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A Burning Heart Can Save Your Soul: Images of the Sacred Heart in New Spain¹

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The events leading up to Christ's crucifixion are commonly exhibited in visual imagery, as well as in performance: Passion plays were, and still are, a popular form of reenacting the last hours of Christ's life. These visualizations of Christ's death are among the most powerful and moving experiences that a Christian devotee can witness.² Of central importance to these performances, as well as to artistic representations of this narrative, is the body of Christ. His *corpus* is a canvas upon which is revealed his suffering, torture, and death.

This essay focuses not on the entire corpus of Christ, but on a portion of it: his heart. Many representations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus were produced in colonial Mexico (the Viceroyalty of New Spain) in the eighteenth century. One of these, the *Sacred Heart of Jesus with Jesuit Saints Ignatius of Loyola and Aloysius Gonzaga* by the Novohispanic artist José de Páez (Fig. 1), exemplifies significant ideas about the Eucharist, mystical Catholicism, and the Jesuits. This painting serves as a case study to explore late-colonial ideas concerning the death and resurrection of Christ's body, ideas which intersect with social, political, and religious discourses in New Spain and the broader Catholic world.



Fig. 1. José de Páez, c. 1770. *Sacred Heart of Jesus with Jesuit Saints Ignatius of Loyola and Aloysius Gonzaga*. Oil on copper, 42 x 32.7 cm, Jan and Frederick Mayer Collection, Denver Art Museum (*The Arts in Latin America* 2006, 384, fig. VI-33).

Prior to the appearance of representations of the Sacred Heart in the eighteenth century, images glorifying Christ's Passion and suffering body were a constant presence in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New Spain.³ Many of these images, such as Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz's *Christ Consoled by Angels* (eighteenth century), display Christ's body as bruised, bleeding, and shredded, thereby alluding to the Eucharist through Christ's body and blood, two elements contained in the Sacrament.⁴ Veneration of the Eucharist was of the utmost importance in New Spain. The festival of *Corpus Christi* was a prominent and significant annual festival; numerous confraternities devoted themselves to the Sacrament; and Eucharistic

allegories were common in visual culture (Curcio-Nagy 4, 7; Morera). Logically enough, it is within this context that representations of Christ's heart first appear. As I will demonstrate, using Páez's painting, along with contemporary texts relevant to the painting, the cult of the Sacred Heart was integrally linked to the Eucharist, and, thus, notions of Christ's death, resurrection, and the salvation and redemption of humankind.

In addition to considering how Páez's painting relates to the Sacrament, I also explore how it encodes or relates to some of the complex socio-cultural issues occurring in eighteenth-century New Spain. The cult of the Sacred Heart, and its accompanying imagery, can be framed within the socio-political and religious context of eighteenth-century New Spain; in the latter half of the century, the devotional practice came under attack by religious and political reformers due to its relationship to the Eucharist, Jesuits, and mystical, Baroque Catholicism, or Catholicism that was rooted in performative and emotive piety. I suggest that it was the Eucharistic underpinnings and mystical associations that initially bolstered support for the cult and eventually led these reformers to attempt to undermine it.

History of the Cult of the Sacred Heart

While no codified cult of the Sacred Heart existed until the seventeenth century, its initial stirrings occurred in medieval Western Europe in relation to the devotion of Christ's wounds.⁵ The wounds and the pierced heart on the cross were commonly displayed together in prints as indexical signs of Christ's crucified body (*The Infant Christ in the Sacred Heart*, fifteenth century).⁶ Since the heart represented a portion of Christ's body and functioned as an opening through which his blood ran, the organ resonated with concepts associated with the Eucharist. In the medieval era, certain visionary nuns, such as saints Mechthilde and Gertrude of Helfta, became ardent devotees and promoters of Jesus' heart after it was the subject of many of their visions (Bynum 170–262; Hamburger; *Krone und Schleier*; Voaden). Christ's heart remained popular throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods, and its Eucharistic and mystical connections continued to grow.

The cult grew rapidly during the seventeenth century when a French Visitadine nun, Marguerite Mary Alacoque (1647–1690), experienced visions of Christ offering her his heart. Her visions even made an explicit connection between the Sacred Heart and the sacrament of the Eucharist, which are recorded in her autobiography (Menozzi; Rosa 18). For instance, she writes that, on one occasion, Christ spoke to her, showing her his heart and requesting that, “the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi be set apart for a special feast to honor My Heart . . . to make amends for the

indignities which It has received” (Alacoque 95–96). It was Alacoque’s experiences that also established the basic iconography of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: a flaming heart crowned with thorns and pierced with a wound in its side. Moreover, her visions made the Sacred Heart an international phenomenon after she claimed that Christ asked her to spread word of the devotion’s benefits. Afterwards, the cult was spread largely by the Jesuits, who encouraged interest in it throughout New Spain.⁷

