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The Ambiguities of the Holy: Authenticating Relics in Seventeenth-Century Spain^{*}

by KATRINA OLDS

Recent scholarship has shown that, even at the heart of the Catholic world, defining holiness in the Counter-Reformation was remarkably difficult, in spite of ongoing Roman reforms meant to centralize and standardize the authentication of saints and relics. If the standards for evaluating sanctity were complex and contested in Rome, they were even less clear to regional actors, such as the Bishop of Jaén, who supervised the discovery of relics in Arjona, a southern Spanish town, beginning in 1628. The new relics presented the bishop, Cardinal Baltasar de Moscoso y Sandoval, with knotty historical, theological, and procedural dilemmas. As such, the Arjona case offers a particularly vivid example of the ambiguities that continued to complicate the assessment of holiness in the early modern period. As the Bishop of Jaén found, the authentication of relics came to involve deeper questions about the nature of theological and historical truth that were unresolved in Counter-Reformation theory and practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1628, a series of supernatural phenomena convinced many residents of Arjona, a town in southern Spain, that they were living atop a hidden burial ground teeming with Roman-era martyrs. In May, a local university professor had alerted town authorities to exciting information that he had read in a recently discovered historical source, a fourth-century chronicle attributed to one Flavius Lucius Dexter of Barcelona. According to Dexter, it had been in Arjona that Saints Bonosus and Maximianus, who were listed in the revised Roman

^{*}The comments and critiques of several audiences have been indispensable in the preparation of this article. Special thanks are owed to participants in The Vision Thing: Studying Divine Intervention, a National Humanities Center SIAS Summer Institute (2007–08), and especially to the seminar's conveners, William Christian, Jr. and Gábor Klaniczay. Portions of this research were also presented at "Feeling the Divine": Emotions in Religious Practices — Historical and Cross-Cultural Approaches, at the Center for the History of Emotions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin (2009). For their helpful input on earlier versions, I should like to thank Martin Claussen, A. Katie Harris, Karin Vélez, and Amanda Wunder. Many thanks also to the anonymous reviewers for their cogent observations and suggestions. Research and writing have been made possible by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the joint U.S.-Spanish Fulbright Commission, Princeton University, and the University of San Francisco Faculty Development Fund. All translations are the author's, except where otherwise noted.

Martyrology without a place of death, had been martyred by the provincial Roman governor in 308 CE. The Arjona martyrs were just two of dozens of such new saints furnished to the Iberian Peninsula by Dexter's *Chronicle or Universal History*, which, along with three continuations, attributed to Marcus Maximus, Luitprandus, and Julián Pérez, were discovered in the late sixteenth century by the Spanish Jesuit Jerónimo Román de la Higuera (1538–1611). These texts, which later critics referred to collectively as the “false chronicles,” purported to record the history of Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula from the first century to the twelfth, from the time of Christ to the reestablishment of Christian rule in Castile in the High Middle Ages.

While critiques published during the Enlightenment revealed that the texts were Higuera's own forgeries, in the early seventeenth century, Spanish scholars for the most part still interpreted the chronicles as valid, albeit problematic, sources of historical information.¹ Thus, after learning of the news that Dexter had provided, Arjonans began congregating at the crumbling castle at the center of town — popularly believed to be a Roman fortress, but in fact dating to Arjona's long Islamic period² — in the hopes of receiving a hint from God about where, precisely, the martyrs might be buried. According to contemporary testimony, residents experienced a variety of signs that confirmed the benevolent presence of martyrs: ghostly apparitions of Roman soldiers, bright orbs of light bobbing around the castle's many towers, the tolling of heavenly bells, and sweet, celestial odors.

As summer turned to autumn, the mood of pious anticipation soon swelled into one of impatient excitement. In October, Arjona's residents decided to start digging for relics, without waiting for the approval of the reigning Bishop of Jaén, Cardinal Baltasar Moscoso y Sandoval (1589–1665). After local clerics joined the digs, Arjona was rewarded for its efforts with two skulls, a pile of human bones, and ashes, as well as what seemed to have been instruments of martyrdom, including nails, shackles, and fragments of a steel blade.³ Further digging — both episcopally sanctioned and otherwise — revealed an astounding number of purported relics, such that, by the mid-1630s, the accumulated discoveries came to include several additional skulls, countless bone fragments, many piles of

¹The standard accounts of the so-called “false chronicles” remain those of Caro Baroja; Godoy Alcántara; Kendrick; for a recent overview, see Kagan, 256–66. The only modern edition of Dexter's text is Migne, which reproduces Bivar, 1627.

²Eslava Galán.

