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Hands of God: Evangelization and Visual Representation in Juan de la Cruz's *Doctrina christiana* (1571)

YARÍ PÉREZ MARÍN

Out of the 131 books and pamphlets known to have been printed in New Spain during the sixteenth century and that survive today, 88, which roughly represent 67 percent, have an explicit religious focus.¹ This observation is hardly surprising given the conditions of early printing in Mexico, the driving reasons for bringing the technology across the Atlantic in the first place, and the historical actors involved in the book trade as patrons, writers, buyers, and readers. From a literary standpoint in colonial studies, however, religious works are rarely put forth as underpinning the foundations of a lettered tradition. That role is customarily set aside for the historiographical writings of figures such as Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, or Bartolomé de Las Casas, among others, and arguably it will not be until the time of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega that a true colonial point of view will reach full literary expression. Yet religious texts like Juan de la Cruz's 1571 *Doctrina christiana en la lengua Guasteca co[n] la lengua castellana* signal an important moment in the history of New World print culture, reflecting processes of negotiation, appropriation, and erasure that not only mirror those found in historiographical texts, but that would also come to define the literature of the Americas.

In some regards, turning to travel narratives and natural history as a point of origin is understandable. The manner in which European authors ciphered their experiences would prove enormously influential, setting the coordinates for dominant representations of the New World and its peoples for centuries to come. From Pedro Henríquez Ureña's

¹ The numerical calculation is based on the most recent data provided by Rosa María Fernández de Zamora's exhaustive study, which updates previous efforts, María Fernández de Zamora, *Los impresos mexicanos del siglo XVI: su presencia en el patrimonio cultural del nuevo siglo* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009), 351-58.

construing of Columbian accounts as a keystone of Latin American expression,² to Alejo Carpentier's appropriation of early exploration-era materials as part of a "marvelous-real" continuum, to Gabriel García Márquez's affirmation that the seeds of the modern novel can be traced back to the chroniclers of the Indies,³ a strong case continues to be made by intellectuals in our time for the interdependence of historiography and literature. As Rolena Adorno points out, "the colonial writers' capacity for observation, interpretation, synthesis, and engaging expression about a world unknown and unseen by Europe are the qualities that make colonial writings worth reading, and it is what makes them literary."⁴

But in other ways, narrative and largely, though not exclusively, Hispanic prose inclusive of lesser-known, non-canonical texts like catechisms and evangelization manuals in the foundational story of Latin American literature can also seem arbitrary. Recasting this corpus of devotional materials as marginal when at the time they were anything but, downplays the extent to which religious literature helped to steer period expectations and practices. If a reader, for example, held a given book in his or her hand in New Spain in the sixteenth century, likely it addressed religion somewhere within its pages.⁵ Moreover, side-lining these texts imposes a double bias, obscuring the fact that indigenous languages actively shaped the early history of printing in New Spain as much as did a religious preoccupation, with over a third of printed works being written either partly or primarily in non-European vernaculars. Case in point, twenty-seven *doctrinas* were printed in New Spain before the seventeenth century, and they were written in Latin and Castilian, but also in

² For a discussion on the landmark quality of Henríquez Ureña's formulation, see Roberto González Echevarría, "A brief history of the history of Spanish American literature," in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, ed. Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1:23-25.

³ Gabriel García Márquez's Nobel lecture, "La soledad de América Latina," The Nobel Foundation, available on line at http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1982/marquez-speech.html (accessed 23 June 2015).

⁴ Rolena Adorno, *Colonial Latin American Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

⁵ The dominance of religious texts is also reflected in period book imports. In his well-known study of the Spanish book trade, Irving Leonard notes that, of the books legally brought to the New World during the early colonial era, "about half of the total [were] clearly theological tomes" with the other half being divided between "secular nonfiction and belles-lettres." Irving Leonard, *Books of the Brave* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 200-01.

Nahuatl (“mexicano”), P’urhépecha or Tarascan (“michuacano”), Mixtec, Teenek or Huastec (“guasteco”), Otomí, Zapotec, Chuchona, and Tzotzil.⁶ The level of critical attention such works have customarily received in modern cultural studies is not proportionate to the place they occupied in their own time.

Juan de la Cruz’s 1571 *Doctrina christiana en la lengua Guasteca cof[n]la lengua castellana* stands out as one of the more intriguing examples of viceregal-period religious literature in the Americas. It is a book often mentioned in passing by scholars of early colonial New Spain who are struck by its distinctive use of page-sized hand illustrations to communicate tenets of the Catholic faith. Yet the *Doctrina*’s investment in visual culture in the context of a trilingual guide for the embodied performance of a religious set of European-based beliefs warrants closer scrutiny, not only to properly situate the hand images within the larger panorama of early modern religious iconography, but also to understand its unique place in colonial letters as a text that both advances and challenges what Walter Mignolo has termed “coloniality.”

For Mignolo, coloniality is “the hidden logic of modernity,” Renaissance Europe’s attempt to disavow “all possible loci of enunciation [other than its own] from religious to economic, from legal to political, from ethical to erotic” as it expanded beyond its physical borders in projects of competing territorial expansion.⁷ Alternate epistemologies were deemed not merely erroneous but were branded as superseded within a developmental framework that placed Europe at the forefront of the modern and gave it exclusive rights over charting the coordinates toward new knowledge. “The supposedly progressive point of view taken by missionaries and men of letters in the sixteenth century,” writes Mignolo, “manifested itself in terms of spreading the right religion, the right customs, and the right ways of learning.”⁸

Truly, what better example would typify what Mignolo describes as the “occlu[sion] of the pluriversal under the persuasive discourse of the universal” than a proselytizing text such as the *Doctrina*, cemented on the notion of a single true faith, and a unitary

⁶ Again following Fernández de Zamora, fifteen texts were written in an indigenous language alone, while thirty-two were written in an indigenous language in addition to Castilian, with four of these being trilingual. Fernández de Zamora, *Los impresos mexicanos del siglo XVI*, 262, 345-51.