During this period, the Sacred Heart developed into a main Jesuit devotion. The eighteenth century marked the zenith of both the Jesuits and the Sacred Heart cult in the Spanish viceroyalty. In New Spain, numerous devotional texts were printed about Christ’s heart.⁸ In addition, certain hospitals, schools, convents, and churches were named in its honor. Many of the century’s most significant artists, including Miguel Cabrera and Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz, represented the organ in paintings, sculptures, jewelry, prints, and even architectural motifs. In short, the Sacred Heart was one of the most pervasive images of eighteenth-century New Spain. Yet, its popularity did not prevent the religious icon from coming under intense scrutiny by enlightened religious reformers and royal absolutist supporters; in fact, its popularity was one of the main reasons for the attacks.⁹

During the mid-eighteenth century, Bourbon religious reforms, incorporating anti-Jesuit ideas, endeavored to curtail emotive, Baroque Catholicism and its accompanying local, religious practices (such as devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus) in favor of a more secularized Catholicism. Páez’s image was created in the midst of these reforms, and, thus, the historical context is important for our reading of it. The social context becomes even more important to establish because Páez’s image has no known provenance.¹⁰ As a representation that is tied to both the Jesuits and the Sacred Heart, this image must be read within Páez’s representational strategies and examined in terms of its iconography. It can then be framed within its specific socio-cultural milieu to understand the broader significance of the work.

José de Páez’s Painting of the Sacred Heart

Páez presents the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a theophany set in a landscape. The painting displays an anatomically correct, wounded heart, surmounted by a cross and encircled with thorns. The heart radiates flames and floats above a lush landscape. Cherubim surround it, while two saints kneel on the ground, gazing at the organ in reverence and crossing their arms against their chests. Based on their physiognomy and attributes, both saints are identifiable. On the left is Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Jesuits. Before him on the ground are a book, possibly his *Spiritual Exercises*, and a

biretta. On the right is Aloysius Gonzaga, also a Jesuit (canonized in 1729), who is accompanied by a bunch of lilies, a crown, and a book. Páez calls attention to their faces and hands by flattening their bodies under their black cassocks. Behind Ignatius, Aloysius, and the Sacred Heart, is a lush landscape. The cooler green hues of the land, in conjunction with the blues of the sky, provide a contrast to the bright, carnelian red of the heart.

While the scene is set in a landscape, the saints and the heart are the center of attention. Both saints rise above the horizon line, as does the heart, quite literally. It is also important to note that the heart's size is in hierarchic scale, thus emphasizing the significance of its owner. Additionally, the composition is stabilized by a cross that is created by the horizontal landscape and the vertically oriented heart. The circle of cherubim around the heart appears stable rather than dynamic, and their presence in the image lends emphasis to the heart, while introducing and containing the sacred space in which the heart exists. Stability is also given to the work by the presence of the two saints who form the base of a pyramid, the apex of which is the aorta of the organ. This compositional balance inspires feelings of calmness, permanence, and solidity. The emotional and physical composure of the saints before the heart further emphasizes a sense of arrested time.

Páez also employed a common compositional conceit used to display saints adoring visions. His depiction is similar to other devotional images that exhibit saints gazing at visions. For instance, a painting of the *Adoration of the Holy Name of Jesus* (seventeenth century), attributed to José Juárez, shows two Jesuit saints (or perhaps priests) adoring Christ's name.¹¹ The monogram of Christ is encased in rays of light and is surrounded by angels and cherubim. Both Jesuits are accompanied, like Ignatius and Aloysius in Páez's painting, by attributes like books and birettas. Thus, Páez borrowed pictorial conventions associated with theophanies to convey clearly to viewers that Ignatius and Aloysius were in the process of experiencing a miraculous vision of Christ's heart.

Interpreting Páez's Image in Relation to Christ's Martyrdom and Resurrection

Based on the iconography and representational strategies of Páez's painting, we are to understand the Sacred Heart as embodying notions of Christ's sacrificial death, redemption, and love, all of which supported mystical piety. On the heart's left side, the bleeding gash reminds us of Longinus plunging his spear into Christ's side during the Crucifixion. Besides the bleeding wound, other pictorial motifs relate to the Passion narrative and specifically index the instruments of Christ's Passion. The cross emerging

from the heart's aorta recalls Christ's crucifixion, and the crown of thorns reminds viewers of Christ's suffering and sacrifice. These pictorial signs function in conjunction with Christ's disembodied, veristic organ to signify Christ's death and ultimate act of charity. The Sacred Heart can be understood as an icon of charity because it reminds viewers that Christ died for his love of humanity. Yet, the Sacred Heart in Páez's painting, as well as others like it, simultaneously conveys Christ's miraculous Resurrection; the heart floats above the ground and, with renewed life, burns with brilliant rays of light and fire.