³Chiriboga.

ash, and a winch that, it was believed, the Roman governor had used to drag Bonosus and Maximianus up and down the side of the castle before ultimately murdering them. The ashes, which were interpreted as the incinerated remains of many additional saints, were gathered up by enterprising local residents, who mixed the powdery dust into their bread dough and baked *panecicos de los mártires* (little martyr buns) for friends, relatives, and pilgrims.⁴

While the Jaén region had been important frontier territory during the decisive Christian advances of the later Middle Ages — including the pivotal battle at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 — its early Christian history had yet to be written. Before the discovery of relics briefly transformed Arjona into a regional pilgrimage destination, the town had been better known as the birthplace of Muhammad Ibn Nasr, the thirteenth-century founder of the Nasrid dynasty, which Ferdinand and Isabella would ultimately defeat in Granada during the portentous year of 1492. The felicitous discovery of the Arjona relics in 1628 thus furnished the town with its first tangible evidence of a pre-Islamic Christian presence and history.

As studies of Catholic reform in the century after the Council of Trent have suggested, creating new saints, verifying old ones, and identifying their earthly remains had become a highly complex and contested process in early modern Europe. In Arjona, as elsewhere, canonization — in the broad sense of authenticating holiness — involved negotiating between the varying interests of local, regional, national, and universal Catholicisms.⁵ On the ground, as it were, neat resolutions were often elusive, and questions of sanctity still admitted a significant degree of ambiguity and uncertainty, as recent scholarship on early modern canonizations and failed saints has confirmed.⁶ If *saint* — whether canonized or merely aspiring — constituted an ambiguous and contested category, so did *relic*, as the criteria and procedures for evaluating the physical remains of purported saints remained ill-defined. This was true even at the center of the Catholic world, in Rome, where theological sands continued to shift well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and whence relics — particularly since the late sixteenth-century opening of the catacombs — streamed, thanks to

⁴On the Arjona saints, see Sabalet Moya; Vincent-Cassy. For the unauthorized digs and the efforts of the bishop's men to circumscribe the prolific movement of the relics, see Olds, 2009b.

⁵For the sometimes tense relationship between local and universal religion, see Gentilcore, 1992; Kamen; Nalle; Poska.

⁶For canonization reforms, see Burke; Ditchfield, 2007; Veraja. For failed saints, see Ditchfield, 2006; Gentilcore, 1993; Keitt; Rubial García; Zarri.

relic-hunters and traders, into the hands of eager patrons in the rest of the Catholic world, unfettered by meaningful theological or legal restrictions.⁷

Perhaps this is why Bishop Moscoso found the question of the validity of the Arjona relics to be such a vexing conundrum that, even after the course of seventeen years — which included a papal audience, consultation with half a dozen theologians, and, eventually, a lawsuit — it would remain unresolved. This article will examine the jurisdictional, theological, and historical pitfalls that Bishop Moscoso confronted in this frustrated quest to verify the Arjona relics. In the process, the Arjona case will suggest that notions of truth and authenticity in matters religious and historical remained surprisingly fluid, even in a Counter-Reformation Spain usually depicted as a bulwark of absolute Catholic truth against Protestantism.

2. THE AMBROSE OF ARJONA?

For most of Bishop Moscoso's advisors, the authenticity of the Arjona relics seemed at first a simple question that could be resolved quickly, if the bishop would just pay attention to the manifest signs that God was sending him. In a 1639 treatise on the *calificación* (authentication) of the relics, the Jesuit Bernardino de Villegas (1592–1653) pointedly compared Moscoso to Ambrose (d. 397), the late antique archbishop who discovered the relics of Saints Gervasius and Protasius while renovating the Cathedral of Milan in the early fourth century. According to Villegas, Ambrose understood at once that God had hidden the bodies of Christian martyrs for centuries until the right man — the perfect prelate, as it were — emerged to lead the community of the faithful. Like Ambrose, then, Moscoso had been chosen by God to lead the community in renewed devotion to their martyrs and patrons.⁸

Although the Cardinal-Bishop of Jaén had not received a vision prefiguring the discovery — as had Ambrose — Villegas pointed out that he had received, time and time again, many other signs of divine confirmation of the relics. These included the supernatural portents that revealed the relics in the first place, as well as the wonders that had followed since their discovery: bleeding bone fragments, miraculous healings, and continued apparitions around the castle site. For Villegas and Moscoso's other advisors, that the bishop continued to hesitate to issue a formal writ of

⁷Bouza Álvarez; Johnson, 1996.

⁸Villegas. For more on Moscoso in Jaén, and for a brief biographical study, see Olds, 2009a.

authentication in the face of such clear divine mandates verged on ungratefulness toward God.

