

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

Vipers under the Altar cloths:

Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada

Andrew Redden

One morning one of the Fathers was saying Mass at the high altar of a church [...]. On reaching the end of the Gospel of St John, his companion placed his hands on the corner of the altar to say '*Verbum caro factum est*'. As he took his hands away, a viper that was under the cloth [struck at] him [but missed] and the Father fervently thanked the Lord for having liberated him from such manifest danger.¹

One afternoon, as [the Jesuit missionaries] left a mountain range, the devil raised such a storm of water, wind, thunder and lightening in revenge for the tremendous torment that their preaching caused him that it seemed like the world would end [...] Once the storm had abated a little, they continued on their journey [...] unharmed: although one of the lightening bolts so startled the mule carrying the [Mass] ornaments [and] portable altar [...], that it fell down the mountainside. But they found it uninjured and its sacred baggage completely undamaged.²

For seventeenth-century commentators, New Granada was a land of great contrasts and extremes—at once violent and beautiful, where temperate and fertile valleys gave way to huge mountain ranges, immense plains or thick jungle; where fast flowing mountain streams became vast languid rivers, and where life and death were familiar partners. Such contrasts

¹ Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (hereafter ARSI), Provincia Novo Regno & Quitensis (hereafter NR&Q) Tomus 12 (hereafter 12), *Litterae Annuae, 1605-1652* (hereafter *Litt. Ann. 1605-52*), 'Annua della Prouincia del nuouo Regno di Granada dell Anno 1615', fols. 111r-190r, (fol. 125r). Unless otherwise stated all translations are my own. [*Et*]*verbum caro factum est* translates as '[and] the word was made flesh'. The beginning of the Gospel of St John was read at the end of the Tridentine Mass and this particular verse (John 1:14) was followed by the response *Deo gratias* ('thanks be to God').

² ARSI, NR&Q 13:2, *Litt. Ann. 1694-98*, 'Letras Annuas dela Prov.a del Nuevo Reyno de Granada dela Comp.a de Jesus Desde el Año de 1694 hasta el de 1699', fols 311r-595v (fol. 506v).

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were often just as evident in people's spiritual lives, so it should come as little surprise to find angels as well as demons in the historical documentation. In a place where vipers could hide beneath altar cloths to strike out at unwary priests as they finished Mass, demons could strike unwary souls in the hope of poisoning them and causing their perdition. Meanwhile, angelic instruments of divine providence were often the soul's last defence against these demonic attacks from the darkness.

The Jesuit author of the first letter quoted above made no allegorical connection between the snake and Satan—an easy association to make at the time. Yet the tale was recounted in a context where the devil was believed to utilise the forces of nature to harry the 'soldiers of Christ' and prevent them from achieving their goals of saving souls. This context was evident in Jesuit writings throughout the 'long' seventeenth century. In the second account—written nearly a century later—lightening bolts purportedly cast by the devil landed a short distance away from the missionaries, terrifying them and their beasts of burden.³ The fallen angel seemingly came within a hair's breadth of scoring a resounding victory against the Jesuits by causing them to lose their most powerful weapon in the war—their Mass ornaments and their portable altar. Yet, once again divine providence protected them and caused the devil's strategy to fail. It is within this context that the response '*Deo gratias*' to the gospel passage of St John took on much deeper meaning. In it, the Jesuits gave thanks to God not only that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among them, as stated in the Gospel of St John, but also for delivering them from physical danger and, last but by no means least, for delivering them from immediate spiritual danger.

Of course, the historian faces numerous interpretive difficulties when trying to understand concepts which people of the time engaged with as they were translated from one culture to another. The common problem of how to interpret sources written primarily by men who knew very little about the religious cultures with which they came into contact should be borne especially in mind. Furthermore, what information they did record was inevitably overlaid with meanings that could only make sense within a Christian context. This information, meanwhile, was generally documented with the twofold purpose of extirpating what was perceived to be diabolical from indigenous cultures while fitting them into one that, in general terms, stretched across the entire Hispanic World. This was an environment, as

³ Ibid.

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Hernando Cabrero wrote in the mid-seventeenth century, in which Jesuits in the confessionals 'waged crude war on demons, tearing many souls from their claws'.⁴

Nevertheless, beneath such heavily Christianised accounts as the Jesuit *Cartas Annuas* lie other indigenous narratives, and the challenge for any historian is to read the documents in a way in which the interplay between the indigenous and the Hispanic, the Christian and the non-Christian, can be better understood.⁵ In a world where demons attacked and angels defended—and even, in some cases, vice-versa—these spiritual beings were perceived quite differently by individuals or groups in various contexts, and these differences often informed their interactions and relationships. What this essay aims to investigate, then, are some of the very different forms these beings took for the people that saw and interacted with them, the rites they used to communicate with and harness them, and, where possible, some of the various meanings that people from diverse social groups attributed to them.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the translation of an entire religious worldview proved a challenge for those concerned with the evangelisation of the indigenous populations of New Granada. In 1606 for example, the recently arrived Jesuit Order found itself embroiled in a polemic regarding the translation of the Catechism into Chibcha, the language of the Muisca people.⁶ As the President of the *Audiencia*, Governor and Captain General of New Granada, Don Juan de Borja, explained in a contemporary document, those opposed to the translation had let it be known that 'it was impossible to reduce the terms and sense of the Castilian language to that of the natives' and that disturbances and arguments had broken out

⁴ ARSI, NR&Q 13:1, *Litt. Ann. 1655-93*, 'Relacion annua de la Prouincia del Nuebo Reyno de Granada desde el año de 1655 asta el año de 1660', fols 3r-35r (fol. 3v).

⁵ The Jesuit *Cartas Annuas* (lit. 'annual letters') were (in theory) annual reports sent to Rome by the Father Provincial of each province. These reports were edited collations of other reports sent to the Provincial by Jesuits in parishes and missions throughout the province. Once in Rome they would be copied and sent out along the Jesuit networks to provide information about how the missions were proceeding. As such they were rhetorical and often fulfilled a number of purposes including that of providing 'consolation' through solidarity to their Jesuit brothers in other missions as they shared their travails, thus encouraging applications to join the missions and appealing for support.

⁶ The terms Muisca and Chibcha have been and sometimes still are used interchangeably to refer to both the indigenous nation and the language. For the purposes of the essay, in order to avoid confusion, I shall use the term 'Muisca' for the indigenous nation and 'Chibcha' to refer to the language. For the translation polemic, see J. Michael Francis, 'Language and the "True Conversion" to the Holy Faith: A Document from the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome, Italy', *The Americas*, 62:3 (2006), 445-453. After a preliminary mission to New Granada from Mexico, the Society established itself there in 1604 (See the *Diccionario Histórico Societatis Iesu*, Joaquín Domínguez and Charles O'Neill eds. (Rome and Madrid, 2001)).