As devotionals and sermons from this period proclaim, this combustible energy is a manifestation of the love that the Redeemer feels for humanity, the love he expresses as he gives himself for sacrifice. Certain texts emphasize that through veneration of the Sacred Heart (and thereby repairing the injustices committed against it), devotees would place themselves on the road to salvation.¹² Moreover, speaking more specifically to the burning love of Christ, the Jesuit Antonio de Oviedo writes in a 1748 sermon:

Apostol, y Evangelista San Juan se le mostró el Corazon de Christo en un trono todo de fuego, y de ardientes llamas, despidiendo por todas partes rayos mas brillantes, que los del Sol. La herida que recibió en el Costado después de muerto en la Cruz, se distinguía claramente en esse Corazon, al qual rodeaba una como corona de punsantes espinas, y en la parte superior del Corazon se veía una Cruz. Y le dio Dios a entender, que esos instrumentos de su pasión significaban, que el amor inmenso, que tenía a los hombres su Corazon, avia sido la fuente, y manantial de todas las penas, y humillaciones, que padeció por ellos, los quales avia tenido presentes desde el primer instante de su Encarnacion; y que desde esse primer instante se le fixó la Cruz en el Corazon, la qual desde entonces avia aceptado, para mostrar el amor, que tenia su Corazon a los hombres. (1-2)

(The Heart of Christ was revealed, on a day of the beloved Apostle and Evangelist St. John, upon a throne of fire and burning flames, sending off in every direction rays brighter than those of the Sun. The wound inflicted to his side, after he died upon the cross, manifest distinctly on that Heart, around which spiny thorns encircled, like a crown and in the uppermost part one could see a Cross. And God made it known that those instruments of his Passion, which represented the boundless love that he had for man in his heart, had been the font and the spring of all woes and humiliations that he suffered for mankind, [these very instruments: the cross and the crown of thorns] had been present since the moment of his Incarnation; and ever since that first moment, the cross, which he accepted from then on, was affixed to his heart to

demonstrate his Heart's love for mankind that he [Christ] suffered for people; and since this first instant the Cross was fixed upon his Heart—he had accepted it to show the love that he held in his Heart for mankind.)

As both Páez's and Oviedo's representation of the Sacred Heart make clear, even after his death, Christ's love burns brightly to convey his model suffering and example. This sentiment is echoed in a 1750 devotional: “el dulcissimo amante Corazon de Jesus . . . arde[—], hasta encender, y derretir con su exemplo, la nieve de los mas clados Espiritus” (*Dia feliz en obsequio del amoroso Corazón de Christo Jesus sacramentado* n.p) (the sweetest, loving Heart of Jesus . . . burn[s], until inflaming, and melting with its example, the snow of the most hardened souls).

The notion that Christ's heart burns with love relates to Christ's role as a solar being. Beginning in the medieval period, Christ was conceived of as a solar figure, one who could bring spiritual enlightenment (Burkhart; Lara 1998, 2008; Rubin).¹³ He was characterized as the *lux mundi*, or the light of the world, an idea derived from John 8:12: “Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’”¹⁴ Theologians, including St. Bonaventure, Gregory the Great, and David of Augsburg, also used solar analogies in relation to Christ, particularly in describing union with God or the heart as a site of burning love and *caritas* (charity) (Burkhart 236–37; O'Donnell 91; Bovenmars 146). For example, David of Augsburg states of Jesus' heart:

From the burning Heart of Jesus flows his blood, hot with love. Jesus showed us from the Cross his faithful heart, glowing with love, since the death of our souls touched him more nearly than the death of his body. Ah, dearest Lord Jesus Christ, what great love and faithfulness wilt thou show to the soul when thou displayest thy riches and openest thy Heart to thy beloved friends! (O'Donnell 101–2).¹⁵

From texts such as these, the idea developed that salvation and redemption could be achieved by following the light, or Christ, as did the notion that Christ was lit with love for humankind and, thus, sacrificed himself willingly for its redemption. Furthermore, these ideas established the metaphor of Christ as a solar figure. Such ideas became intertwined with notions regarding the Eucharist, or the *Sol Sacramentado* (Sacramented Sun), and they become particularly apparent in Corpus Christi celebrations.¹⁶

Visual imagery in New Spain, as in Europe, encoded notions of Christ's solar, Eucharistic symbolism. Sunburst monstrances, for instance, became common liturgical objects to assist worshippers in visualizing Christ's body surrounded by rays of sunlight, and many of them were carried during the

festival of Corpus Christi to hold the consecrated host. By enveloping the Sacred Heart in intense illumination and flames, images like Páez's also underscore the solar aspects of Christ-as-the-sun. It is the light source for the image, illuminating the saints and putti, and, thus, metaphorically, it is the light for Christian believers. The flames and light also connote the powerful life force inherent in the organ; here, the heart has conquered death and risen, thereby signifying Christ's triumph over death.

Significantly, the Sacred Heart relates to Christ's Resurrection because images of the Resurrection visually proclaim the promise of life after death. They also allow Christian devotees to ponder the idea that a better life is achieved in death, giving people hope in the face of increased social problems, such as epidemics (Mormando).¹⁷ Christ's life and death, thereby, exemplify how a person can achieve everlasting salvation. With the increased concern over death and dying in eighteenth-century New Spain, it is important that images of the Sacred Heart reminded people of Christ's death and existence after death; in other words, the organ became a symbol for Christ's continued existence.¹⁸