It was not that the bishop was reluctant to endow the Arjona relics with a public cult; in fact, ever since 1628, his vicars had been building up the foundations of public veneration of the Arjona saints, both in writing and *in situ*. Under the supervision of Friar Manuel Tamayo, head of the Granada province of Franciscans and theological consultant to the Cordoba tribunal of the Inquisition, continuing excavations uncovered new relics and artifacts into the 1630s. At the same time, under Moscoso's sponsorship construction of a new sanctuary in honor of Bonosus and Maximianus proceeded, beginning with the demolition of Arjona's old castle walls, which were replaced with a new foundation in 1635.⁹

Yet as Moscoso himself was acutely aware, the authentication of relics had been significantly less complicated in fourth-century Milan. The identity and authenticity of the Milan relics had been immediately clear thanks to the preponderance of supernatural signs that heralded them: from Ambrose's initial vision of the relics' location, to the miraculous healings and spontaneous exorcisms that followed their discovery, the archbishop possessed a surfeit of clues suggesting that the bones he had found were truly the remains of the early Christian saints Gervasius and Protasius.¹⁰ However, in the context of early modern Catholicism, such pious certainties also had to be confirmed through historical and archaeological research. Thus, as Bishop Moscoso's men on the ground literally enshrined the relics, the scholars in his service — including, among others, Villegas — sought textual and physical evidence for identifying them with actual martyrs.

In these efforts, the bishop's scholars were heirs to Catholic reformers of a previous generation. Protestant critiques of the cult of saints, along with the renewal of Catholic scholarship in the wake of the Council of Trent, had prompted the complete overhaul of the Church's major liturgical and historical traditions, particularly as spearheaded by Cardinals Cesare Baronio (1538–1607) and Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) and the Sacred Congregation of Rites. These efforts, along with the reopening of the catacombs in 1578, helped generate new discussions about how to verify

⁹Domínguez Cubero; Francisco de Rus Puerta, "Obispos de Jaen, y segunda parte de la historia eclesiastica deste reino y obispado," Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid (BN), Ms. 5737, 1646, 250^r, 313^r. For the shrine's history and iconography, see Domínguez Cubero; Galera Andreu; Martínez Ramos.

¹⁰For Ambrose's vision of the martyrs, see Augustine, 1991, 165–66 (*Confessions* 9.7.16); Augustine, 1972, 7:211–13 (*City of God* 23.8); and Augustine, 1994, 101–06 (sermon 286, on Saints Gervasius and Protasius). Ambrose's own account, in a letter to his sister, can be found in Ambrose, 378–79. For the historical context, see Moorhead, 150–51.

the authenticity of pious traditions about saints and their relics. The most pressing dilemma posed by the rediscovery of the catacombs had been how to determine whether a given tomb belonged to a martyr or to just an anonymous Christian or pagan.¹¹ Thus, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Roman scholars such as Antonio Bosio, the so-called “Columbus of the Catacombs,” and Antonio Gallonio, author of a 1591 treatise on the torture of martyrs, catalogued the various *signa martirii* (signs of martyrdom), such as a palm frond, or a phial of red liquid (presumed to be blood), that might appear on a martyr’s tomb. Yet these discussions did little to clarify the broader question of how relics might be verified outside of the catacombs, especially if there were no gravestones at all, just anonymous and undifferentiated mounds of bones and ash.¹²

In his efforts to find proper historical and theological foundations for the new devotions, Moscoso was to prove more of a “local Baronio” than an Andalusian Ambrose.¹³ For nearly two decades — from the first Arjona discoveries in 1628 until 1646, when he was promoted to the Archbishopric of Toledo — Moscoso sponsored the publication of approximately a dozen historical and theological considerations of the relics in the hopes of confirming the propriety of the new texts and saints. In addressing the complex questions of history, hagiography, and theology that the Arjona case prompted, Moscoso and his advisors also attempted to balance the sometimes competing demands of local and universal Catholicism.¹⁴ In Jaén this was especially thorny territory, which Moscoso and his scholarly retinue negotiated haltingly.

3. THE DILEMMA OF THE INNUMERABLE RELICS

In his effort to base the cult of the Arjona martyrs on solid historical documentation, Moscoso received a crucial piece of evidence in 1629 from Francisco de Bivar (1584–1634), a Cistercian monk who was to play

¹¹For the argument that the Renaissance discovery of the catacombs has been overstated greatly, and that the catacombs had, in fact, never been lost, see Oryshkevich.

¹²Gallonio. On Gallonio, see Ditchfield, 2001 and 2005. Unanimity on the *signa martirii* was not achieved until 1668, when the Sacred Congregation of Rites decreed that a palm and a phial of blood were sufficient to verify that a given tombstone belonged to a martyr: see “Fino al decreto del 1668,” in Battista de Rossi and Ferrua, viii–xxii; as well as the discussion in Bouza Álvarez, 110–33. For medieval theory and practice in identifying relics, see Hermann-Mascard, 106–42.

¹³For regional antiquaries and sacred historians as “local Baronios,” see Ditchfield, 1995.