⁷ Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 442.

⁸ Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, 257.

Catholic purchase over its expression?⁹ Coloniality thus relies on the sustained deployment of monotopic hermeneutics to engage with cultures outside of its purview being brought into the fold. As Mignolo and Madina V. Tlostanova explain:

The understanding subject of monotopic hermeneutics is not, and cannot be, *the other*, but is always the same. It is precisely the privilege of controlling knowledge and meaning that allows monotopic hermeneutics to secure the voice of *humanitas* and to define itself by inventing its exteriority, i.e., the other.¹⁰

In contrast, and at the heart of postcolonial approximations to colonial historiography, in pluritopic hermeneutics the other acquires “the potential of thinking from his or her own body and experience, subsuming the imperial reason that makes an *other*, an *anthropos* out of him or her.”¹¹ The performance of such alternate interpretations enabled by pluritopic hermeneutics, regardless of whether they challenge or support a Western cultural hegemony, nonetheless calls into question the ostensibly absolute and universal nature of that very discourse. While as a catechism the *Doctrina* would appear to be a text bound at every step by the logic of coloniality, it, nonetheless, marks a departure in its attempts to stage an embodied performance for a Huastec subject. It asks its readers, European and indigenous alike, not just to engage with knowledge but to repeatedly produce it in a sustained dialectical comparison between words, images, and physical reality. Cruz’s text charted a participatory and collaborative reading that reached the limits of monotopic hermeneutics, venturing toward the space of the pluritopic, a strategy that likely doomed the project to becoming a historical cul-de-sac with more prescriptive approaches taking its place instead.

Other than the fact that he was a friar and that he served as prior of one of the local Augustinian convents, little is known about Cruz’s identity or when he arrived in New Spain.¹² From the

⁹ Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, 435.

¹⁰ Madina V. Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo, “On Pluritopic Hermeneutics, Trans-modern Thinking, and Decolonial Philosophy,” *Encounters* 1:1 (2009):17.

¹¹ Tlostanova and Mignolo, “On Pluritopic Hermeneutics,” 17.

¹² Joaquín García Icazbalceta, following earlier scholars, suggests that Cruz may have arrived in New Spain in 1539. Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVI; primera parte: catálogo razonado de libros impresos en México de 1539*

information shared in this, his only known work, it can be gleaned that he lived among the Huastec for twenty years before setting himself to the task of composing the *Doctrina*. Also well-versed in Nahuatl, he claimed to be familiar with an earlier text (now lost) written by a “Fray Juan de Guevara” that translated Christian teachings into Teenek, which, according to Cruz, had appeared in 1548. Though appreciative of Guevara’s previous efforts, he mentioned his work only to point out its shortcomings, touting how his own publication overcame the hurdles his predecessor had faced, offering more reliable, better-informed solutions based not just on his own personal experience, but also purportedly in ample consultations with “otros padres y ministros celosos de la salvación de aquella pobre gente, y de otros muchos de los cuales me he ayudado para examinar la congruencia y correspondencia de la lengua guasteca a la nuestra española.”¹³

Indeed, the accuracy of the translations is singled out as a central concern, given the apparent scarcity of competent bilingual personnel, a feature of the *Doctrina* that stands in contrast to comparable period catechisms printed in other indigenous languages, such as Nahuatl.¹⁴ According to Cruz, with the exception of another colleague who did not wish to write his own text, and after the death of another priest who had been competent in the Teenek language, “de los

a 1600 con biografías de autores y otras ilustraciones, precedido de una noticia acerca de la introducción de la imprenta en México (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954), 251. In her own study, Ángela Ochoa is skeptical of that arrival date due to lack of proper documentary evidence. See Ángela Ochoa, “La *Doctrina Cristiana en lengua Guasteca* (1571) de fray Juan de la Cruz. Primicias de un análisis,” *Actes: La “découvert” des langues et des écritures d’Amérique*, available online at http://www.vjf.cnrs.fr/sedy/l/amerindia/articles/pdf/A_19-20_09.pdf (accessed 23 June 2015). The Augustinians had been in New Spain since 1533, following the Franciscans and the Dominicans, and considered themselves the third order to have settled in New Spain, a claim contested by the Mercedarians. For more information on the relationship between the various orders in the early colonial era, see Karen Melvin, *Building Colonial Cities of God: Mendicant Orders and Urban Culture in New Spain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

¹³ Juan de la Cruz, *Doctrina christiana enla lengua Guasteca conla lengua castellana, La guasteca correspondiente acada palabra: de guasteco: Segun q[ue] se pudo tolerar enla frasis: de la lengua guasteca: compuesta por yndustria de vn frayle de la ordendel glorioso sanct Augustin: Obispo y doctor de la sancta yglesia. En mexico En casa de Pedro Ocharte, 1571*. Copy at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, fol. 4r.

¹⁴ For a discussion on the centrality of writing in Nahuatl during the colonial era up to the Bourbon Reforms of the eighteenth century, see Kelly S. McDonough, *The Learned Ones: Nahua Intellectuals in Postconquest Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 11-13, 46-58.

clérigos no [había] otro que de ella [entendiera] cosa.”¹⁵ It is a preoccupation shared by the signers endorsing the text, who enlist the help of two independent Huastec interpreters to check for accuracy.