Besides these obvious signs of Christ's sacrificial death and rebirth, Páez's image alludes to the Sacred Heart's Eucharistic underpinnings. Christ's heart literally contains both flesh and blood, and thus is a metonym for Christ's body (Camporesi; Debroise). Novohispanic devotionals also note this metonymic function of the Sacred Heart (Kilroy 170–209). For example, Juan Antonio de Mora wrote that the heart “es ser como receptaculo, en que se contiene la sangre” (23–24) (is like a receptacle that contains the blood). Many other Novohispanic representations of the Sacred Heart, such as Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz's *Sacred Heart of Jesus* (eighteenth century) make this connection even more explicit.¹⁹ In Morlete Ruiz's depiction, for instance, the artist superimposed a Eucharistic wafer over Christ's heart, upon which is stamped Christ crucified. Inscribed on the host are the words “Hoc est enim corpus meum” (For this is my body). These same words are spoken by a Catholic priest after the moment of transubstantiation, the point at which the congregation is supposed to adore the raised host. Here, then, Morlete Ruiz signals that Christ's wounded heart serves as a metonym for the Eucharist because it embodies both his flesh and blood.

Although Páez's image is not as explicit as Morlete Ruiz's, the Eucharistic overtones of the Sacred Heart would have been noticed by viewers. Numerous texts devoted to Christ's heart celebrate the connection to the Eucharist, and many request that during the octave of Corpus Christi, churches should be “se han de visitar con mayor fervor, y devocion los Templos, y siendo posible visitar cinco vezes al Santissimo Sacramento. . . . Desagraviar a el Sagrado Corazon de JESUS, por las muchas ofensas de todos los pecadores, y especialmente las cometidas contra su Magestad en la Eucharistia” (Mora 34) (visited with the greatest fervor and devotion, and if

possible [people should] visit the Holy Sacrament five times. . . . Redress the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the many affronts of all sinners, and especially those committed against his Majesty in the Eucharist). Significantly, the feast day of the Sacred Heart occurs one week after Corpus Christi (usually in June). Juan de Mora writes: “dedicar todos los años el Viernes después de la Octava de Corpus a los cultos del Sagrado Corazon de JESUS” (33–34) (Every year dedicate the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi to the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus). This temporal connection between the two devotions assisted in solidifying the Eucharistic symbolism of the Sacred Heart.

Given the myriad Eucharistic images in New Spain at this time, it is not surprising that representations of the Sacred Heart emphasized the connection between the Sacrament and Christ’s heart as well.²⁰ It is important to note that this connection between the Sacred Heart and the Eucharist supported post-Tridentine, mystical Catholicism, because the centrality of the Eucharist to the Catholic faith was reaffirmed during the Council of Trent (1545–1563); the Jesuits also championed the Eucharist and mystical Catholicism during the Counter Reformation. Before considering these implications in greater detail, I will first discuss the significance of Aloysius Gonzaga and Ignatius of Loyola in Páez’s painting.

Jesuit Saints, Visionary Meditation, and Affective Piety

In addition to visualizing Christ’s death, rebirth, and sacramental heart, Páez’s image also includes saints Ignatius of Loyola and Aloysius Gonzaga who witness the Sacred Heart as a vision; based on my previous discussion, one could even say that both saints experience a Eucharistic theophany. It is significant that Páez shows the two saints witnessing a vision of Christ’s heart, as both saints affirm ideas about Christ’s death and resurrection. The painting offers the two Jesuit saints as models for salvation and for visionary meditation on Christ’s crucifixion and miraculous rebirth. Furthermore, by showing saints witnessing visions, the work supports aspects of mystical Catholicism.

Both Aloysius’ and Ignatius’ hagiographies demonstrate how the saints function, in concert with the Sacred Heart, to support Baroque Catholicism. Aloysius Gonzaga entered the Jesuit order as a novice in Rome in 1585, after renouncing his noble heritage and wealth. His participation in the Jesuit order was short-lived, however, as he died at the age of twenty-three in 1591, after he exposed himself to the plague by attending to its victims. His date of death, June 21, is significant as it occurred on the octave of Corpus Christi (Bosio; Martindale; Bailey 74–106). After his death, Gonzaga became associated with charity, protection, and pious works, and was the

patron of youths, Jesuit students, eye ailments, and relief from pestilence. Even after his death, Gonzaga miraculously cured people who became sick. The most famous of these curative episodes is his healing of the dying Jesuit novice, Nicolás Celestini, in 1766. Aloysius appeared to Celestini, promising to cure the novice if he devoted his life to supporting the cult of the Sacred Heart; Celestini agreed and was cured.

The Celestini event further cemented the relationship between the Jesuits (especially Aloysius) and the Sacred Heart.²¹ This episode, along with others of a similar nature, made Aloysius' hagiography particularly relevant to the cult of the Sacred Heart: Novohispanic devotionals that focused on Gonzaga or the Sacred Heart frequently reminded readers of the saint's devotion to Christ's heart, "fue el carácter de distinción de San Luis Gonzaga" (Peñalosa 223–24) (as it distinguished the character of St. Aloysius Gonzaga).²² It is likely, then, that Christian devotees in New Spain were familiar with Gonzaga's curative powers and role in visionary experiences.²³

Gonzaga's function as a meditation model and visionary example is also evident if we take into account the following: when he became ill from pestilence, he reportedly woke every night to gaze on a crucifix and on the day he died, he grasped the crucifix and prayed. This action of intensely gazing on the crucifix became a popular subject of paintings, the most famous of which is Pompeo Batoni's representation *circa* 1744; this image was copied and brought to New Spain and versions of it appear throughout the Spanish colony.²⁴ Because the Sacred Heart in Páez's painting is crowned with a crucifix, it is possible that Gonzaga's ardent gaze toward the heart might relate to his hagiography: he here focuses his intention on a metonym for Christ's crucified body, and, thus, on the crucifix to which he prayed before he died.