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in the streets, squares and private houses over its accuracy.⁷ While opposition was generated in large part by monolingual clerics who stood to lose their parishes through their inability to teach and preach in the indigenous language,⁸ the intense interest that ordinary people appear to have shown in the polemic is noteworthy, as is the bemused reaction of the indigenous population who reportedly thought that the arguments were due to a schism in the 'substance and unity of the faith'.⁹ The fact that what was essentially a theological and linguistic matter was able to generate such heated controversy amongst ordinary townsfolk is indicative of a society that made no separation between theology and everyday life. At the same time, if Juan de Borja's worried statement was not merely a projection of his own concerns, it seemed to reflect the increased confusion of an indigenous population who were only marginally incorporated into the Christian spiritual world.

That said, according to another Jesuit letter, the sudden switch to preaching Catholic doctrine in the language of the Muisca caused something of an epiphany for the listeners who, apparently, were 'shocked to hear such new mysteries in their own language'.¹⁰ The author optimistically wrote about the benefits that would ensue from such translations, given the listeners' comments that the doctrine they could now understand was actually good, whereas previously they had thought it alien [*distinto*] for being in another language. In his optimism he compared the potential fruits of the translation to similar work being done with non-Christians in Japan and China, a somewhat unfortunate comparison given the violent termination of the mission in Japan and the persecution of converts that was being carried out at that time.¹¹

⁷ ARSI, NR&Q 14, *Litt. Ann. 1587-1673*, '25 Ag 1606', fols 48r-50r (fol. 48r).

⁸ Francis, 'Language and the "True Conversion"', 447-448.

⁹ ARSI, NR&Q 14, '25 Ag 1606', fol. 48v.

¹⁰ ARSI, NR&Q 14, 'Descripcion de el Nuevo Reyno de Granada de las yndias occidentales en orden a la fundacion q e el mesmo Reyno pretende y pide se haga en el de casas y collegios de la Comp.a de Jesus: y de la Mission que desde la Nueva españa hizieron a el los P.es Al.o de Medrano y Fran.co de Figueroa Sacerdotes de la mesma comp.a de Jesus que pasaron al dicho reyno en compañía del R.mo S.or D.or Don Bartholome Lobo Guerrero Arçobispo de el mesmo nuevo Reyno', fols 1-17v (fol. 15v). The Jesuit author called the language *Mosca* (or Muisca) after the ethnic group, although it is more correctly known as Chibcha.

¹¹ *Ibid.* The general persecution of Christians in Japan in fact began in 1587. For a Jesuit perspective of the persecution of the Japanese Christians, see Luis Piñero, *Relacion del sucesso que tuuo nuestra santa fe en los Reynos del Japon, desde el año de seyscientos y doze hasta el de seyscientos y quinze, Imperando Cubosama* (Madrid, 1617). For recent studies of these events see: Stephen Turnbull, *The Kakure Kiristan of Japan: A Study of their Development, Beliefs and Rituals to the Present Day* (Abingdon, 1998), 27-49; Ikuo Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice* (Leiden, 2004), passim; Kiri Paramore, *Ideology and Christianity in Japan* (Abingdon, 2009), 23-44, 53-76.

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Not all had such cause for optimism, however. In 1616 a letter was sent to Pope Paul V on behalf of Dr Don Fernando Arias Ugarte, the Archbishop of Santafé de Bogotá, describing the general spiritual state of the archdiocese.¹² Despite appearing to be based on the first of the Jesuit (1604) letters mentioned above, it contains very little in the way of 'edifying material', centring instead on the persistent and ubiquitous idolatry of the 'ignorant and barbarous' indigenous population, and on the fact that the devil held them subject and would not release them from his grip.¹³ According to the account, the majority had idols and talked to the devil face to face; they worshipped mountains, rocks, trees and animals, as well as the idols that were kept in grottoes to which they offered gold, silver, precious stones and clothing; worse still, they taught their wives and children to make human sacrifices.¹⁴ The author lamented that the suffragan dioceses of Popayan, Cartagena and Santa Marta were in an even worse state than Santafé and categorically blamed the lack of progress on two principal causes: the resilient problem of the inability of priests to preach and teach in the indigenous languages, and the rather unfair accusation (given the former admission) that the native peoples had an innate and wicked aversion to Christianity.¹⁵

Unfortunately the copy of this letter currently available in the Jesuit archive in Rome is not complete, so the exact reason for it being written is not clear (other than it being a résumé of the state of the archdiocese as encountered by the newly appointed archbishop). If it was not primarily intended to persuade the Pope to send more priests, then its pessimistic tone is puzzling in the context of Arias Ugarte's later scepticism regarding idolatry in the archdiocese of Lima and his opposition to anti-idolatry campaigns there.¹⁶ The pessimism in the letter is made even stranger by the fact that it appears to be a summary of the more negative aspects of indigenous religion gathered from an account of the first proto-campaign against idolatry

¹² Arias Ugarte was a Creole born in Santa Fe who was elected as its Archbishop in 1615 and according to Gil González Davila, *Teatro eclesiastico de la primitiva Iglesia de las Indias Occidentales*, 2 vols (Madrid, 1649), ii, fols 18, 26) was consecrated on the 22 January 1616. An autobiographical note compiled by the Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango from an autobiography written by Arias Ugarte's confessor, Diego López de Lisboa y León, gives the date of his arrival in Santa Fe as 7 January 1618. He was promoted to the Archbishopric of Las Charcas in 1625. <<http://www.lablaa.org/blaavirtual/historia/hiscua/hiscua14.htm>> [last accessed 05/08/11]. The letter, written in Italian, was presented in Rome by an advisor to the Archbishop, the Augustinian friar, Maestro Lorenzo de Ruffas.

¹³ ARSI, NR&Q 14, '1616', fols. 139r-144v (fol. 139v).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., fol. 143r.

¹⁶ See Kenneth Mills, *Idolatry and Its Enemies: Colonial Andean Religion and Extirpation, 1640-1750*, (Princeton, 1997), 38.