¹⁴For “local Catholicisms,” see Christian; Ditchfield, 1993 and 1998.

a pivotal role in the bishop's efforts to authenticate the relics.¹⁵ From his Leonese monastery of Santa María de Nogales, Bivar wrote to notify Moscoso that he had discovered the original *Acts of the Martyrs Bonosus and Maximianus*. Thanks to a deal brokered by a relative of the bishop, Francisco de Santa María (1567–1649), a Carmelite historian based in the university town of Baeza, near Jaén, Bivar supplied the document to the bishop in exchange for a “a large relic of the saints and some of their blood.”¹⁶ The *Acts* helped supplement the meager historical evidence of Dexter's *Chronicle* by detailing the death of Bonosus and Maximianus, whom the document identified as brothers and Roman soldiers who had renounced their military service when they converted to Christianity. Yet Moscoso was disappointed to find that, in spite of Bivar's earliest assertions, the document did not come from the unimpeachable Vatican archives but, in fact, from a monastery in north-central Castile, found among the papers of a deceased Cistercian historian. As Bivar reported ruefully, the authenticity of his document had been challenged by an unnamed rival from another religious order, who, it seems, was also hoping to gain an illustrious patron in the cardinal-bishop: Bivar's anonymous foe had sent Moscoso a different version of the acts of Bonosus and Maximianus, which he alternately claimed to have unearthed in a French monastery, the famed monastic library at Fulda, and the Vatican Library.¹⁷

Even if Bivar's document could have been vouchsafed, it could not assuage the more profound difficulties that continued to complicate the matter of the Arjona relics. For one, the relics had been to that date completely and hopelessly anonymous, even to those venerating them.¹⁸ This is attested in the 1630 *Relation and Memorial of the Investigations that Have Been Conducted into the Prodigies and Marvels That Have Been Seen . . . in Arjona*, a collection compiled by two of the bishop's vicars of the testimony of over 600 witnesses who had experienced, or been witnesses to, the various wonders and miracles reported by visitors to Arjona's shrine

¹⁵Muñiz, 49.

¹⁶As Santa María reported to the bishop, Bivar consented to send the *Acts* for “una muy gruesa Reliquia de los sanctos y algo de su sangre”: BN, Ms. 4033, 170^r (letter of 29 June 1629). For biographical details on Santa María, see San Geronimo, 524–29; for his links to the Sandoval family, see Rowe, 157.

¹⁷BN, Ms. 4033, 204^r (letter of 4 December 1629 from Bivar to Moscoso).

¹⁸For the negotiations among Bivar, Moscoso, and Francisco de Santa María, including Bivar's tergiversations about the document's provenance and authenticity: see *ibid.*, 170^{r-v}, 205^r. The *Acts* were published in a short pamphlet written by a teacher of humanities in Antequera in 1629: see Aguilar.

(fig. 1).¹⁹ The testimony reveals that witnesses were unconcerned, by and large, with the specific identity of the martyrs whose relics they were visiting, collecting, and literally consuming, as ash mixed into drinkable potions and baked into bread.²⁰ Over and over again in their accounts of wonders witnessed and favors received, residents and pilgrims alike joyfully but vaguely thanked the “martyrs” or the “saints that have been discovered here” without naming any saints in particular.²¹

It was not merely in the popular imagination that the Arjona relics were anonymous and, possibly, innumerable. At the excavation site, no information had been uncovered that would permit any of its relics to be identified as those of Bonosus and Maximianus, nor, for that matter, matched with any other names. There were no tiny scrolls marked with names, no inscriptions upon any tombstones, nor any *signa martirii* of any type. If the relics of the only two confirmed martyrs could not be singled out, then none of the relics could be identified. In other words, since nobody could sort out which bones and ashes belonged to whom, they were all effectively anonymous. And while the continued proliferation of alleged human remains at the sanctuary — particularly in the form of easily partible ash — made it possible for pilgrims to take a piece of Arjona’s saints home with them, it posed serious problems for the bishop. After all, the more remains that were unearthed, the more diluted the pool of potential relics. Since it was patently clear that the bodies of Bonosus and Maximianus alone could not have produced so many piles of ash, how would it be possible to separate the saints from the sinners, the Christians from the Muslims and pagans, and the human from the beastly? Due to the undifferentiated manner of their burial, how could the remains of the actual martyrs ever be isolated and enshrined appropriately?

This presented the bishop with a serious theological quandary, namely, if the vast majority of relics could never be identified, could the Arjona relics *in toto* be venerated publicly? In 1625, Rome had promulgated new guidelines restricting public veneration of holy men and women to those

¹⁹Adarve de Acuña and Saro.

²⁰Arjona’s visitors were overwhelmingly local and regional: of the 605 named witnesses in the *Relation and Memorial*, approximately half were from Arjona and its immediate environs, 25% from elsewhere in the diocese of Jaén, 13% from Andalusia at large, and 2% from other regions of Spain; the place of residence of approximately 10% of the witnesses is not identifiable. Thanks to Michael Williams for help in compiling this data.