Unlike Aloysius, Ignatius of Loyola did not have any explicit connection to the Sacred Heart. He is likely included in Páez's painting for two reasons: first, he founded the Jesuit order and, therefore, symbolized the Jesuits in general; second, worship of the Sacred Heart espoused the type of affective spirituality that Ignatius advocated in his most famous text, *Spiritual Exercises*, first published in 1548. He encouraged sensory involvement in devotional meditation, and his goal was to move his readers to relate to Christ's pain and suffering by having them rely on their own senses.²⁵ Frequently, Ignatius asks his readers to contemplate Christ's crucified body, wounds, and blood, and to focus on the details of Christ's martyrdom. Through this focused contemplation, he intends to have his readers experience an emotional response. To a large degree, mystical, Baroque Catholicism is synonymous with the ideas outlined in *Spiritual Exercises*.

Representations like Páez's valorize this type of meditative practice advocated by Ignatius of Loyola. Because the Novohispanic artist's

depiction displays two saints contemplating Christ's wounded, bleeding, and crucified heart, a viewer might be reminded of Loyola asking readers to focus on events of the Passion: "Imagine Christ our Lord suspended on the cross before you . . . reflect on yourself and ask: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ? In this way, too, gazing on him in so pitiful a state as he hangs on the cross, speak out whatever comes to your mind" (Loyola 1991, 138). Later in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Loyola also asks readers to feel "sorrow with Christ in sorrow; a broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured" (169). He includes, as well, an entire section on "The Risen Life" of Christ and his apparitions to the apostles after his resurrection (197–200). Because Páez's image relates simultaneously to Christ's Passion and Resurrection, it supports, if viewed with the type of affective approach supported by Ignatius, pointed meditation on these various events in Christ's life.

Religious texts appearing in New Spain demonstrate that Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* were popular. Some authors even modified Ignatius's text to create new spiritual exercises with a more delimited focus, such as on the Sacred Heart. Along these lines, in his *Meditaciones del sagrado corazón de Jesus* (1739), Juan de Loyola opened his title page with "Para el use de sus congregantes, y devotos, según el método de los Exercicios de N. P. S. Ignacio de Loyola, Fundador de la Compañía de Jesus" (titlepage) (For the use of congregants and devotees [of the Sacred Heart] according to the method of the *Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Company of Jesus).²⁶ At the beginning of the volume, he notes, "Todo el estudio de los verdaderos devotos del Corazon Divino se reduce á meditar, amár, imitar, y desagrarivar el Sagrado CORAZON de JESUS, nuestro Celestial Maestro" (1) (One may reduce all studies of the true devotees of the Divine [Sacred] Heart to meditation, love, imitation of, and making amends to, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our Heavenly Teacher). Clearly, the author's goal is to augment Christians' love for Christ's heart, to reveal its role in the mysteries of the holy life, Passion, and death of Christ, and to communicate the hypostatic union of the Divine Word. Although Ignatius of Loyola did not write these exercises himself, his influence is clearly obvious, upon reading Juan de Loyola's text. It is possible that a viewer of Páez's painting might recall Juan de Loyola's popular exercises (or other similar exercises based on Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*).

In addition to promoting a spirituality based on sensory experiences, Ignatius, and the Jesuits, in general, advocated a greater involvement with the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Ignatius of Loyola, in fact, wanted people to visit and ingest the Eucharist on a more regular basis because, as *Spiritual Exercises* demonstrates, he was concerned with penitence and salvation and, thus, with saving a person's soul (Bailey 223). Ignatius felt that by receiving Christ's body internally, people would be better Christians

and live by Christ's example. In doing so, a devotee could hope to die well and to escape the torments of Purgatory and Hell. If, as I proposed in the previous section, the Sacred Heart had explicit Eucharistic associations, then it is possible to read an image like Páez's as exhibiting Jesuit saints kneeling before a sign of the Eucharist. As a result, the Jesuit support of the Eucharist is further emphasized.

The Attack on the Cult of the Sacred Heart in Eighteenth-Century New Spain

While Páez's painting supported Baroque Catholicism, the Eucharist, and saintly intercession, its creation in the eighteenth century is particularly worthy of remark given the contemporary religious, social, and political discourses. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the fortunes of the Jesuits were declining and the order's support waning. The Spanish monarch, Charles III (1759–1788), openly criticized the cult of the Sacred Heart along with its Jesuit promoters, despite Pope Clement XIII Rezzonico's (1758–1769) endorsement of the devotion and the Jesuits.²⁷ Furthermore, as the Jesuits came under increasing suspicion by religious reformers, Jansenists, and absolutist supporters, so, too, did the Sacred Heart. A representation like Páez's obviously maintains the connection between the religious order and devotional cult, promoting both in a positive light and, thus, endorsing both in the face of increased scrutiny. The multifaceted attacks leveled at the Jesuits culminated in the expulsion of members of the religious order from Spanish dominions in 1767.²⁸ The motives for the attacks were many and varied and, in the following, I give only a few that seem salient to the cult of the Sacred Heart.