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carried out by archbishop Bartolomé Lobo Guerrero and the Jesuits Alonso de Medrano and Francisco de Figueroa between 1598 and 1600.¹⁷ The earlier letter, a more detailed report that mentions specific examples in the Jesuits' battle against diabolic idolatry, follows the Society's formula for literary edification more closely by highlighting the difficulties faced (either natural or diabolical) and the progress made in overcoming them. Arias Ugarte's letter, by contrast, barely mentions any of the more edifying details in the report, and it combines the negative examples in a manner that demonstrates altogether very little hope. His letter carries serious theological implications, as it almost despairs of the possibility of salvation for these serial idolaters, enslaved by the devil as they were and innately averse to the Christian faith.¹⁸

If the *Cartas Annuas* are any measure of spirit, however, no one could ever accuse the Jesuits of being unduly pessimistic. According to their own report, shortly after their arrival in Santafé and establishment in the city hospital where they ministered to the sick, they discovered a cotton idol belonging to an Indian woman. Never ones to shy away from pedagogical spectacle, they put the idol on display and preached a sermon in the main square, much to the 'shock and horror' of both Indians and Spaniards—one can only imagine the imagery they invoked in their rhetoric. With typical theatrics, they then handed over the idol to the secular 'authority' of a youth tribunal they had convened for the occasion who 'stamped on it, spat on it and tossed it in the mud before burning it to great effect on the innumerable Indians who had gathered to hear the doctrine and see the spectacle'.¹⁹ Importantly, the report adds, the spectacle was also watched from his windows by the President of the *Audiencia* and a number of his *oidores*. He promptly requested an audience with the new archbishop 'who was moving around his archdiocese, visiting and administering the sacrament of

¹⁷ ARSI, NR&Q 14, 'Descripcion de el Nueuo Reyno de Granada', fols 1-17v. Lobo Guerrero was elected Archbishop of Santa Fe on 12 August 1596. He was consecrated in Mexico in 1597 and, according to the report, invited the two Jesuits to travel with him to New Granada in 1598 (fol. 9r). In 1607 he was transferred to the Archdiocese of Lima. The Jesuits left for Europe in 1600 to report on the viability and necessity of establishing the Society in New Granada.

¹⁸ Whilst it is not proof in itself, it is certainly suggestive of a much more widespread pessimism and gloom when faced with the enormity of the evangelical task ahead. This was paralleled by an apparently similar negativity among certain ecclesiastical groups in New Spain and Peru during the late-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. See especially Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven and London, 1994), 16-39.

¹⁹ ARSI, NR&Q 14, 'Descripcion de el Nueuo Reyno de Granada', fol. 10v. 'Youth tribunal' (lit. *braço seglar de los muchachos*). Of course this handing over of the condemned to the 'secular arm' was deliberately reminiscent of the Inquisitorial *autos de fe* in which prisoners condemned to die would be handed over to the secular authorities (*el braço/brazo seglar*) who would carry out the exemplary punishment.

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confirmation'.²⁰ Nothing in the report specifically states that this and what followed were the result of meticulous planning on the part of the Jesuits. However, the tone and tempo of the letter give the distinct impression that the spectacle in the square directly resulted in the decision that Lobo Guerrero, one *oidor* and one of the Jesuits should leave on a campaign of extirpation throughout the region.²¹ As the Jesuits saw it, however, this was due less to their own machinations than to divine providence.

Having left the urban centre of Santafé, the campaign got off to an energetic start, beginning in a Muisca settlement two leagues away called Hontibon [Fontibon] where it began to uncover idolatry and to persuade the Muisca population to give up their idols and sanctuaries.²² In part, this was due to the exhortations and preaching of the clergy, but also, the narrator admitted, to fear of the secular justice and the torture it was using. The vivid impression given by the letter is one of idolatry being ubiquitous and frightened Muisca hurrying to uncover idols that they had hidden underground, in the roofs and walls of their houses, or in what the Jesuit narrator saw as the equivalent of parish shrines.²³ Reading between the lines, however, we see little more than the frightened reaction of an indigenous village which Christianity had seemingly not yet reached. Given that Fontibon was only two leagues from Santafé, the seat of the *Audiencia*, the scene is illustrative of the almost complete failure of Spanish Christianity in New Granada to spread out from the Hispanic (and hence Christian, townships). The population had not hidden their idols; rather, they were being discovered and removed from their proper places. Indeed, the letter continues, the frightened Muisca asked the authorities to send them a minister or priest who could teach them the Catholic faith, for, until that moment, no-one had ever told them that their own religious tradition was wrong. At this point the archbishop found himself caught out by his own zeal; as the Jesuit recounts, he and the *oidor* saw that the request was a just one, but there was no secular priest among the whole of the clergy who was available (or more-to-the-point, apt) for the ministry; yet, if the missionaries

²⁰ The *Audiencia* was the regional secular court that was responsible for enacting and policing the laws of the Spanish Monarch in the Viceroyalty. *Oidores* were influential citizens who sat in the *Audiencia*, heard cases and made pertinent decisions.

²¹ *Ibid.*, fols. 10v-11r. In method and style, combining decisive and exemplary judicial punishment with Jesuit pedagogy, this campaign seems to be a definite precursor to the campaigns against idolatry that Lobo Guerrero would instigate and support during his time as Archbishop of Lima (1609-1622). See Mills, *Idolatry and its Enemies*, 25-33.

²² The town is now incorporated into the city of Bogotá.

²³ ARSI, NR&Q 14, 'Descripcion de el Nueuo Reyno de Granada', fol. 11r.

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were to continue to 'eradicate the weeds of idolatry, it was at least necessary to have someone who could plant the true faith'.²⁴ Enter here, of course, the Society of Jesus.

Despite the injustice of torturing and punishing the indigenous population for something that they could not have known was even deemed to be wrong—an injustice that is all the more terrible when we consider that these early extirpators were in fact aware of the problem—those carrying out the extirpation found themselves in the uncomfortable predicament that, even if the indigenous population had no idea that their worship of local deities was diabolical, according to the contemporary Christian worldview the devil was very much behind native religious practice and even indirectly ended up becoming the focus of their religious worship. The comparative tolerance of the sixteenth century, given voice by the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas, was certainly not present on this visitation.²⁵ By this time, the Jesuit narrator and those involved in the extirpation could only express what they saw of native religious practices and the campaign to eradicate them in terms of the cosmological battle between the forces of light and darkness, in which the devil imitated the sacraments and rituals of the Catholic church in order to ensnare souls and lead them to perdition. Take, for example, a description of a ritual of priestly initiation that the extirpators came across, in which boys were isolated from the community and lived ascetic lives in caves for a number of years while they received training in the rites and practices of their community. The narrator wrote: 'they teach [the boy] to become inebriated by a certain type of tobacco smoke, and in this state the devil appears to him, induces him to make his pact, and teaches him the things of his cult: in these seven years of his noviciate, they seal up a girl with him [in order to test his chastity], and once these tests and experiences are completed to the satisfaction of the older priests [...] he graduates, receiving a cap from a great *cacique* that they consider to be the high priest, after which the boy begins to exercise his office and to ensnare souls, sending them to hell'.²⁶ A more generic summary reads: 'they talk familiarly with the devil, even today. But from what I have been able to gather, they do not appear to make human sacrifices, although the priests throw

²⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 12r.

²⁵ Las Casas famously argued that even human sacrifice could be in accordance with the fundamental precepts of reason and natural law. Viewed from a Lascasian perspective, indigenous idolatry was nothing more than a natural, if misguided desire to worship the divine creator. See Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, trans. and ed. by Stafford Poole (DeKalb, 1991), chs 35–8, 226–48.

²⁶ ARSI, NR&Q 14, 'Descripcion de el Nueuo Reyno de Granada', fol. 11v. *Cacique* is a Carib word for 'chief' and entered the Spanish language and was used throughout the Americas to refer to indigenous nobles or leaders.