²¹The notable exceptions were, unsurprisingly, in the testimony of the approximately 18% of the witnesses identified as members of the clergy or religious orders, who were more likely to cite Bonosus and Maximianus by name. For two examples, see Adarve de Acuña and Saro, 47, 394.

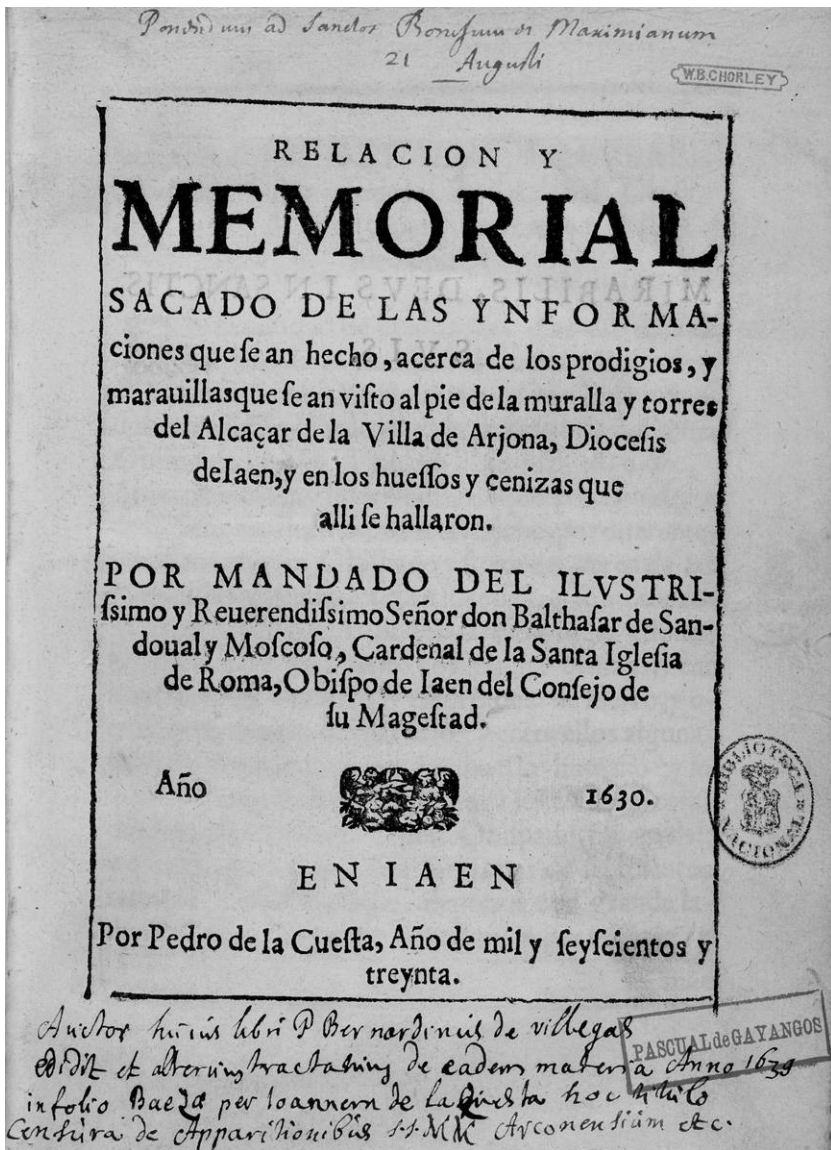


FIGURE 1. Title page of Nicolás Adarve de Acuña and Gabriel de Saro., eds., *Relacion y memorial . . . acerca de los prodigios y marauillas que se an visto al pie de la muralla y torres del Alcaçar de la villa de Arjona*. Jaén, 1630. © Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

who had been canonized.²² Since Bonosus and Maximianus were listed as martyrs in the most recent revision of the Roman Martyrology, it was licit to grant them public veneration, but only, presumably, if their relics could be isolated. In order to keep the burgeoning Arjona cult on the right side of canon law, Moscoso attempted to identify at least some of the relics, perhaps fearing that, in the age of aggressive canonization reforms under Pope Urban VIII (r. 1623–44), it would be unwise to construct a shrine to a pile of unidentified bones and ashes. One avenue, of course, would be to identify more of the dead as martyrs. In this effort, Moscoso and his scholars turned once again to Dexter's chronicle, the original source of information about the Arjona martyrs. They found that, according to the *Chronicle*, three Christians — Saints Apolo, Isacius, and Craton — had been put to death in a place called “Alba,” near “Acci” in the Roman province of Baetica in 300, as part of the same persecution during which Bonosus and Maximianus had perished.²³ The saints were listed without a place of death in the revised Roman Martyrology.²⁴ Not all of Moscoso's scholars agreed that “Alba near Acci” — an obscure place name — was Arjona. Bivar and Rodrigo Caro (1573–1647), a prominent Sevillian scholar who had also prepared an edition of Dexter's chronicle, argued that “Alba” referred to Arjona, which, as Pliny the Elder attested, had been known by the two Latin names of *Alba* and *Urgabona*.²⁵ Detractors, including royal chronicler Tomás Tamayo de Vargas (1588–1641) and Adán de Centurión (1582–1658), the Marquis of Estepa, contended that, in fact, “Alba” was a mistranscription of “Abla,” a modern village near Guadix, also in Andalusia.²⁶ Adán de Centurión even sent news to the Bishop of Guadix, urging him to embrace the martyrs for Abla.²⁷ In spite of these dissenting opinions, Moscoso opted to throw his weight behind the Arjona interpretation and to claim the