One of the primary reasons had to do with the perception of political alliances, as well as with the growing political and economic power of the Jesuits. The supporters of the Spanish Crown did not trust or like the Jesuits, since the Jesuits were regular clergy, who took their orders directly from the Pope and not from the Spanish monarch. Further, monarchial supporters were also worried about the transnational character of the Jesuits: the order's members had been sent, by the Pope, not the King, to every corner of the empire and, once there, their presence extended beyond the church grounds into local economics and international trade. Unlike the secular colonial governments, the crown could not be assured of peppering the order with *peninsulares* beholden to the King. This lack of control put the order at odds with royal interests, and monarchists felt that this situation would, inevitably, cause the religious order to be disloyal to Spain (Engstrand 440–41; Mörner 158). Since the cult of the Sacred Heart was intimately tied to the Society of Jesus, and was perceived as a vehicle through which the

Jesuits maintained a certain authority over the populace, the decreasing favor of the religious order led to escalating criticisms of the devotion.

A second reason for the decline of the cult had to do with philosophical shifts in religion. Sacred Heart images were rightly considered to be examples *par excellence* of post-Tridentine, mystical Catholicism (Brading 1–22) because of their relationship to mystical visions (such as those experienced by Marguerite Mary Alacoque), and the Eucharist.²⁹ This type of Catholicism came under attack in the eighteenth century by enlightened reformers who desired a more modest, less emotional, and less mystical type of religious piety.³⁰ An image like Páez's would be understood as antithetical to these reformist goals, as it functioned not only to advertise the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, but also to propagandize mystical Catholicism, the Eucharist, and, of course, the Jesuits. The linkage to the order is underscored by such paintings that focus on visionary acts by saints. In effect, these representations defended the mystical aspects of Tridentine Catholicism by exhibiting a visionary rhetoric (Kilroy 250–91). Saints continued to play an important role as agents of visions in devotional images; Aloysius Gonzaga and Ignatius of Loyola direct our attention to the fact that the Sacred Heart is a theophany.³¹

Finally, the cult came under attack by clergy who had been influenced by Jansenist thought, whose positions on individual freedom of choice and limited communion, put them strongly at odds with the Jesuits. They sought to downplay, and even remove, the significance attached to the heart as the site of the soul, feeling, and cognitive faculties, and they did so by bolstering their theological perspective with science. They invoked William Harvey's scientific evidence that showed that the heart was no more than a blood pump, and, thus, could not be the seat of the soul, memory, and emotions, as had been thought previously. Some even claimed that devotion to the Sacred Heart was heretical because followers of the cult believed that the heart was both symbolically *and* literally Christ's body part; those who attacked the cult viewed this belief as skirting transubstantiation and, therefore, wanted the organ to be purely symbolic (Seydl 2005, 2003, 36–37, 215–18; Johns; Cognet; Voekel 51; Doyle 5–14, 9–12, 17, 21–22; Manning Stevens; Kilroy).

Prior to the expulsion, the Sacred Heart cult had circulated throughout New Spain, beyond the borders of Jesuit institutions, to become popular among many sectors of society, including among secular creoles, nuns, and bishops (Kilroy 126–66). After the expulsion, creoles, in particular, continued to champion Jesuit devotional cults such as the Virgin of Loreto, and, I would suggest, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As I have discussed elsewhere, it is possible that the Sacred Heart became for many people in New Spain, particularly creoles, who had been educated by Jesuits, an icon of retaliation against the Spanish Crown (Kilroy 203–5). The Jesuit expulsion angered many social groups, and paintings like Páez's supported

the Jesuits and their associated devotion. Like the Virgin of Guadalupe then, the Sacred Heart may have functioned as a banner under which people could gather to support their religious beliefs, as well as the Jesuit order. In addition, the Jesuit expulsion was perceived as a direct threat to creoles because many Jesuits were creoles. Moreover, many depictions of the Sacred Heart appear in objects owned by, and associated with, creoles, such as *escudos de monjas* (nuns' badges). *Escudos* appear to have functioned as visual statements of protest and acts of defiance against the Spanish Crown. As Elizabeth Perry states, "The pronounced Jesuit iconography of many late colonial *escudos* . . . appears to have had political as well as religious meaning for the creole convents" (2007, 33; 2004, 218). While more research in this direction is needed, it is likely that the Sacred Heart participated in the creation of *la patria criolla*, which is one reason why the cult and its imagery were maintained after the Jesuit expulsion.

