusalem, and received in return a letter from her with her blessing. Quevedo reproduces the letter, and declares that his interest is in the people's devotion, not in the veracity of the letter: "aparto mi juicio del examen desta antigüedad, ocupándole en admiraciones de la devoción que produce" (Quevedo 1994: 276). He goes on to discuss the work of Don Roccho Pirro, who exposed the letter as inauthentic; while Quevedo acknowledges the accuracy of Don Pirro's work, he finds the devotion of the people more important than quibbling over the veracity of the tradition, as long as there is nothing against orthodox teaching: "más respeto

se deve a la piedad religiosa de muchos que a la ambición propia ostentosa de erudición, y más cuando ni altera contraria prop[osition] de fe, ni el Texto Sagrado” (Quevedo 1994: 277). As Martín Pérez summarizes:

Piensa él que, en estos casos, nadie está autorizado a contribuir a la destrucción de la sencilla fe popular y, mucho menos, a secar en sus fuentes los frutos ciertos de una devoción que se juzga no rectamente entendida. Lo más cristiano entonces, según él, es admirarse de los frutos que tal devoción producen y guardar un circunspecto silencio.
(137)

In short, this is another example of the dialectical relationship between religious orthodoxy and popular devotion; as Nider has it, “L’antitesi devozione / erudizione appare dunque attenuarsi in rapporto alla specificità della materia sacra” (26). Likewise, in our poem, whether or not Quevedo is aware of the origin of the local cult to the Virgen de la Antigua, he is willing to celebrate it, and does so using the orthodox interpretation of Scripture.

The *cofradía* of the Virgen de la Zarza

As we have seen, the use of the intertexts from the sapiential books allows Quevedo’s Mary to speak in the first person. Later in the poem, this allows Quevedo to privilege another form of local devotion, when he has Mary address the members of a local *cofradía*:

Haced fiesta, mis cofrades,
que el nombre de Antigua quiero;
estimalde y celebralde,
que yo os daré el justo premio. (69–72)

Cofradías (confraternities) were groups of lay people, usually organised by profession or neighbourhood, who performed a range of religious, social and political activities. They were usually hosted by a church where they could rent an altar or side chapel, and were named for

a particular devotion; they would take part in processions on feast days and could organise private services. Their other contributions to the wider community involved attendance at public ceremonies such as funerals, accompanying the dying, running hospitals, and various kinds of poor relief and education.¹⁰

Confraternities emerged in the Middle Ages as part of an increased desire for spiritual activity among the laity and, as such, are another example of the collapsing of the dichotomy between hegemonic church and lay believer. Indeed, Eisenbichler explains that confraternities were often seen as a threat to the State and the Church “not only for the acquisition and distribution of social capital, but also wealth, be that spiritual or material” (1). Similarly, Black points out that the “limited clerical supervision” under which confraternities operated could upset church authorities (134–35). The fact that Quevedo has Mary addressing her *cofrades* is particularly significant in a post-Tridentine context when *cofradías* were coming under increasing ecclesiastical control, a process which was stricter in Spain than in other countries (*Sacred charity* 116–120).

Furthermore, in the post-Tridentine period, the Church particularly promoted confraternities which supported its decisions on dogma, such as those dedicated to the Most Holy Sacrament and the Souls in Purgatory (*Sacred Charity* 122–23). The consequence of this, as Flynn points out, was that “Confraternities transferred allegiance away from indigenous cults toward officially recommended devotions” (*Sacred Charity* 124). She also notes that the European shift away from native Marian cults in this period could be seen in a drop in the percentage of confraternities dedicated to Mary. Meanwhile, the Marian cults which continued tended to focus on images of Mary which showed her status below Christ, such as devotions to the sorrowful Virgin (*Sacred Charity* 124–26). By enjoining *cofrades* to celebrate not a recently promulgated dogma, but the local appellation of a triumphant Virgin,

Quevedo is once again privileging local devotion over institutional religion, all the while using an orthodox interpretation of a passage of Scripture.