Written in Spanish, Latin, and Teenek, the customary opening licenses of the *Doctrina* are followed by a nuncupatory epistle to Alonso de Montúfar, a Dominican who was then the second archbishop of Mexico. In the dedication, Cruz explains that the purpose of the project was to cement what he described as a largely already accomplished enterprise, as, according to his assessment of the situation, with the exception of the “chichimecas bravos” all others were “bautizados y han menester saber algunas cosas más de las necesarias a la salvación.”¹⁶ Setting aside the degree of truthfulness of a claim that the conversion of indigenous peoples to Catholicism in Mexico was a *fait accompli* by that point in time, still, the language and style of the text are aimed at an ideal reader who has already embraced Catholicism and needs only to be aided and coaxed into a more perfect expression of that new religious faith rather than persuaded of its validity. After the epistle, the initial section concludes with a Castilian abecedary and syllabary before the main exposition begins in earnest, which is organized following a repeating pattern of bilingual, twofold translations.

Cruz’s book was the most profusely illustrated text printed in New Spain on any subject in the sixteenth century.¹⁷ With 71 out of its 100 printed leaves (a total of 49 folios) featuring at least one woodcut image, the overall framework of the *Doctrina* leaves no doubt as to the importance its author ascribed to graphics in the project of conversion.¹⁸ Among the numerous illustrations included in the text are 15 outlines of left hands, each with different sets of labels superimposed, used throughout to explain topics like the holy sacraments, the Ten Commandments, or the various ways of doing penance (see Figure 1). The metaphor of body-as-text, of the hand as a

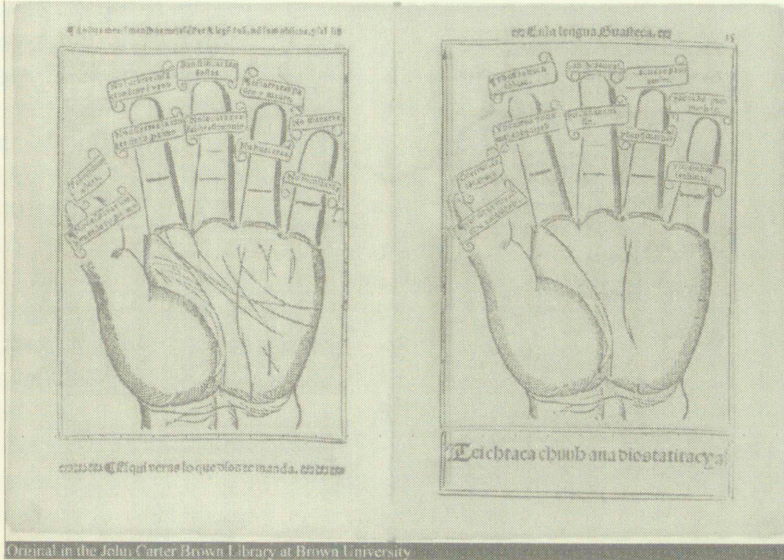
¹⁵ Cruz, *Doctrina christiana*, Mexico, 1571, JCB, fol. 11r.

¹⁶ Cruz, *Doctrina christiana*, Mexico, 1571, JCB, fol. 11r.

¹⁷ See Fernández de Zamora, *Los impresos mexicanos del siglo XVI*, 113, 261-62. Three copies of the book are known to exist at present and are held at Harvard University, the John Carter Brown Library, and The Hispanic Society of America in New York; only the latter is complete, according to Ochoa, “La *Doctrina Cristiana*.”

¹⁸ Note the decorated initials are not included in this calculation. The copy held at the John Carter Brown Library, which is the one consulted, features 140 illustrations (albeit not all different), some of them full-page. It should be noted that many of the woodcuts are reused throughout the text.

Figure 1



Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Juan de la Cruz, *Doctrina christiana en la lengua Guasteca co[n] la lengua castellana* (Mexico: Casa de Pedro Ocharte, 1571), fols. 14v and 15r. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

legible surface to be inscribed and then decoded, is an alluring point of entry for present-day sensibilities, and some of the scholarly work that has been carried out on the text follows in this vein.¹⁹ Yet it is critical to ask how these printed hands made their way to the page in late sixteenth-century Mexico, for even though the images may be atypical in an early modern American milieu, arguably they are standard fare if considered in a transatlantic context, late examples of what were by then well-established iconographic traditions in medieval and renaissance Europe that employed images of the body—and of the trope of the labelled hand specifically—in manuscripts and in print as mnemonic devices.²⁰

“Visual preaching,” as Jaime Lara terms it, had been an important proselytizing element in Christian conversion campaigns in Europe since at least the fourth and fifth centuries, and the practice would later be adopted by mendicant orders, especially by the followers of Saint Francis. “Franciscan preaching,” explains Lara, “was supremely visual and appealing to sight and sound, and it continued a long tradition of auricular and ocular homiletics.”²¹ It was a Franciscan, Fray Pedro de Gante, who first created a catechism in New Spain entirely in pictographs, in which he offered “visual equivalents for each of the phrases or ideas represented in the Our Father, the Creed, the Hail Mary, and so on.”²²

After Gante, so-called “Testerian manuscripts,” named for Fray Jacobo de Testera who acquired a reputation for giving sermons that relied on pictures to compensate for his lack of fluency in Nahuatl, became an essential part of missionaries’ arsenal for preaching to the newly faithful. These objects were “a series of rolled animal hides on which various images could be quickly painted and used as portable

¹⁹ See Colleen Ebacher, “The Old and the New World: Incorporating American Indian Forms of Discourse and Modes of Communication into Colonial Missionary Texts,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 32:2 (1991):135-65.

²⁰ Representations of disembodied hands appear elsewhere in Christian iconography. Two salient examples are: the Franciscan coat of arms, which shows the crossed arms (not just the hands) of Christ and St. Francis both bearing the stigmata; and expanded representations of the *Arma Christi* incorporating the *manus depillans* and the *manus alapans*, synecdochic tropes of the abuse endured by Jesus during the Passion.

²¹ Jaime Lara, *Christian Texts of Aztecs: Art and Liturgy in Colonial Mexico* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 43.