Conclusion

During this time, when the cult of the Sacred Heart, the Jesuits, and mystical Catholicism were increasingly scrutinized, artists like José de Páez continued to emphasize the connections among this devotional cult, the religious order, and the religious mode. Páez's painting of the Sacred Heart with Jesuit saints offers viewers signs of Christ's death and resurrection, the Eucharist, and saints associated with mystical Catholicism upon which they could meditate penitently to achieve salvation. Given the historical climate of eighteenth-century New Spain, Páez's image refused to let either the Jesuits or the mystical cult of Christ's heart expire in the face of aggressive political and religious reforms that aimed at instituting a new type of enlightened Catholicism—one devoid of levitating hearts, mystical visions, and saints' intercessory powers. The representation maintains focus on the emotive experience of Christ's Passion, albeit in a different manner than theatrical Passion plays, since here his *corpus* is symbolized by one particular body part. Like other representations exhibiting the final moments of the Passion narrative, Páez's depiction emphasizes Christ's death as the iconic Christian sacrifice, an event that is, here, experienced by two of the era's most important and politically-charged Jesuit saints. They are witnesses to the death and resurrection of the Savior, performing as virtuous models for Christian devotees who might behold this Eucharistic theophany. In short, the painting defends many Tridentine beliefs and foils reformers' attempts to eradicate Baroque Catholicism. By encoding ideas related to Christ's death and resurrection, and the importance of the Eucharist and saints, the painting visually proclaims the notion that a burning heart can save your soul.

Notes

1. I thank Charlene Villaseñor Black, Cecelia F. Klein, Joanna Woods-Marsden, Constance Cortez, John Beusterien, Christopher Eckerman, Kristen Loring, and Kim Richter for their comments and suggestions about various ideas contained in this paper. Also, I appreciate all the helpful comments I received at the “Death in Words and Images” conference held at Texas Tech University in October of 2008.
2. Among the most recognized Passion plays are those occurring during Holy Week in parts of Spain and Mexico, such as Seville and Iztapalapa, respectively.
3. This focus on Christ’s wounded body is exemplified by various *cristos de caña* (cornstalk-paste sculptures), by depictions of the *Ecce Homo* and of Christ’s mutilated body, and a by plethora of Crucifixion images.
4. Oil on copper, 83 x 62.5 cm, Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA. See *The Arts in Latin America, 1492–1820* 2006, VI–29, p. 380.
5. For an extended discussion on the history of the cult of the Sacred Heart, see Kilroy 2009, chapter one.
6. Woodcut, 126 x 89 mm, Staatsbibliothek, Munich.
7. Christ also asked Alacoque in a vision to call upon the Jesuits to spread the devotion (Jonas 3–25).
8. Texts that were reprinted on at least several occasions in the eighteenth century include Juan Antonio de Mora’s *Devoto culto que debe dar el Christiano a el Sagrado Corazon de Christo Dios, y Hombre* (1732) and another text published two years later, titled *Practica y modo de prepararse à celebrar el Sacrosanto Corazon de Jesus el viernes despues de la Octava de Corpus Christi* (1734) (Mora; *Practica y modo*).
9. For an in-depth discussion of the cult of the Sacred Heart in New Spain, see Kilroy.
10. This is likely the result of several events, including the royal decree of 1767, that ordered the destruction of Sacred Heart images, as well as the selling off of Jesuit possessions thereafter (Johns n.p.).
11. Oil on canvas, 126 x 145.5 cm, Pinacoteca del Templo del Oratorio de San Felipe Neri, La Profesa, Mexico City. For the image, see Horz de Sotomayor 2003, 49.
12. For instance, “y compensar las injurias, que se hazen al CORAZON de JESUS en este Sacramento de amor” (Loyola 1739, 2–3) (and make up for the injuries that were made against the Heart of Jesus in the Sacrament of love). “Oiga Misa con toda devoción, para repara de este modo las ofensas con que ha sido el Corazon de Jesus agraviado en los Templos, y en los Altares” (Xavier Lazcano 9) (Listen to Mass with complete devotion because it repairs the offenses that have been committed against the Heart of Jesus in churches and on altars). “y juntamente contrepasando las injurias hechas à este amorosissimo Corazon por la ingratitude de los . . . hombres. . . .” (Mora 32) (and at the same time counteracting the injuries made against this loving heart because of the ingratitude of men); “O Corazon amante . . . cada dia te provocan en este Sacramento de amor, con injurias, contumelias, y agravios, en lugar de amor, y la gratitud. . . y con sumo dolor te pido el perdon de tantas injurias, y costumelias” (Mora 48–50) (O loving heart . . . each day they cause you in this sacrament of love, injuries, affronts, and grievances, in place of love, and gratitude. . . and with extreme sadness I request of you the pardon of so many injuries, and affronts). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
13. I mention also the date chosen for Christ’s birth, December 25, since this was also

the feast of Sol Invictus.