The address to the *cofrades* points to the presence of a *cofradía* at the celebration. There does not appear to be a *cofradía* named specifically for the Virgen de la Antigua in Valladolid in this period (Egido 200). However, there was one hosted by the church of La Antigua, which was dedicated to the Virgen de la Zarza and approved in 1604 (Larruga y Boneta 92–93). The confraternity was named after a miraculous image of the same name which was located in the church until at least the beginning of the twentieth century (Pérez-Rubín y Corchado 9). In the 1700s, Canesi reports that the image was believed to have been discovered by Pedro Ansúrez in a bush (*zarza*) on the very site where it still stood:

Esta parroquia tiene muy lucidas capillas y la más preciosa es en la que está colocada Nuestra Señora de la Zarza, que es tradición fue hallada en el mismo sitio en que hoy se venera, dentro de una zarza, de que tomó el título, el año de 1096, y que estaba junto a una columna o pirámide a tiempo que iban fabricando este templo. (I: 255)

The image is significant to our poem for two reasons: firstly, the antiquity of the image was one theory cited by Canesi for the advocation “La Antigua”, providing another example of how local lore justified the devotion: ‘Y no falta autor que diga que esta Santa Imagen es una de las más antiguas de los reinos de Castilla y León y quiere por esta causa se nombre esta iglesia de Santa María la Antigua’ (I: 255). Secondly, Canesi reports that the *cofradía* celebrated its advocation on the feast of the Nativity: “celebra su fiesta el día de la Natividad de María Santísima” (I: 255). As we have seen, Quevedo was in Valladolid between 1601 and 1606, so it is even possible that this poem was composed for the inaugural celebration of the feast day of the *cofradía* in 1604.

While there is no evidence that the confraternity commissioned the poem directly, I would like to suggest that if Quevedo composed the poem for the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin celebrated in La Antigua, he may have been influenced by both the advocacy of the host church and that of the confraternity. For example, one way in which both devotions may have influenced the poem is suggested by its focus on Mary's queenship, such as when Mary declares: "y a mí solo me dieron silla / como reina de aquel reino" (ll. 47–48). Significantly, Juan de Juni's sculpture is crowned, and has even sometimes been called "La Santísima Virgen coronada" (García Guereta: unpaginated). Canesi's references to the "Reina Celestial" and "Emperatriz del Empíreo" suggest that the image of the Virgen de la Zarza was crowned as well (I: 255).

Another way in which confraternal celebration is privileged lies in the references to celebrating the feast in these lines ("Haced fiesta", l. 69; "celebralde", l. 71). The phrase "Haced fiesta" refers both to marking a feast with religious observance, but also to celebrating it with festivities. Covarrubias is careful to define a *fiesta* as primarily the religious part of a feast, with some time left over for honest recreation:

La Yglesia Catolica, llama fiesta la celebridad de las Pascuas, y Domingos, y días de los Santos que manda guardar, con fin que en ellos nos desocupemos de toda cosa profana, y atendamos a lo que es espíritu y religión, acudiendo a los templos y lugares sagrados a oyr las Missas, y los sermones, y los oficios divinos: y en algunas dellas a recibir el santísimo Sacramento, y vacar a la oración y la contemplación; y si en estos días después que se oviere cumplido con lo que nos manda la santa madre Yglesia sobrare algún rato de recreación, sea honesta y exemplar. (403^v)

However, he himself notes that "comunmente dezimos quando ay regozijos que se hazen fiestas". The poem's references to celebration thus point to confraternal festivities, which

often involved banquets, music and dancing, activities which were often censured by ecclesiastical authorities. For example, Christian notes that the confraternal banquets were “regularly deplored by bishops and ecclesiastical visitors” (58). Poska lists occasions where episcopal visitors to the diocese of Ourense reprimanded the *cofradías* for excessive spending on meals and profane songs and dances on religious feasts (74–75). Flynn points out a similar phenomenon in Zamora. She goes on to note that by the seventeenth century, when Quevedo wrote his poem, confraternal celebrations of feast days were more sober: “The joyous parades, frolics and bull-runs through the streets quietened into rosary devotions and prayer vigils” (*Sacred Charity* 121–22). Likewise, Knighton draws attention to objections raised to dancing in *cofradía* council meetings in Barcelona (128–30). Therefore, the poem’s injunction to make merry could also be read as an exaltation of the customs of the *cofradía* over the power of the centralized Church.