²² Lara, *Christian Texts*, 49.

‘blackboards’ for visualized rhetoric” (see Figure 2).²³ Like Testerian manuscripts, in the case of non-visual print materials, the size of many multi-lingual religious books hold clues as to the pragmatic nature of their use. Smaller quarto and octavo tomes would presumably have been easier to carry when ministering, or could have even fit under a friar’s robes, if necessary. At first glance it might seem difficult to ascertain where the *Doctrina*, with its unusually high visual content, fits in this equation, or how exactly would it have been employed in the field. How did the indigenous readers directly addressed in the prose of the text connect word and image? To what extent would indigenous readers have observed the images up close rather than the priest’s embodied performance, showing them how to apply the memorization method in his own hand, or in theirs?²⁴

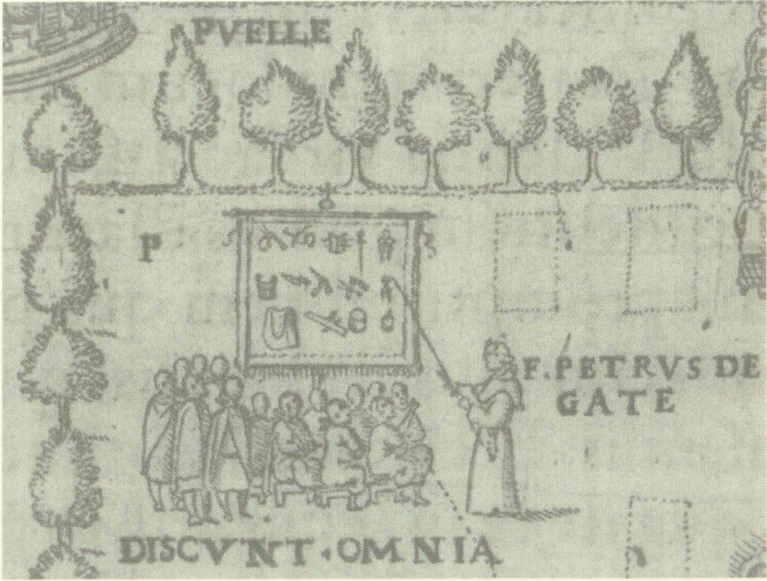
Diego Valadés’ *Rhetorica christiana* of 1579, a text printed in Europe about religious instruction in New Spain, includes an engraving depicting small groups of indigenous peoples assembled around a Testerian manuscript, where a priest (identified as Gante, who had been Valadés’ teacher) uses a long wand to point to figures that are large enough for all to see (see Figure 2).²⁵ This more distant interaction with fairly large images seems unlikely in the case of most of the woodcuts in Cruz’s book, given its dimensions. The hand illustrations each take one full side of a quarto folio and would have been life-size at best if shown to a reader, with the information in the labels certainly being much too small to be read from afar. The majority of its woodcuts, depicting not hands but scenes from the Bible, are smaller still compared to the hands, usually three per page, which would not have allowed for any discernible engagement from a distance.

²³ Lara, *Christian Texts*, 51. Though very few have survived, Testerian manuscripts were numerous and are referenced in print culture, in written texts, and in engravings that show how they were used.

²⁴ Osvaldo F. Pardo’s remarks on the subject of non-verbal interaction in the context of confession seem highly relevant here as well. As he points out, “a good portion of the priests’ efforts went into making the Indians memorize the basics of Christian doctrine” but “often religious instruction was in the hands of a bilingual Indian chosen by the priest.” Osvaldo F. Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahuatl Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 111. It is possible thus to assume that indigenous readers could have handled the book directly.

²⁵ For a discussion on Valadés’ use of images in the context of New World mnemonics and religious conversion, see Linda Báez Rubí, *Mnemosine novohispánica: retórica e imágenes en el siglo XVI* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de México, El Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2005), 119-37.

Figure 2



Diego Valadés, detail of image in *Rhetorica christiana ad concionandi, et orandi vsum accommodata, vtrivsq[ue] facultatis exemplis suo loco insertis: quae quidem, ex Indorum maxime de prompta sunt historiis: unde praeter doctrinam, summa quoque delectatio comparabitur* (Perugia: Apud Petrumiacobum Patrutium, 1579), 107. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

The writing itself, however, suggests that indigenous readers did have direct access to the images on the page in the case of the *Doctrina* as they would have had for larger illustrations in Testerian manuscripts. The woodcut pertaining to the seven deadly sins (see Figure 3) consists of a single left hand with labels in both Castilian and Teenek, framed by a set of instructions that reads:

No te olvides de pelear contra los siete pecados mortales que son serpientes matadoras que emponzoñan las almas y las llevan al infierno que el ángel de Dios: tu guardador te ayuda y si tu quieres no te vencerán ten cuenta en tu mano te los escribo como verás en esta mano.²⁶

The passage, with its use of the second person singular and demonstrative pronouns, describes the close physical proximity between the book and at least two people: the priest or Church representative who reads the text out loud as he writes the information upon the hand of a second individual listening who, in turn, is asked to notice the correspondence between his or her own newly inscribed body and the print image. Perhaps more explicitly than in any other early colonial source, the *Doctrina* outlines the process for the staging of a joint, collaborative reading where two people, at least one of whom is indigenous, interact with a visual and print text simultaneously.²⁷

Visual preaching did not translate into visual printing in the case of religious literature in New Spain, which for the most part did not have the same level of investment in graphic imagery. Printers would make ample use of illustrations in a number of religious publications, yet the relationship between the images and the sections

²⁶ Cruz, *Doctrina christiana*, Mexico, 1571, JCB, fol. 22v. A later Teenek grammar and catechism from the eighteenth century clarifies that concepts such as the deadly sins in this image were rendered in Teenek by adapting existing nouns characterizing people: “los abstractos...se forman de sus propios concretos, añadiendo a la terminación propia de estos esta partícula *talab*...hombre cortés es *caenax*, la cortesanía *caenax-talab*.” Carlos de Tapia Zenteno, *Noticia de la lengua huasteca* (Mexico: Imprenta de la Biblioteca Mexicana, 1767), 11.