²²However, petitions could be made to the Congregation of Rites for exceptions if the individual had been venerated publicly from time immemorial, in the so-called *casi excepti*: see Ditchfield, 2007, 209–18; for a list of these cases, see Veraja.

²³Migne, col. 455.

²⁴Baronio, 21 April.

²⁵Migne, col. 455A; Caro, 110.

²⁶For Tamayo de Vargas's stint as royal chronicler, see Kagan, 218–19.

²⁷Adán de Centurión, “Memorial, en que el Marques de Estepa suplica al Señor Obispo de Guadix que su señoría mande celebrar en Abla como santos mártires de aquel lugar a S. Apollo, S. Isacio, y S. Craton cuio día es a 21 de Abril”: Real Academia de la Historia (RAH), Madrid, 9/3572, s/f.

martyrs for his diocese.²⁸ In April 1629, Moscoso authorized public veneration of these three additional Arjona saints, and even attended their festival on 21 April, which the Roman Martyrology recorded as their day of death.²⁹

Yet the dilemma remained, for the addition of three more saints' bodies could not possibly come close to accounting for the copious piles of bone and ash that were still being unearthed at the site. Of course, in early modern Roman practice — as opposed to theory — the preponderance of anonymous human remains was not necessarily a prohibitive burden. After the catacombs were reopened, scores of unidentifiable bones were repurposed into relics, in a process that the late Trevor Johnson described vividly, through their “baptism” with invented names with little or no basis in historical reality.³⁰ Thus they were converted into spiritually and financially profitable tokens of Christian antiquity that, as the Spanish Jesuit Juan de Mariana (1536–1624) complained in 1597, had resulted in the widespread circulation of relics of dubious authenticity.³¹

Yet Rome was unique. As the home of the popes — the special guardians of the relics of the apostles Peter and Paul — and of the myriad other heroic saints who subsequently emulated them, its martyrs were generally considered to be innumerable. Already in the early fifth century, Prudentius had referred to the city's “countless” graves of martyrs, most

²⁸The acts of these martyrs were later discovered in the Cathedral of Astorga by Juan Tamayo Salazar, who included them in his massive, and much maligned, compendium of Spanish martyrs: Tamayo de Salazar.

²⁹Rus Puerta, 143^v–144^r. Another Moscoso advisor, the Carmelite Jerónimo Pancorbo, made the case for an additional 500 Arjona martyrs. Pancorbo, who was also a theological consultant to the Inquisition, drew on the chronicle of Julián Pérez (the fourth in the Dexter family of false chronicles) to argue that hundreds of would-be Roman hermits, leaving Egypt with Seleucus Panucius, had met their fate in Arjona during Diocletian's Great Persecution: Pancorbo, 2^v–3^r.

³⁰Johnson, 1996, 16: “Once extracted from their subterranean *loculi* or *arcosolia*, the bones were taken to the Apostolic Sacristy for authentication by the cardinal vicar or the papal sacristan. Given the absence of any identifying inscriptions on the majority of their tombs, at this juncture the various heaps of bones often had to be provided with suitable names. Some were rather desperate inventions, pride of place perhaps belonging to the (touchingly frank) St Anonymus. Other appellations reflected the alleged qualities of the martyr in question (such as Felix or Justus), drew their inspiration from the name of the reigning pontiff, or, in what appears to be a smart marketing ploy, were identical with those of their intended recipients.”