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themselves off cliffs and mountains when the devil orders them to, and with these tricks he carts off their miserable souls to hell'.²⁷

There are a number of fundamental misconceptions about the nature of indigenous religion in society in these assessments. The assumption, of course, is that there existed a diabolical priesthood with its own form of noviciate (distant even from the indigenous community). This noviciate was seemingly followed by ordination by a religious hierarchy and infernal ministry which inevitably resulted in the damnation of indigenous souls. Yet an important clue in the text points towards a very different interpretation of indigenous society. The 'ordination ceremony' is described in terms clearly reminiscent of a university graduation (especially with the award of a 'cap' to the 'graduate'). What was really being described, however, were rites of initiation into a much broader society than that of a separate 'priesthood'. The fact that the 'cap' was presented by a great *cacique* considered to be a 'high priest' indicates that in Muisca society political and religious roles were in fact conjoined. The boys might just as easily, and even more likely, have been going through a process of initiation into the rites of nobility and leadership, in which religious ritual knowledge and practice played a crucial part.

Nevertheless, the problem remained that Muisca socio-religious practices could never be understood by the Jesuits on their own terms. Whatever the relationship between indigenous nobility and religious practice, by the early seventeenth century it would always be seen as diabolically-inspired idolatry. Even the discourse of separation between the 'priesthood' and indigenous society made sense in the context of Satan's perceived desire to be worshiped as God and thus also to imitate the Church in its structures and hierarchies.²⁸ The impending disaster this would cause for the souls of humankind meant that native religious practices had to be combated by drastic measures, notwithstanding the 'unfortunate ignorance' of the native population.

The extirpation's combination of spectacular religious ritual and judicial punishment (also made into a spectacle) seemed to provide just the vehicle to combat this satanically-inspired catastrophe. After preaching in Spanish to the '*ladinos*' and then in the indigenous language,

²⁷ Arias Ugarte's later and more pessimistic letter to the Pope explicitly contradicted this. ARSI, NR&Q 14, '1616', fol. 139v. See above [note 14]. ARSI, NR&Q 14, 'Descripcion de el Nueuo Reyno de Granada', fol. 6r.

²⁸ See for example, José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral delas Indias* (Seville,1590), bk. 5, chs.1, 11-12, pp. 303-5, 329-30.

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the extirpators lit a bonfire to incinerate the idols that had been discovered: ‘the Indians were [notably] shocked, not least due to the justice that was done to the guilty, obliging the ministers of the devil first to stamp on their own idols, insult them and throw them onto the fire with their own hands’.²⁹ ‘Meanwhile’, the Jesuit continued, ‘the priests of the Most High God that were present happily sang: “*Confundantur omnes qui adorant sculptilia [...]*”³⁰ This particular hymn was an amalgamation of Psalms 96:7 and 113:12,16 (in the Latin Vulgate) and can be roughly translated as, ‘confounded be all those who worship sculptures [graven images], those who glorify images; let those who make them and all those who trust in them become like them: the idols of the gentiles are of silver and gold, the works of men’.³¹ All this was apparently also proclaimed in the indigenous language with the intention of leaving the natives in no doubt as to the futility of idolatry.

Nevertheless, what was intended did not always marry with what resulted. No matter how much the extirpators thought that they had made clear their message through terror and graphic liturgical spectacle, translated and proclaimed in the indigenous language, it was highly unlikely that the traumatised populations fully understood the reasons why their gods had been burned and ‘more than eighty [indigenous] priests [...] condemned to exile’.³² Yet it is important to bear in mind that, from the perspective of the Jesuits, the process of conversion and transformation was never as simple as that of action, explanation and effect. Behind the scenes, other factors—indeed, other beings—were believed to be at work, and this was implicit in the careful choice of hymn and the reworking of the psalms sung. The full version of Ps 96:7 reads, ‘confounded be all those who worship sculptures [graven images], those who glorify images; *all his [God’s] angels adore him*’ [my italics].³³ While idolatrous humans were left bewildered by the coming of Christ, the angels continued to worship him as was right and proper, as they had always done and as they would always do. Angels, therefore, were seen as

²⁹ ‘*Ladino*’ was the term used to describe a hispanicised indigenous person. The letter writes: ‘there are many of them and they know the Spanish language as a result of regular contact with the Spaniards’. ARSI, NR&Q 14, ‘Descripción de el Nuevo Reyno de Granada’, fol. 13r.

³⁰ The hymn continued: ‘*similis illis fiant qui faciunt ea et omnes qui confidunt in eis: simulachra gentium et aurum opera manum hominum; os habent et non loquentur &c [sic]*’. Ibid.

³¹ In the English translations, the verse corresponds to Psalm 97:7.

³² ARSI, NR&Q 14, ‘Descripción de el Nuevo Reyno de Granada’, fol. 13v.

³³ *Confundantur omnes qui adorant sculptilia, et qui gloriantur in simulacris suis. Adorate eum omnes angeli ejus*. As an interesting aside, neither the English KJV nor NKJV make any mention of angels. The NKJV reads “Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, Who boast of idols. Worship Him, all you gods”.

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diametrically opposed to idolatry, both rhetorically in the Psalm and physically in the world; as such, they would work together with the Jesuits to uproot this perceived offence to God.

In 1615, for example, a report was sent by Jesuit missionaries from a residence they had founded in Fontibon, by now a fortified settlement.³⁴ Rather disparagingly, the narrator, Manuel de Arce, referred to the settlement as 'this castle of idolatry'. Yet he then went on to describe how 'more than one-hundred youths' brought back an idol from the nearby countryside while people watched in amazement as they built a fire onto which they threw it, mocking the devil all the while. 'All this', he added, 'has come about through the hard work of one Indian from the fort, whose devotion [...], way of life and good customs have led many people, [...] including all the Indians, to call him [...] "the Saint" and [...] "the Angel"'.³⁵

The dedication of Jesuits and 'angels' (especially indigenous ones, as in the case mentioned above) thus seemed to have had an impact on indigenous society, especially on the lives of the youths most influenced by the missionaries. Their actions, in turn, affected the religious practices of a much broader section of their community. Arce continued his report by quoting from a letter he had received from Pedro Navarro (the Father Superior of the mission in Fontibon) in which a wooden idol 'as big as a fifteen-year-old youth' was found and shown to the children who were undergoing catechesis. They were asked if the idol was their god and 'with one voice they all replied: "this is the Devil. Our God is in the Church in the High Altar"', at which they apparently attacked the idol so violently that it was left completely disfigured and unrecognisable.³⁶ Navarro rhetorically imagined the Devil's impotent rage at such mistreatment at the hands of the 'sons and daughters, nephews and nieces of idolaters and neophytes'. We, on the other hand, might speculate on the impact of such splits in indigenous society caused by the actions of indigenous angels, children and Jesuits.³⁷

³⁴ The author of the letter, Manuel de Arce (Manuel di Arceo), referred formally to the fort as the *Castillo d'Hontibon*. ARSI, NR&Q 12, 'Annua [...] dell Anno 1615', fol. 141r.