²⁷ In his survey study of multi-lingual catechisms, Otto Zwartjes notices the possibility that song may have also played a role in the performance/reading of the text to Teenek-speakers. See Otto Zwartjes, “The Missionaries’ Contribution to Translation Studies in the Spanish Colonial Period: The *mise en page* of Translated Texts and its Functions in Foreign Language Teaching,” in *Missionary Linguistics V: Translation Theories and Practices*, ed. Otto Zwartjes, Klaus Zimmermann, and Martina Schrader-Kniffki (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2014), 22.

Figure 3



Juan de la Cruz, *Doctrina christiana en la lengua Guasteca co[n] la lengua castellana* (Mexico: Casa de Pedro Ocharte, 1571), fol. 22v. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

of the text they appeared next to seldom performed as explicit a complementary function as in Cruz's woodcut hands. However, knowing that from a pedagogical standpoint indigenous audiences in this case were encouraged to engage directly with images, and considering also the European precedents for the use of the hand trope by readers, these factors suggest that the *Doctrina* may well have allowed for a more interactive, even if atypical approach.

An obvious template for the use of hand illustrations is the so-called *manus aretina* or Guidonian hand, which, as Susan Forscher Weiss explains, was "one of the most ubiquitous images of the Middle Ages and Renaissance relating to memory and learning in music."²⁸ In use from the late ninth century well into the Enlightenment, Guidonian hands were intended as mnemonic devices and were represented as the disembodied palms of the left hand, just like the hands in Cruz's text. Twenty different musical tones were assigned to its various parts, "starting with the tip of the thumb and continuing counterclockwise [*sic*] in a spiral motion" with textual labels placed directly on top as indexical references.²⁹ Though there is evidence suggesting that hands had been used in a similar fashion before the High Middle Ages, the practice of associating tones to its joints when learning music and as an aide for sight-singing (solmization) became linked with the figure of the eleventh-century monk, Guido of Arezzo, who described the method in a letter and for whom it was named.³⁰

Guidonian hands appear in numerous manuscripts throughout Europe, and with the advent of the printing press, woodcuts and later engravings of the image would also abound (see Figure 4). Cruz's printer, Pedro Ocharte, surely would have been familiar with the Guidonian hand as an available prototype of textual illustration, and Cruz himself no doubt would have come across them as well.³¹ But

²⁸ Susan Forscher Weiss, "The Singing Hand," in Sherman, *Writing on Hands*, 35. Weiss, as do other scholars, notes that the attribution of the method to Arezzo is problematic, given that he was not the first one to use it, not are there any diagrams of the image in his own writings.

²⁹ Karol Berger, "The Guidonian Hand," in *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, ed. Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 76.

³⁰ For a discussion on the Guidonian hand, in addition to Weiss and Berger, see also Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³¹ Ocharte was a Frenchman who emigrated to New Spain as a merchant and married the daughter of the first printer to set up a shop in the Americas, the Italian Juan Pablos, becoming Mexico's third printer. For more on Ocharte, see footnote 46.

Figure 4



Late sixteenth-century Guidonian hand in Francisco de Montanos, *Arte de musica: theorica y practica* (Valladolid: Casa de Diego Fernandez de Cordoua y Obiedo, 1592), fol. 10v. I thank Drew Edward Davies of Northwestern University's School of Music for bringing this Hispanic example to my attention. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Histórica de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, BH FLL 27938.

Cruz likely had more immediate examples that related specifically to Church teachings at his disposal when he decided to adopt the device, as the left hand had already been used for representing the ecclesiastical calendar, first in manuscripts and then in book sources, the latter partaking of the identical illustration technology used by print shops for Guidonian hands, albeit for different ends. “The Hand as the Mirror of Salvation,” an anonymous 1466 woodcut that depicts the palm of the left hand, is one of several cases where the trope “serves as a cognitive map on which the inscribed words form a series of memory places based on the anatomy of the hand and the nomenclature of the fingers” (see Figure 5).³²

Beyond mere instruments for learning and recalling information, like the ones in the *Doctrina*, these religious memory hands could also invite the reader to inner reflection and self-assessment. One such case is found in Jan Mombaer’s *Rosetum exercitorum spiritualium et sacrarum mediatonum*, from 1510, which contains a full-leaf woodcut image labelled the “chiropsalterium,” a left hand dotted with labels, which operated as “a mnemotechnic device to describe his method of prayer and to meditate on the Psalms” (see Figure 6).³³ There is evidence to show the same pedagogical method surviving well into the late seventeenth century for the training of clergymen, as shown by a 1676 printing of Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual exercises*. This edition includes an image of a left hand, much like the ones in the *Doctrina* and the *Rosetum*, which “prompted an individual to give thanks to God (the thumb); seek inspiration from the Holy Spirit (pointer finger); full examination of conscience written (middle finger); heartfelt confession (ring finger); and vow to guard against sin (pinky finger).”³⁴

Even if the Guidonian hand had been the more common template when Cruz composed the *Doctrina*, the fact that religious hands did not necessarily adhere to the counter-clockwise, spiral sequence of decoding information suggests that earlier religious memory hands, rather than those for musical use, would have probably been foremost in the author’s mind when designing his own. The starting place for reading hands in the *Doctrina* is usually the thumb,

³² Claire Richter Sherman, “Reading the Writing on Hands,” in *Writing on Hands: Memory and Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Claire Richter Sherman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 64.