The rest of the poem recapitulates the exaltation of local and confraternal devotion while deploying elements of Scripture. For example, in lines 73–74, the appellation *Antigua* is once again justified, since the church is said to be ancient (“antiguo”, 73) and renowned enough to deserve its name: “Y al templo antiguo y famoso, | que alcanza tal epiteto”. Furthermore, it is the *cofrades* who are charged with ensuring its prosperity: “enriquecelde vosotros | que vaya siempre en aumento” (75– 76). Likewise, in the final lines, the Virgin encourages the *cofrades* to continue in their devotions to her:

Perseverad hasta el fin
 en ser mis devotos rectos,
 que yo prometo de daros,
 por uno que me deis, ciento. (ll. 76–80)

The statement recalls God's promise to multiply Abraham's offspring (Genesis 15. 5–6, 22. 15–18). However, the promise to multiply the *cofrades* is also an assertion of the importance of the devotion of the local community. The expansion of the cult may also have some basis in reality; Canesi writes “y el conde D. Armengol aumentó mucho su culto y desde aquel siglo fue tanta la fama y devoción con esta soberana Reina, que de Sevilla y otras lejanas partes venían en romería a consagrarla sus humildes corazones” (I: 255). Significantly, Canesi reports that the pilgrimages happened “el día de su festividad”, the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin. Once again, although Quevedo displays his knowledge of Scripture, he uses it to celebrate local worship.

Conclusion

Quevedo's religious poetry has often been seen as representative of conservative and monolithic religion; Carreira goes so far as to say that the voice of all of Quevedo's religious poetry is so dogmatic as to be virtually the voice of the Church, or even the Inquisition:

el locutor ... adopta una perspectiva que se pretende intemporal y superior a toda contingencia: la abstracta perspectiva de la Iglesia, mejor aún, del Santo Oficio. El locutor habla desde la ortodoxia y fulmina a quien se aparta de ella, porque la poesía religiosa de Quevedo . . . es sobre todo arma ofensiva usada para meter en cintura a los disidentes. (277)

It is true that in “Ya la obscura y negra noche” Quevedo exhibits a knowledge of liturgy and Scripture, but he deploys it not to celebrate Catholic dogma, but to justify a local appellation of Mary. We have also seen how the figure of Mary, who speaks in the first person thanks to her association with the scriptural figure of Wisdom, encourages confraternal devotion, which was often seen as a challenge to institutional religion during the period. In this way the

poem can add to our understanding of the dialectical relationship between institutional and popular religion in the literature of the Golden Age.

Notes

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² The translation I am using is Douay-Rheims.

³ Qtd. in Moreno Martínez (1308–09).

⁴ This does not include the unnumbered *redondilla* between psalms XV and XVI.

⁵ For a summary of the question of the relationship between *Heráclito Cristiano* and *Lágrimas de un penitente*, see Varela Gestoso 293–315.

⁶ It should be noted that this is not the Virgen de la Antigua after which Núñez de Balboa named his settlement, and whose iconography was based on that of the Cathedral of Seville; as Medianero Hernández notes, discrete traditions of the “Virgen de la Antigua” should be treated separately (94).

⁷ Astrana Marín dated the poem to 1604, although, as Blecua points out, no justification is given (‘sin dar ninguna razón’, Quevedo 1971: 215). The poem is not dated in Crosby.

⁸ The text I am using is Francisco de Quevedo, *Obras completas I: Poesía original completa*. 3rd ed, edited by José Manuel Blecua, Planeta, 1971.

⁹ I have been informed that María Vallejo González correctly identified the scriptural allusion in her PhD thesis (2017), but have been unable to consult it.

¹⁰ See Eisenbichler 1–8; Rowe 57–59; Flynn, *Sacred Charity*; “Rituals of Solidarity” 53–68; Black 1–34.

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