³⁵ Ibid., fol. 141v.

³⁶ Ibid., fol. 143v.

³⁷ Ibid. Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this essay to investigate these particular effects in more detail, but it is worth drawing attention to the apparent similarities in traumatic conversion processes across the Americas. The targeting of children for catechesis by Spanish clergy caused inevitable conflicts in indigenous communities, often tragically centring on the children. For similar cases in Peru see Andrew Redden, *Diabolism in Colonial Peru 1560-1750* (London, 2008), 126-31. For an example from Central Mexico see Toribio de Benavente (Motolinía), *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España*, ed. by Claudio Esteva Fabregat (Madrid, s.d.) tratado 3,

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

More than generational or communal clashes, however, the real conflicts that these agents of Christ (whether angelic or Jesuit) wished to cause were those that affected individual consciences. In order to bring these about, the Jesuits (and, as we shall see, their angelic counterparts) also combined the semi-liturgical, semi-judicial spectacles described above with the subtler method of preaching sermons to the already distressed indigenous populations, using the very vivid imagery of souls in torment. Their aim was to cause anguish in the minds of their listeners so that they would convert and confess to the priest, thereby potentially saving their souls from eternal anguish after death. In the *Cartas Annuas*, these traumas often manifested themselves in the form of visions or dreams, especially by those close to death. These individuals—arguably the most vulnerable and impressionable of all—were considered by missionaries and priests to be those in most urgent need of salvation, and so they would be subjected to their most concentrated persuasion.³⁸ As reported, their dreams or visions closely resembled the moralising (and often frightening) imagery that one would expect from a Jesuit sermon. One such example, as described by the author of the extirpation report, involved an indigenous person who, thought to be dead, had lain for a day in the village church before waking up. He described having seen three different ovens—or, rather, hellmouths—in the village, into which demons were dragging the indigenous villagers as a punishment for three particularly common vices. Into the first hellmouth went the idolaters; into the second, those who had committed incest; and into the third, those who were prone to drunkenness.³⁹ The letter continued that after this vision the 'Indian lived for many years having changed the way he lived his life [and this] set a clear example to the Indians of this town [...]'.⁴⁰

In this particular case, it does not seem too far-fetched to imagine a Jesuit missionary preaching against these three vices in an indigenous settlement using exactly the imagery described. Nor is it too great a stretch of the imagination to envisage the impact this imagery might have had as it worked its way into the listeners' subconscious. Furthermore, this impact would have been so much greater in a context where the existence of powerful and frightening spiritual entities was never in any doubt and where visions and dreams were relatively

cap. 14, 264-75. See also Robert Haskett, 'Dying for Conversion: Faith, Obedience and the Tlaxcalan Boy Martyrs in New Spain', *Colonial Latin American Review*, 17:2 (2008), 185-212.

³⁸ Similar evidence of spiritual trauma can be seen in the Andes during the colonial period. See Redden, *Diabolism*, 113-120.

³⁹ ARSI, NR&Q 14, 'Descripcion de el Nueuo Reyno de Granada', fol. 14v.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

common ways for the super/preternatural to manifest itself. It was in dreams and visions, therefore, that crises of conscience could be induced.⁴¹ From the perspective of the Jesuit narrator, however, this fortunate Muisca neophyte was seemingly granted a second chance—less by missionary preaching than by divine providence. Not only was he able to return from death's door to amend his way of life, but his example was also observed by a number of other indigenous villagers present at the time. By allowing him to witness how the fallen angels worked to punish sinners and sins (especially sins considered to be peculiarly indigenous), divine providence allowed him to undergo and sustain the necessary process of conversion both to enable his eventual salvation and to begin that same process in his fellow townsfolk. It would appear, therefore, that in seventeenth-century New Granada missionary machinations and divine providence were perceived to be intimately intertwined.

As one might expect, divine providence in dream visions was commonly mediated by angels. In the *Carta Annuua* of 1694-8, for example, one feverishly sick indigenous person named Marcos, fifty years of age and 'hardly Christian', purportedly saw a vision of 'a resplendent cross carried by two angels who exhorted him to worship and believe in it if he wished to be saved'. If he refused, they asserted, 'he would truly die and be condemned'.⁴² The letter continued, 'filled with fear, the terrorised man adored the cross and promised to live as a good Christian from here forward'. After that, the vision disappeared and Marcos was able to recover 'from the suffering of his soul and body', from then on living an exemplary life as 'one of the most fervent Christians'.⁴³

Marcos' vision is evocative of the avenging angels of the middle ages, beautiful and terrifying in their anger; yet it is also strikingly reminiscent of the role played by the Jesuit missionaries themselves, concerned for the salvation of indigenous souls. To those who had put their spiritual affairs in order, the missionaries could offer consolation and peace, but those who were on the point of death without having turned to God could only be warned of their impending doom and exhorted to repent. For an indigenous neophyte in the midst of a

⁴¹ See for example chapter 21 of *The Huarochiri Manuscript* ed and trans. by Frank Salomon and George L. Urioste (Austin, 2005), 107-10 which recounts one such crisis of conscience in an Andean noble. In this crisis, a struggle between the noble and his local deity (referred to as a demon) became manifest in a nightmare. See also Frank Salomon, *Nightmare Victory: The Meanings of Conversion among Peruvian Indians (Huarochiri, 1608?)*, 1992 Lecture Series, Working Papers No.7 (College Park, 1990).

⁴² ARSI, NR&Q 13:2, 'Letras Annuas [...] Desde el Año de 1694 hasta el de 1699', fol. 455v.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

feverous delirium, two Jesuits urging conversion and repentance or predicting death and damnation might easily have seemed like avenging angels, especially when the vision was relayed back to the local community. If such mistaken identity occurred at all, however, it will hardly have posed a problem to the Jesuits, particularly given that the end results were often the same. Theirs was an angelic ministry designed to bring souls back to God. Although the spiritual impact of angelic apparitions was, of course, much more significant for the purposes of their ministry, it was relatively unimportant whether Jesuits or angels were seen to do the actual work.