³³ Susan Forscher Weiss, “Guiding Hands,” in Sherman, *Writing on Hands*, 246.

³⁴ J. Michelle Molina, *To Overcome Oneself: The Jesuit Ethic and Spirit of Global Expansion, 1520-1767* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 119.

Figure 5



Anonymous, "The Hand as Mirror of Salvation" (Netherlandish, 1666). Handcolored woodcut. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art (USA).

but not always, and the trajectory can vary. In some cases, after the joint where the thumb meets the hand, the reader is asked to go up each digit starting with the index finger and then moving right. Sometimes, however, the order jumps from the thumb to the tip of the index finger moving clock-wise (see Figure 1), and, still other times, the thumb is abandoned altogether as the point of entry, having the reading begin elsewhere, for instance, with the little finger.³⁵ Employing the hand as a mnemonic and pedagogical device, or using the body as a text, therefore, cannot be considered a strictly colonial-era phenomenon, nor was it a novel idea by 1571. In this regard, the hands in the *Doctrina* could be seen as no different than those circulating in Europe, before and after its time.

However, Cruz's decision to enlist the device in a text aimed not at the spiritual training of European novices or monks but as part of a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic project to secure the religious conversion of the Huastec breaks new ground. To that end, Cruz expands the semiotic potential of early modern religious iconography in significant ways. The structure of the *Doctrina* is built upon the premise of translatability in the case of the prose content, and of complementarity in the case of the visual material. Following the opening section already discussed, there is a bilingual presentation of the main Catholic prayers: the *Per Signum Crucis*, *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, *Credo*, *Salve Regina*, *Ad Completorium*, and *Ad Primam*. Facing an open copy of the book, Cruz presents the folios in *verso* to the left in Latin (with each prayer identified in Spanish), vis-à-vis the corresponding sections in Teenek in the *recto* folios to the right (see Figure 7). Cruz adheres to this format throughout the text in the subsequent sections but with the *verso* folios in Spanish instead of Latin, and the Teenek translations always in the *recto* folios to the right. The presentation is careful in this conceit, for even if the Spanish or the Teenek side is longer or shorter, and despite small variations in the size of the images, new material will not be introduced until one turns the page so that the reader is forced to always engage with the texts side by side.

Prior to Cruz's book, Ocharte had published catechisms in Nahuatl, Zapotec, and Mixtec, which in some regards anticipate the format of the *Doctrina*. Fray Domingo de la Anunciación's *Doctrina cristiana breve y compendiosa por via de dialogo entre un maestro y*

³⁵ For example, compare the images in folios 11v, 15r, and 18v of the *Doctrina christiana*, Mexico, 1571, JCB.

un discipulo (1565) did not have bilingual facing pages, but instead featured side-by-side columns on a single page in Castilian to the left and Nahuatl to the right. Though Anunciación's catechism only had four images, and not presented in a dual layout, Fray Pedro de Feria's *Doctrina Christiana en lengua castellana y çapoteca* (1567) kept the same dual column format, with the Zapotec in smaller print on the right-hand side, and did introduce the use of woodcuts.³⁶ But rather than a set of complementary images, as in Cruz's text, in Feria's, images sit in the middle of the two columns, surrounded by the prose content on each side.

After Feria, Fray Benito Hernández published two catechisms with Ocharte, in 1567 and 1568 respectively, which also made use of images, thirty-two discernible ones in the latter, albeit not in the context of side-by-side translations.³⁷ Though none of these catechisms follow Cruz's facing-page mirror format, or include any hand illustrations, there is a noticeable sensitivity to the use of visual material leading to the publication of the *Doctrina* at Ocharte's shop.

The non-hand woodcuts used by Cruz will avoid repeating themselves in facing pages, serving a complementary function, while the prose information is instead offered as an original text and its direct translation. There will always be the same number of images left and right, but the religious scenes shown will tend to be different rather than exact copies.³⁸ The hands, however, follow a different logic, closer to that of the written word. Three of the illustrations are of single left hands with both Spanish and Teenek labels superimposed unto a single outline, with the remaining hand woodcuts presented as full page, facing illustrations.³⁹ In these sets, even when the contours of the palms are different, the place of the labels on both will mirror each other exactly (see Figure 1).

Cruz's introduction of paired, cross-lingual, and arguably cross-racial memory hands marks an important change. These hands then become not only "mirrors of salvation," but also mirrors of each other in their duplication. By having the visual trope serve not just as a mnemonic aide, but also as a translation bridge, the subordinate

³⁶ Seventy-one in total, including some that were repeated, and not including decorated initials in the calculation.

³⁷ For a discussion on usual formats for bilingual and trilingual catechisms in early colonial Spanish America, see Zwartjes, *Missionary Linguistics*, 12-25.

³⁸ This format is followed less strictly as the text nears the end, where images begin to be recycled with greater frequency.

³⁹ Cruz, *Doctrina christiana*, Mexico, 1571, JCB, fols. 16v, 18v, and 22v.

position of the Teenek to the Spanish is disrupted. The indigenous hand not only rests side by side with the Spanish and occupies equal physical space, but in some ways, it also becomes self-sufficient, fully inscribed with all the relevant information displayed by its counterpart, creating a relationship of relative parity. That, in itself, points to the looming issue of coloniality and indigenous agency in the process of conversion.