³¹Mariana made this critique in draft memos to Clement VIII and Philip II of Spain, as discussed and transcribed in Cirot, 53–62, 426–29. The baptism of catacomb relics continued into the nineteenth century: see Bouza Álvarez; Johnson, 1996, 16. This was in spite of repeated Vatican efforts to reform the Roman relic trade, including, for example, a 1643 decree, “Reliquarum Incerti Nominis”: see Sacra Congregationis Propaganda Fide, 184.

of whose names were known to God alone.³² Later, in the fourteenth century, Saint Brigit of Sweden reckoned that the number of relics buried in Roman soil was so great that they could not be calculated. In his seventeenth-century treatise, Girolamo Bruni tried to calculate the number anyhow; in his estimate, contemporary Rome was sitting atop the remains of approximately sixty million martyrs.³³

By any measure, Arjona was certainly no Rome. Although archaeological discoveries have confirmed that the region had been settled by Celto-Iberians well before Roman times, as far as we know, Arjona itself lacked any oral or iconographic traditions attesting to early Christian martyrdoms.³⁴ After having been conquered in the early eighth century by Arab and Berber forces, Arjona — or, as it was known in Arabic, Aryuna — became part of the hinterland of the independent Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba. With the eventual disintegration of Umayyad rule in Spain in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the various city-states of Islamic Spain became prizes coveted by the successive North African dynasties known in Spanish as the Almoravids and Almohads. In fact, it was under Almohad control that Arjona's extensive fortified architecture, including its hilltop citadel complex, had taken definitive shape, as the *arriviste* Berber dynasty attempted to fend off its various Islamic and Christian rivals in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The definitive defeat of the Almohads at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, in a mountain pass seventy-five kilometers northeast of Arjona, did not end Arjona's long history as a frontier territory. From its conquest by Ferdinand III of Castile in 1244, until the fall of the Nasrid dynasty of Granada in 1492, the Jaén region hosted many pivotal Christian outposts, and became known as the "Holy Kingdom" due to its crucial role in the ensuing Christian victories. This continued status as a border territory is confirmed by the abundance of fortified architecture in the region, visible today to the visitor who might follow the Jaén tourist authority's

³²According to Prudentius, the record of many persecutions had been lost to time, such that "God alone knew the details of the martyrs' passions." Since the contents of the heavenly register of saints were inscrutable to anybody but God, Prudentius's only option was to "fabricate the experiences of the saints and celebrate them in verse": see Oryshkevich, 88, citing Prudentius's *Peristephanon*, XI, 1–16.

³³Oryshkevich, 88, citing Bruni's manuscript, *De coemeteriis*.

³⁴Heavy rains in the spring of 2010 revealed a first-century BCE necropolis in the olive fields just outside of the center of town. See "El Centro Andaluz"; Rodríguez Cámara. For a recent assessment and demythologization of the early Christian history of the region, see Castillo Maldonado, 2005b.

suggested *ruta de los castillos* (castle route) through a countryside that is indeed strewn with castles.³⁵

In other words, it seems much more likely that Arjona's castle rested atop layers of archaeological detritus that came from its successive Roman, Visigothic, Islamic, and Christian rulers than from a hypothetical and brief period of fourth-century Christian martyrdom.³⁶ Yet in a handful of other contemporaneous relic discoveries *ex nihilo* in Spain and Italy, local prelates facing a similar lack of material and historical evidence of martyrdoms forged ahead, and identified new relics with the help of their own historical and archaeological sleights of hand. Two rival relic discoveries in Spanish-dominated Sardinia that began in 1614 illustrate the extent to which contemporary prelates could maneuver with or without papal approval to enshrine new relics in their dioceses. The Archbishops of Cagliari and Sassari uncovered caches of early Christian relics in their dioceses within a few months of each other in 1614. Motivated in part by an ongoing rivalry between the two sees for ecclesiastical primacy, the archbishops quickly made the most of their discoveries.³⁷ In Cagliari, the relics were identified by a fragmentary inscription that was interpreted to read "SANCTI INNUMERABILI." This effectively identified all 338 bodies as martyrs, at least as far as the Archbishop of Cagliari

³⁵The Arjona fortifications continued to be important militarily during the Castilian civil wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. When the accession of the Trastámara dynasty brought peace, Jaén became a staging area for Ferdinand and Isabel's military campaign against Granada: see Aldea Vaquero, Marín Martínez, and Vives Gatell; Caballero Venzalá, 12; Eslava Galán, 30; Ximena Jurado and Frías Marín, 633.

³⁶Yet the identity and cause of death of the humans whose remains were uncovered in the seventeenth century is still unclear. One local expert has identified various items discovered with the relics as Almohad-era artifacts: Eslava Galán affirms that the so-called winch was, in fact, part of the mechanism used to defend a castle gate and not, as seventeenth-century observers would have it, an instrument of torture. He also explains that the "dungeons" (*mazmorras*) where many of the bodies were held were actually *aljibes*, underground cisterns to store water, that would have been very important in a place like Arjona, which has no natural water source. The Almohads had constructed a very large *aljibe* in Arjona to make sure the town could withstand a long siege. Yet Eslava Galán is hard-pressed to explain the presence of so many human remains. He speculates that it is possible that the entire population of the settlement had been massacred sometime in antiquity, perhaps before the Roman presence, and that the fortress was subsequently erected by the conquerors — Roman or otherwise — atop the mass graves: see Eslava Galán, 32 (for the bodies), 75–76 (for the *aljibe*).