The relative unimportance attributed to potential confusions between missionaries and spiritual beings can be seen even in cases in which missionaries were given demonic attributes. Such confusions were incidental (and even perhaps beneficial) as long as the final outcome appeared to demonstrate the ways in which divine providence could elicit that probable salvation of the individual concerned. In the same settlement, an indigenous woman named Mariana was also extremely sick and in the midst of a similar hallucinatory delirium provoked by the same epidemic that afflicted Marcos. After giving her the sacraments, wrote the Jesuit narrator, they found her 'in the middle of the room, out of her bed, and completely terrified'.⁴⁴ Her husband, the town's Lieutenant, asked her what had caused such terror. She told him that two ferocious men had twice arrived and threatened her with death, but on both occasions a very beautiful boy had defended her and would not let them near her. In the end the boy caused 'those monsters' to flee and calmed the woman down, allowing her to recover from the illness.⁴⁵ It is unclear whether the beautiful boy was a representation of the Christ child or an angel (both are commonly described in such terms), nor is it ever stated that the two 'monsters' were Jesuit missionaries. The timing of their arrival, however, and the fact that they appeared together as a pair, is certainly suggestive of two missionaries visiting and urging repentance and conversion before death. If that was indeed the case, then there is a sharp irony in the sick woman envisioning them chased away by an angel or the Christ child. As we have seen, however, such ironies were of little importance to the Jesuits, so long as divine providence was seen at work in the conversion of souls before it was too late.

⁴⁴ ARSI, NR&Q 13:2, 'Letras Annuas [...] Desde el Año de 1694 hasta el de 1699', fol. 455v.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

In some cases, however, angelic or even demonic intermediaries could not have been confused representations of Jesuit missionaries, even if the visionary intervention plausibly came about wholly or in part as a result of preaching and catechesis. Occasionally, the archangels themselves—recognisable by their context and appearance—were thought to have become directly involved in the affairs of individuals. In the letter reporting the years 1655-60, Hernando Cabrero described one occasion when the 'Prince of the Celestial Militia appeared in a dream' to a female devotee, but one who was 'living in sin'.⁴⁶ Eight days before his feast day, the archangel appeared as a 'most beautiful youth' and was recognised by the insignia he was wearing, which were, added the narrator, 'those with which he was [always] painted'. The youth's manner toward the woman was ambivalent, at once stern and forbidding (like the angels who threatened Marcos years later), and caring. Both these attitudes came together in the style of a concerned parent or sponsor, and the archangel admonished her saying: 'why do you not leave behind this shameless cohabitation? Look, if you don't amend your ways God will punish you. If you do change, however, I will help you'.⁴⁷ With that, he disappeared and the woman awoke in such severe pain that she realised she had to prepare herself for death. After confessing to a Jesuit priest and receiving the sacraments, she died, apparently on St Michael's own feast day, a clear indicator (to the narrator) that she had indeed repented and that her chosen patron had successfully interceded on her behalf. The case was documented as an example of St Michael's intercession in 'these lands of the Indies', the power of which was compared to his heavenly war against Lucifer at the beginning of time.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of angelic and demonic apparitions in New Granada should have been placed in the context of this eternal struggle between fallen and celestial angels. This battle, which was believed to have begun at the dawn of time, continued in the minutiae of people's lives as demons and angels (and missionaries and shamans) struggled for possession of their souls. In 1615, for example, the Jesuit missionaries from Cartagena reported a bitter struggle between indigenous *mohanes* and Dominican friars in diabolical terms.⁴⁸ Many of the friars had died and the parish priest that the missionaries were visiting told them that in the space of less than a week he had buried five who had been killed

⁴⁶ '[...] *que vivia en mala amistad*' lit. 'who lived in [a state of] bad friendship'. ARSI, NR & Q 13:1, 'Relacion [...] desde el año de 1655 asta el año de 1660', fol. 25r.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ A *mohan* was an indigenous religious practitioner, usually expert in herb lore and who would act as an intermediary between the community (or individuals) and the deities.

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

with poisonous herbs.⁴⁹ In a uniquely ironic manner, during the on-going conflict the devil apparently kept appearing in the town square, dressed as a friar. In order to protect the youngsters of the town, the parish priest hung crosses around their necks. Manuel de Arce lamented that the light of the gospel had not reached these people because they had not been properly instructed in the faith, and he tactfully neglected to speculate on the apparent association between the devil and Dominicans.⁵⁰ It would seem that the friars really were fighting a losing battle, beset on the one hand by the poisons of the *mohanes* and, on the other, by the somewhat surreal situation in which the indigenous townsfolk had been given crucifixes to protect themselves against these diabolical Dominicans.

Although some struggles between the forces of darkness and light in New Granada were less violent than the one described above, others had more clearly defined sides and clearer implications for the souls of those caught between them. In the same *Carta Annu*, Arce summarised an account that had come in from the Jesuit house in Tunja, in which a traveller had apparently met a man on the road dressed in black.⁵¹ The two men greeted each other, as fellow travellers were wont to do on long journeys, and the man dressed in black asked the other traveller where he was going. In conversation, the man in black offered to be the other's patron and proposed to him that, if he went with him and, we might assume, acted as his servant, he would 'provide well for him for the rest of his life'.⁵² For reasons unmentioned by the Jesuits, the traveller was sorely tempted by the offer, even if that meant failing to fulfil a vow he had made to God. And so the trap was set, and they agreed to meet again in a few days' time. Later, however, the traveller confessed that all the while he had talked to the man in black a tremendous melancholy had settled on him while his horse became so restless that he could barely control it. Further along the road he came across another rider, this time dressed in green and riding a white horse. They greeted one another and, much to the surprise of the traveller, the man in green immediately questioned him as to whether he had met a man in black. On affirming that this was the case he was then told not to listen to him as he was seeking to trick him. Instead, he was to journey to Tunja, seek out a Jesuit priest and make a

⁴⁹ ARSI, NR&Q 12, 'Annu [...] dell Anno 1615', fol. 173v.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Tunja is now the departmental capital of Boyacá and lies approximately one hundred miles to the north east of Santafé de Bogotá as the crow flies.

⁵² Ibid., fol. 150v.

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

full and general confession.⁵³ On hearing this he was overwhelmed by such 'consolation in his soul that talking to him he seemed to be in heaven'.⁵⁴ The traveller immediately got off his horse to try to kiss the man's feet in thanks but was sternly told not to touch him before the green man rode quickly away. The traveller never saw either of the two men again but, after making his confession, he fulfilled the vow he had made to God.⁵⁵

In this case, an afflicted conscience once again appeared to project an interior struggle onto an external vision, blurring the boundaries between what was real, what was imagined and what was envisioned. Even though the traveller appeared not to recognise the strangers as a demon and an angel (though his horse seemingly did!), the strangers' respective effects upon his state of mind were representative enough of the struggle between spirits of darkness and light over the souls of individuals in seventeenth-century New Granada. One character represented a path that would have led the traveller to neglect his religious obligations to the divine, while the other reaffirmed the importance of the sacraments and the need to return as a prodigal son to ask for God's forgiveness. If, however, the isolation of the highways and byways allowed sufficient time and space to reflect on the demands of conscience versus those of desire, in some cases the boundaries between light and darkness were not always so clear-cut. If we turn again to the city of Tunja—the same place in which the traveller had confessed his experience on the road—we find that a few decades later, in 1649, a woman called Beatriz de la Gasca was accused of having set altars on the nights of certain saints' feasts, and of holding prayer vigils with four other women. She apparently made wax candles into crosses and burned them on the altars whilst saying the rosary. It is hard to see what problem the Inquisition would have had with any of this until we learn that one witness reported to have seen a golden snake and white doves appearing on the altar. Another said she had seen a winged shadow with a dog's snout. Beatriz allegedly said that it was her guardian angel coming to ask what she wanted. A married couple told the inquisitors that Beatriz had informed them that their daughter was