In his discussion on the problems faced by Church officials in New Spain with the administering of confession to non-Spanish speaking populations, Osvaldo F. Pardo observes that there was a great degree of anxiety among clergymen over the effectiveness of translation and the penetration of Catholic doctrine. Questions were being raised about whether the new indigenous converts truly grasped religious teachings, internalizing them with enough nuance so as to enable a proper self-examination of conscience and sincere repentance, preconditions for Catholic absolution and reconciliation. "From a linguistic point of view," he writes, "confession presented priests with rather particular difficulties since it required a more thorough and active understanding of the native language."⁴⁰ Nahuatl, he adds, was not only "the language most widely spoken by the Indians, followed by Otomí" but was also "the most commonly used language in confessions, and there were very few ministers who spoke an Indian language other than Mexican."⁴¹

In this context, the relative self-sufficiency of the Huastec side in the *Doctrina* acquires a deeper resonance, for it was perhaps even more critical that individuals belonging to this non-Spanish, non-Nahuatl speaking ethnic group be able to freely perform an examination of conscience on their own.⁴² Print culture, in the form of complementary, mirrored, and translated text as well as image, sought to bridge the gap where interpersonal communication stopped short. But this qualified independence being afforded to an indigenous subject who was then free to use his or her hand as a roadmap to salvation could also be highly suspect, given the presence of *other* hands in literature by this point in time.

Guidonian and religious mnemonic palm illustrations share an iconographic space with additional types of hands in sixteenth-century print culture. Scientific engravings such as the ones in Vesalius' 1543

⁴⁰ Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism*, 111.

⁴¹ Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism*, 110, 111.

⁴² It should be noted that the *Doctrina* is the only book in Teenek included in Fernández de Zamora's list of surviving print materials from sixteenth-century New Spain. Fernández de Zamora, *Los impresos mexicanos del siglo XVI*, 350.

De humani corporis fabrica, or Ambroise Paré's mid-century mechanical hand, a similarly-displayed, full-page engraving of a labelled open palm (albeit a right hand in this case), show how the trope had evolved so as to allow for multiple uses and different interpretations. One available type of hand illustration, however, would be particularly problematic in the context of the *Doctrina*, and that was the divinatory palm, which shared the same display format and made use of similar technology to reach print (see Figure 8).

The sixteenth century would see an abundant influx of print materials relating to physiognomy and palmistry in Europe, and this new interest was spread to, and was policed in, New Spain as well. There is, for example, the case of Pedro Suárez de Mayorga, who was tried by the Inquisition in Mexico in 1583 for having "papeles supersticiosos de suertes, rayas de manos y cosas desta calidad" as well as "un libro que se intitula Taisnerio que trata de fisionomía y quiromancia."⁴³ Suárez's possession of a transcribed copy of Taisnier's book was "un documento de 219 folios manuscrito por ambas caras, plagado de dibujos de manos."⁴⁴ Images of the hand in texts dealing with palmistry could be very similar, from a formal standpoint, to the ones previously discussed: full-leaf disembodied open palms with textual labels superimposed on top of the graphic design, with meaning ascribed to their various parts. They tended to differ, however, in that they paid greater attention to depicting the various lines and birthmarks deemed relevant for fortune-telling.

Whether the result of changing early modern sensibilities, more attuned to anatomical accuracy, or possibly the influence of imagery borrowed from then popular literature on chiromancy and physiognomy, several of the hands in the *Doctrina* show a great level of detail in the representation of the lines of the hand (see Figure 1).⁴⁵ This trait is odd, given that unlike the digits and joints in religious memory hands or Guidonian examples, lines are not allocated any special meaning by Cruz. Without clues in the prose as to the reason, the phenomenon likely has less to do with the author's intentions and more with the typographical resources available to Ocharte in his print

⁴³ Margarita Peña, "Quiromancia y adivinación en la Nueva España," *Literatura y cultura populares de la Nueva España*, ed. Mariana Masera (Barcelona: Azul Editorial, 2004), 59. The text that lands Suárez de Mayorga in trouble is described as a manuscript copy of a printed work by Johannes Taisnier. For more information on the *Taisnerio*, see Peña's essay.

⁴⁴ Peña, "Quiromancia y adivinación," 60.

⁴⁵ Cruz, *Doctrina christiana*, Mexico, 1571, JCB, fol. 14v.

Figure 8

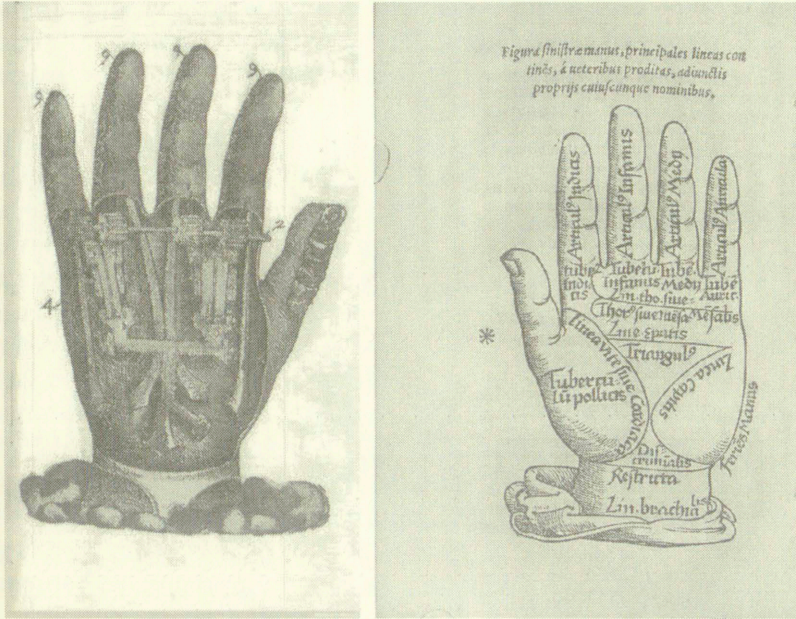


Illustration of the mechanical hand in Ambroise Paré, *Instrumenta chyrurgiae et icones anathomicae* (Paris: 1564); and divinatory hand in Tibertus Antochus, Ivo Schöfer, and Johannes Dryander, *De Chyromantia libri III auctoris cuiusdam vetustissimi* (Germany: Moguntiae excudebat Ivo Schöfer, 1538). Courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London, and Google Play Books (public domain) respectively.