14. In the Book of Revelation 21:23, Christ's role as the sun, as divine illumination, in the Heavenly Jerusalem is also noted, as is the ability of Christ's face to shine like the sun (1:16). "And the city does not need the sun, nor the moon, to shine in it, for the clarity of God illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb." "A face like the shining sun with all its force."
15. Other texts from the medieval period emphasize that the burning heart, or Christ's solar associations, conveys the notion of Christ's intense love, which burns for humanity. The Dominican Meister Eckhart (d. 1327) states that, "On the cross his Heart burnt like a fire and a furnace from which the flame burst forth on all sides. So was he inflamed on the Cross by his fire of love for the whole world" (Stierli 80). See also the writings of nuns like Mechthild of Magdeburg and Gertrude of Helfta (O'Donnell 106–108; Gertrude 1991, 1999; Menzies 9).
16. All these metaphoric ideas about Christ as a solar being were carried from Europe to New Spain after the Spanish Conquest in 1521, as discussed by both Louise Burkhart and Jaime Lara (Burkhart; Lara 2008, 194–99).
17. See Knight.
18. See Schroeder; and Lomnitz 153–57, 159–78, 179–222.
19. For this image, see *A Pictorial Heritage of New Spain* p. 195.
20. See Morera for a basic introduction to Eucharistic imagery in New Spain.
21. A painting created in 1766, by the Novohispanic artist Miguel Cabrera captures this narrative. See *Catálogo comentado del acervo del Museo Nacional de Arte*. vol. 2, p. 82.
22. Pedro de Peñalosa included an entire chapter on Aloysius Gonzaga.
23. Gonzaga functioned not only as an intercessor for devotees, but also as a model upon which to base their lives: good Christians were supposed to be charitable and to assist those in times of social calamity. At least one Novohispanic devotional mentions the cure of Celestini: "pues últimamente hiciste un milagro, dando la vida aun Moribundo Jesuita, para que promueva el culto de el Sagrado Corazon de Jesus" (*Día veinte y uno de cada mes, en honra, y culto del thaumaturgo jesuita, san Luis Gonzaga* n.p) (since finally you performed a miracle, even giving life to a dying Jesuit, so that he promotes the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus). According to hagiographies distributed in New Spain, Gonzaga also became the patron saint of eye ailments and vision; perhaps the saint's penitent and ardent gaze in Páez's image reminded many viewers of his ability to cure eye afflictions.
24. Oil on canvas, 79.1 x 63.8 cm, private collection, New York. For Batoni's image, see Bailey 2005, cat. no. 19, p. 215.
25. For a more complete discussion of Ignatius of Loyola's hagiography, see Burke 7–15.
26. Similarly, the *Via Crucis* is rewritten in New Spain to focus on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. See *Estaciones del Via-Crucis, en que el devoto Corazon del Christiano, debe acompañar al Corazon Crucificado de JESUS; conforme instituyó la V. M. Maria de la Antigua*; Santa Clara; *Estaciones del Via-Crucis: en que el devoto corazon del christiano debe acompañar al Corazón crucificado de Jesus; conforme instituyó la v. madre Maria de la Antigua*.
27. Early Bourbon rulers supported the devotion, such as Philip V (1700–1746), who urged papal recognition of a feast day in 1727; in addition, many members of the Spanish episcopate also encouraged papal support. In 1755 and 1756, all churches in New Spain supposedly celebrated the Divine Heart, and by the early/mid-eighteenth century, the cult reached its highest level of cultic significance in New Spain and Europe. Nevertheless, Popes Benedict XIII Orsini (1724–1730) and Benedict XIV

- Lambertini (1740–1758) refused to sanction the new cult, the latter openly promoting a more enlightened Catholicism in opposition to Baroque Catholicism supported by the Society of Jesus. This enlightened Catholicism was marked by moderation, restraint, and decorum, and focused on a more direct, personal relationship to God. It opposed performative, exterior-oriented piety, such as touching and kissing, and mysticism. Moreover, a cult like the Sacred Heart was firmly rooted in Counter Reformation discourse, since the devotion was meant to reinforce the Eucharist, which was a major topic of the Council of Trent. See Brading 1994; Larkin; and Voekel, especially 1–16, 77–105. On February 6, 1765, Pope Clement XIII Rezzonico ratified the decree of the Congregation of Rites, and gave his sanction of the cult, but did not extend the devotion to the Universal Church. The devotion’s feast day was not officially endorsed until 1856, by Pope Pius XI.
28. For the official royal mandate, see AGN, Inquisition, vol. 1521, exp. 1, 1767, fs. 1–55; see also in the same volume exp. 2, fs. 64–65, for the viceroy’s statement about the expulsion. In 1773, the order was disintegrated.
 29. The Eucharistic readings of the Sacred Heart began in the Middle Ages, but became explicit after Alacouque’s visions (Menozzi; Rosa 18).
 30. See chapter one of Kilroy 2009 for more on this historical context.
 31. Craig Harbison discusses how depictions of miraculous visions in early Flemish painting functioned as devotional, meditative images, as well as visualized visions for viewers. For the latter, Harbison argues, there was a desire in the fifteenth century to “emulate visionaries and relive visions from the past” (94). In many ways, viewers were asked to participate in the vision or relive the visionary experience of a saint or holy figure (95). Harbison and I agree that the gaze is a forceful agent in identifying a “visionary quality” in artworks (100).

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