⁵³ A general confession was a peculiarly Jesuit practice in which penitents would search their consciences, repent of and confess the sins they had committed over their entire life notwithstanding the absolution that they may have received in previous confessions.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 151r.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

bewitched, and that she had made a wax figurine and cast it into the river whilst praying to her guardian angel to lift the spell.⁵⁶

Beatriz, meanwhile, denied all the accusations, even under torture, saying that a mulatto woman had given false testimony against her. Even if the accusations were false, however, they nevertheless shed light on a society where the boundaries between the angelic and the Satanic were blurred indeed. On the one hand, Jesuit missionaries were attempting to inculcate an international devotion to the guardian angel; on the other, ordinary people, more remote from the socio-religious hierarchy, were mixing this devotion with something more personal, perhaps more useful, but, unfortunately for some, also prohibited.⁵⁷

A grander, less shadowy angelic devotion to a number of apocryphal angels was also prevalent in the urban centres of New Granada, and Tunja, where Beatriz lived, was no exception. Devotion to the seven apocryphal angels of Palermo had been suppressed in Spain and Italy at the beginning of the seventeenth century precisely due to doubts about whether they were angels or demons—it would not do, of course, to invoke demons by name even if the intention was to invoke angels. Despite its suppression in Spain, it was a devotion that still appeared to capture people's imagination and it therefore quickly spread throughout the Americas at the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁵⁸ The seven angels of Palermo appear, for example, in the writings of a Creole nun and three-times superior of the convent of the Poor Clares in that same town. Francisca Josefa de Castillo y Guevara Niño y Rojas (1671-1742), wrote (among other things) a small book of devotions to the seven angels allocating one to each day of the week.⁵⁹ Her purpose was to inspire daily contemplation on the virtues of each angel; she therefore gave each angel a name to coincide with each day of the week and translated each

⁵⁶ Trial of Beatriz de la Gasca, (1649) Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid-hereafter AHN), Sección Inquisición (hereafter Inq.), Libro 1021, fols. 198r-200r.

⁵⁷ In Santiago de Chile for example, the Jesuit run seminary of San Miguel was renamed the Seminary of the Santos Ángeles Custodios. See also the Neapolitan *Trattato del'Angelo Custode* by Ottavio Iovene (Naples, 1612), which draws on Jesuit examples from all their missions, including New Spain.

⁵⁸ For a remarkable study of how this devotion began and spread to and throughout the Americas, see Ramón Mujica Pinilla, *Ángeles apócrifos en la América virreinal* (2^{da} edición) (Lima, 1996), passim.

⁵⁹ *Afectos y cilicios: la clarisa Josefa de Castillo 1671/1742*, facs. (Bogotá, 1994). The seven angels named by Josefa were *Michael* Victor, then *Gabriel* Strength of God, *Rafael* Medicine of God, *Uriel* Fire of God, *Seatiel* Orator/Petition of God, *Jehudiel* Remunerator/Confession or Praise of God, *Baraquiel* Assistant/Blessing of God. Devotion to the angels seems to have been particularly strong in convents, presumably because of the angelic links with mysticism, and union with the Divine. One of the first institutional patrons of the devotion to the Seven in the Spanish peninsula was the convent of the *Descalzas Reales*. See Mujica Pinilla, *Ángeles apócrifos*, 46-51. For more general information on the baroque history and art of the convent see the special edition issue of the journal, *Reales Sitios: El Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales*, 35:138 (1998), passim.

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

name into the vernacular. She then described their divine offices, the way in which they should be depicted, the colours of their robes, and what they should hold in their hands. Wednesday, for example, she allocated to Saint Uriel, whom she called 'Fire of God' and whom she described as the 'supreme justice of the omnipotent king, [who] engulfs lukewarm hearts in flame [and is our] patron in battles against temptations'.⁶⁰ Despite his apparently severe appearance, Josefa reassuringly continued, 'he favours men so that they might not be punished and [so that they might] conquer the temptations and be charitable, zealous and righteous'. But then, after describing him as painted in red with a sword in his hand, she went on to say that 'it is he who banished Adam and Eve from paradise, who resisted Balam with a naked sword [...] and who killed 185,000 Assyrians in a single night'.⁶¹ Uriel was clearly a powerful ally and patron in the struggle against vice. As with all angelic devotions of the period, however, the cult of Uriel was tinged with ambiguity. Devotion to the divine virtues of the Seraph and invocation of their protection was also mixed with a healthy fear in the face of their power. Here was a being, one of the avenging angels of ancient tradition, whom one would not want to offend. At the same time, however, he was a spiritual being not universally recognised throughout the Hispanic World (although more frequently than not in Hispanic America) as still on the side of light. Apart from Lucifer, only three were named in the Bible (Michael, Gabriel and Raphael), the names of the others came from uncanonical apocryphal texts such as the book of Enoch.

None of this, however, seems to have deterred devotees in the central highlands of New Granada. In the parish of the Divine Saviour at Sopó, for example, we find a vivid artistic testimony that the seven named angels became twelve.⁶² All of them were painted in the mid-to-late seventeenth century by an anonymous painter simply known as the maestro of Sopó and, according to the art historian Pablo Gamboa Hinestrosa, they most likely adorned the walls of the Dominican convent of Santafé before successive earthquakes in the eighteenth

⁶⁰ *Afectos y cilicios*, fols. 1^v-2^r.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² To those named above were added *Esriel* Justice of God, *Laruel* Mercy of God, *Ariel* or *Piel* Commando of God, *Leadh* Power of God, and the Guardian Angel. Portraits of twelve angels can be seen in the Convent Church of Santa Bárbara, Tunja, so it is unlikely that the number is coincidental. Sopó was an indigenous Muisca town that by the mid-seventeenth century had undergone a number of relocations. The current location of Sopó dates from its third relocation in 1653 (Pablo Gamboa Hinestrosa, *La pintura apócrifa en el arte colonial: Los doce arcángeles de Sopó* (Bogotá, 1996), 22).