shop.⁴⁶ It is possible that the risk of confusion between the *Doctrina's* religious hand and the divinatory palm may have been a factor in explaining why the method was not endorsed as a pedagogical tool by religious texts in general in the New World. Writing "about fortune-telling with the hands" in New Spain in 1629, Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón bemoaned "putting in first place this kind of fortune-telling...because it is the most used by the Indians."⁴⁷

Despite its self-proclaimed pragmatic potential, which brought together the visual iconography of European Guidonian and religious hands, and combined it with the mirror-image layout of earlier bilingual catechisms in New Spain, Cruz's innovative model was not followed by later religious works nor did it share in the popularity of Testerman manuscripts. The timing of the *Doctrina's* publication also bears mentioning, for after 1580 catechisms would cease to be published altogether in the New World when exclusive printing privileges were granted to El Escorial.⁴⁸ The hand illustrations in the *Doctrina* then become a singular yet isolated chapter in the history of colonial Latin American literature that hinted at the possibility of pluritopic hermeneutics, but was ultimately left out of the printed page. In a world of limited resources, where the design and production of an image represented a certain investment on the part of the printer, their absence in later materials is conspicuous.⁴⁹

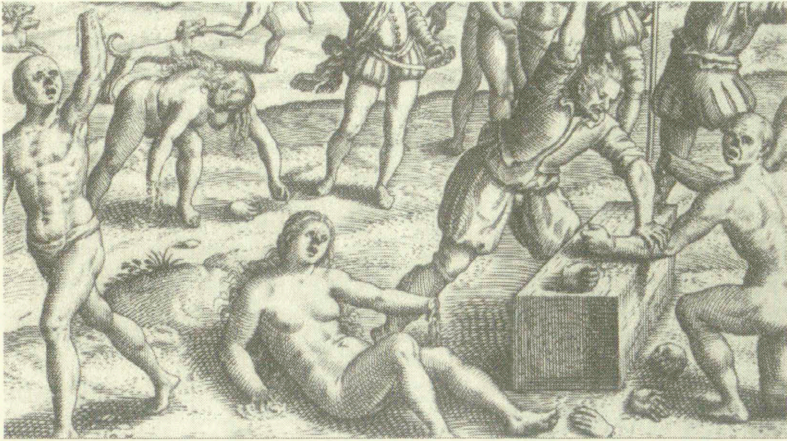
⁴⁶ In January of the following year, along with his engraver Juan Ortiz, Ocharte would be detained, tortured, and imprisoned for two years by the Inquisition for not having shown enough care in his use of illustrations, accused of printing an image that was deemed heretical and that supposedly reflected Lutheran beliefs. See Fernández de Zamora, *Los impresos mexicanos del siglo XVI*, 231-33.

⁴⁷ Alarcón's "fortune-telling" refers not to palm-reading, but rather to the practice of Nahua medicine men using the hands to "read" and heal the body of the sick. Therefore the activity he is denouncing would have more to do with an indigenous belief system rather than the embracing of European palmistry methods. Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón, *Treatise on the Heathen Superstitions That Today Live Among the Indians Native to This New Spain, 1629*, trans. J. Richard Andrews and Ross Hassig (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 143. See also pages 282-83.

⁴⁸ See Fernández de Zamora, *Los impresos mexicanos del siglo XVI*, 260.

⁴⁹ There are a few other examples of images of disembodied hands in the history of Hispanic print, such as Melchior de Yebra's *Libro llamado Refugium infirmorum* (Madrid: Luys Sa[n]chez, 1593) or Juan Pablo Bonet's *Reducción de las letras* (Madrid: Francisco Abarca de Angulo, 1620). However, in these cases, hands were used differently, illustrating gestures that corresponded to the alphabet so as to enable communication with sick, deaf or mute patients. See Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism*, 126-27.

Figure 9



Bartolomé de las Casas, *Narratio regionum indiarum per Hispanos quosdam devastatarum verissima* (Frankfurt: Theodor de Bry and Ioannis Saurii, 1598). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Self-sufficient indigenous hands, belonging to readers able to make meaning of their bodies without the assistance of a priest, were perhaps much too dangerous a proposition for neophytes.⁵⁰ If true, as Mignolo argues, that “in the colonial space, the strangeness of the other constantly erodes the realm of the same, does not leave it impenetrable, and eventually finds its way to the metropolis,”⁵¹ then the hands, with their potential to answer back, rest at the very limits of coloniality. Indeed, the most widely disseminated images of hands reflecting indigenous identity that readers saw in print during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were not the detached, Christianized, Huastec foils of European hands in Cruz’s *Doctrina*, but rather those littering the fields in Theodore de Bry’s illustrated editions of Bartolomé de las Casas’ writings (see Figure 9). The contexts for each are admittedly different. Yet in another sense, these parallel late sixteenth-century approaches to the visual representation of indigenous hands share a semiotic space, one that points just as easily to the stripping of power as to the limits of an embodied Catholic religious faith. Their juxtaposition lays the coordinates for the range of possibilities, as well as the limitations, of indigenous agency and conversion in early viceregal times.

⁵⁰ Lara makes a similar argument to explain why a comprehensive translation project of the Bible into indigenous languages was not seen as a priority: “It is doubtful, however, that the whole Bible was translated or made available to natives; nor was it necessary. The basic biblical texts were those employed as proof texts in the conversion process and those used as lectionary periscopes for mass,” adding that “vernacular readings [were] done from the pulpit immediately after the solemn proclamation of the Gospel in Latin, but not as a replacement for the Latin texts.” Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 57.

⁵¹ Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, 18.