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

century precipitated their removal to Sopó.⁶³ The twelve have been placed firmly within the long tradition of European and later Colonial American angel paintings, but it is unfortunate that relatively little is known about why an international devotion to the seven archangels was augmented in New Granada to twelve.⁶⁴ One hypothesis could be that the number represents a symmetry between heaven and earth in the manner of Pseudo-Dionysius' Celestial and Terrestrial Hierarchies. While Dionysius proposed nine heavenly hierarchies reflected by nine earthly ones, the twelve angels might well reflect the twelve apostles charged with carrying the gospel to the world.⁶⁵

It is also tempting to suggest that the closer one gets to the spiritual centre of a region the more angels one might expect to find. However facile this statement might seem, the fact that the twelve archangels of Sopó originated in Santafé appears to give it weight. Indeed, embedded within the Hispano-American urban topography was a spiritual framework that placed the church edifice at the centre. The larger the urbanisation, the more church buildings there would be. In the early 1690s, a Jesuit from the mission of San Xavier de Macaguane suggested to an indigenous leader that he send his three sons 'to Santafé and other cities in the kingdom, so that, on seeing how Christianity flowered, the sumptuous magnificence of the temples, the grave majesty of the liturgy, and ecclesiastical ceremonies and the authority of the ministers of the Church, they might gain an understanding of the Catholic faith'.⁶⁶

In the same vein we might consider the description of the dramatic inauguration of the new Jesuit church of St Ignatius in Santafé de Bogotá in 1697.⁶⁷ Amidst a magnificent procession accompanied by fireworks and music, the Blessed Sacrament was carried, accompanied by six boys dressed as angels who scattered rose petals and perfume as they went. Various teams had competed to construct the most complicated and decorative castles possible, each of them designed for each point in the procession along which the Blessed Sacrament would stop. One

⁶³ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁴ Representations of angels in groups of twelve can also be seen in the dome of the mid-seventeenth century church of Espíritu Santo, Chiguata, in the southern Andean highlands of Peru. The church is constructed in a style that Alexander Gauvin Bailey terms the 'Andean Hybrid Baroque'. See Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque: Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru* (Notre Dame, 2010), 89-93, figs 3.14, 3.15.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 33-62, especially 50. See *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid (London, 1987).

⁶⁶ Macaguane is in present day Arauca, close to the Colombian/Venezuelan border. ARSI, NR&Q 13:2, 'Letras Annuas [...] Desde el Año de 1694 hasta el de 1699', fol. 452r.

⁶⁷ ARSI NR & Q 13.2, Litt. Ann. 1694-8.

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

of these castles was 'populated with angels [...] armed with carbines [...] At the very top, were beautifully dressed angels with harquebuses on their shoulders'.⁶⁸ Two boys dressed as angels, one with a lighted torch, the other with a garland of flowers, came out of the castle to receive the host [*Su Magestad Sacramentado*] and joined the other six in accompanying the Blessed Sacrament to the new and majestic palace erected for the purpose. The second castle, designed by the city militia and following the military theme, incorporated a squadron of infantry. Above them were placed richly dressed angels. The procession continued through the streets and into the town square, past shrines set up to tell the life of St Ignatius and past yet more angels who accompanied him. Another castle was decorated with branches and flowers in which birds of paradise were placed alongside other animals to represent the Garden of Eden as the procession neared its goal: the church, God's house, or Paradise itself.

As they entered the church, 'instruments and delicate voices could be heard welcoming Christ and St Ignatius into his temple'. Describing the dome, the narrator said that there were innumerable children and angels. Seated on the altarpiece were two angels and on every archway there were more. As the Blessed Sacrament entered, the boy-angels accompanied it in procession scattering flowers and amber.

'In short', the Jesuit writes evocatively, 'the church was a living representation of heaven whose delights were experienced by all those that crossed the threshold. Many were those who felt sweet tears pulled onto their cheeks by the joys of their heart'.⁶⁹

If in the minds of the seventeenth-century Jesuits, the centre, the capital, the church, replete with angels, represented Paradise, they also knew that the unorthodox rites they came across in the countryside, far from the urban and Christian centres, could only be Satanic. So, in the words of the Jesuit narrator, 'moved by one same Spirit, the subjects of this Province declared horrific war on hell from all their Colleges [...] beginning in the city outskirts and extending outwards fifty, sixty and even one hundred leagues, so that there has remained no city, town, village, farm or countryside ranch that has not resounded with the truths of the Gospel'.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid., fol. 356r.

⁶⁹ Ibid., fol. 363v.

⁷⁰ Ibid., fol. 369r. (On *mohanes* see above, note 47).

Andrew Redden, 'Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada', in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.146-167.

Theirs was an angelic mission, part of the eternal angelic war against the forces of darkness that the missionaries also perceived behind indigenous religious practices. Angels travelled and fought with them, penetrating the indigenous worldview even as demons became more visible and replaced deities, especially in the minds of youths exposed to Christian catechesis. Nearly one hundred years after the first Jesuit missionary campaigns, this angelic war for the souls of New Granada continued to be fought between missionaries and *mohanes*, angels and demons. This was an ambiguous spiritual world in which a guardian angel might appear as a winged shadow with a dog's snout, a form more traditionally associated with the demonic. As with all warfare, this was a struggle that involved considerable subterfuge: angelic and demonic forms blurred with missionaries and travellers as they wrestled for control. Indeed, not all were even aware of who was on whose side, as indigenous peoples discovered themselves in the middle of a spiritual struggle not of their making. Some, like the *mohanes* of Santa Marta, took sides against the missionaries to protect their communities and their traditions; yet, despite the apparent martyrdoms of numerous Dominicans, in this case it was the friars who were documented as having appeared on the demons' side in this place which the 'light of the gospel had not yet reached'. Others, like the youngsters of Fontibon, fell under the influence of the Jesuits and worked with the angels to 'confound all those who worshipped graven images'. The Jesuits themselves also took on ambiguous forms in the visions of the sick, even appearing as avenging angels and demonic persecutors, themselves chased away by angelic or Christ-like powers. In a Viceroyalty where vipers could hide under the altar cloths, the forms of angels, demons and deities, missionaries, *mohanes* and indigenous catechists could and did merge at different times in this eternal struggle for souls.

Vipers under the altar cloths: Satanic and angelic forms in seventeenth-century New Granada. Chapter. Jan 2010. Andrew Redden. One morning one of the Fathers was saying Mass at the high altar of a church. On reaching the end of the Gospel of St John, his companion placed his hands on the corner of the altar to say "Verbum caro factum est". As he took his hands away, a viper that was under the cloth [struck at] him [but missed] and the Father fervently thanked the Lord for View. "Guided by God" beyond the Chilean Frontier: The Travelling Early Modern European Conscience. Vipers under the Altar cloths: Satanic and Angelic forms in Seventeenth-Century New Granada more. by Andrew Redden. Research Interests The community, ideally united in faith, was always under attack as Satan tried to break down the defences and wreak havoc inside the citadel. His aim was to prise individuals away from their communal and ritual protection, leading them to their destruction in their isolation. In the same way, he was seen to attack family units and religious communities, undermining their coherence and causing pain and strife. An altar cloth is used by various religious groups to cover an altar. It may be used as a sign of respect towards the holiness of the altar, as in the Catholic Church. Because many altars are made of wood and are often ornate and unique, cloth may then be used to protect the altar surface. In other cases, the cloth serves to beautify a rather mundane construction underneath.