³⁷The Sassari relics were discovered first, in June 1614; by October, the prelate of Cagliari had responded with his own archaeological spectacle. See Cattalini for details and analysis; Manconi for the role of historical scholarship in these Sardinian ecclesiastical battles.

and his scholars were concerned.³⁸ Rome was significantly more wary. The papal nephew, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, recommended that the Flemish hagiographer Jean Bolland (1596–1665) await Roman recognition of the relics before including the Cagliari martyrs to his published collection of *Acta sanctorum*.³⁹ Yet no evidence suggests that Rome sought to make any other moves in consequence, such as suppressing the nascent cult in Cagliari. In the meantime Archbishop Francisco de Esquivel promptly enshrined the relics in a new sanctuary in Cagliari's cathedral.

Some of the relics in neighboring Sassari — including those of Saints Protus, Gavinus, and Januarius — were identified by Archbishop Gavinus Manca de Cendrelles thanks to a local tradition that their remains had been moved from Sassari to a hiding place during the Islamic incursions in the seventh century. In order to identify the remaining relics, the archbishop convoked a regional council. The assembled theologians cited a variety of other signs to confirm that the remaining anonymous relics did indeed belong to martyrs, including seeming evidence of violence, such as a skull traversed by a massive nail.⁴⁰ In his 1615 treatise on the relics, the Archbishop of Sassari also cited the miracles and wonders that had accompanied the relics and their discovery to confirm their authenticity. Manca de Cendrelles concluded his book with an entreaty for guidance and approval from papal circles, yet he scarcely seemed preoccupied with Rome's input. After all, as he noted, regardless of the response, he would continue to seek more relics while enshrining the ones that he had already discovered. For the Archbishop of Sassari, the authenticity of relics seems to have been a question settled quickly and easily.⁴¹

4. THE PROBLEM OF PRECEDENT: THE LEAD BOOKS OF GRANADA

If other prelates in Catholic Europe seemed to proceed with aplomb when it came to new and rediscovered relics, one has to ask why the Bishop of Jaén instead hesitated. One answer is found in the long shadow cast by the

³⁸Bonfant; Esquirro; Esquivel.

³⁹This according to Ditchfield, 1993, 292, who cites Daniel Papebroch's comments in *Acta Sanctorum*, 5 May.

⁴⁰Manca de Cendrelles, 25^r. Note that spelling of the archbishop's second last name varies, and is sometimes given as "Cedrelles" or "Cedrellas." For the latter, see Gams, 840.

⁴¹Cattalini; Ditchfield, 1993; Manconi. For another relatively painless relic authentication, see the discovery of the head of Saint Hierotheus by the abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Santa María de Sandoval in León in 1625: Bravo de Mendoza.

so-called “lead books,” or *plomos*, of Granada.⁴² These controversial texts, nearly two dozen of which came to light in the southern Spanish city in the late sixteenth century, purported to be first-century Christian writings by Arabic-speaking Christians in Spain, and were also discovered with a number of relics, including a fragment of the Virgin Mary’s handkerchief and the bones of the first-century martyr Saint Cecilius. Pedro de Castro y Quiñones (1534–1623), Archbishop of Granada during most of the discoveries, had greeted the new texts and relics with enthusiasm, and convoked a number of theological councils to discuss the question of their authenticity. Castro’s forceful advocacy for the texts and relics, combined with the seemingly apocryphal nature of the writings themselves, prompted less-than-favorable reactions in Madrid and Rome that eventually grew into open hostility. Rome’s initial reaction had been one of caution: in 1598, Pope Clement VIII (1536–1605) tried to quell public discussion of these problematic texts by banning the dissemination of any opinions, whether favorable or not, regarding the texts’ validity or orthodoxy.⁴³ Attitudes toward the Granadan texts and relics quickly hardened into antagonism as Archbishop Castro ignored repeated requests to send the *plomos* themselves on to Rome. Not surprisingly, Castro’s efforts to defend what he considered Granada’s spiritual patrimony against papal — and, increasingly, royal — opposition earned him little goodwill outside Granada. The tug-of-war continued even after Castro’s death until, finally, in 1632, Philip IV (1605–65) ordered the lead books seized from the lockbox in the abbey of Sacromonte, which Castro had established in honor of the discoveries.⁴⁴ In the meantime, the Roman Inquisition prohibited the text of the *plomos* from public circulation, whether in print or manuscript.⁴⁵ The question of the texts’ authenticity was resolved — at least from the papacy’s perspective — definitively in 1682, when Pope Innocent XI (1611–89) condemned the *plomos* as heretical, Islamic-flavored “human fictions, fabricated for the ruin of the Catholic faith.”⁴⁶

⁴²See the astute analysis by Harris. For recent research on various facets of the *plomos*, see Barrios Aguilera and García-Arenal; García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, 2008 and 2010.

⁴³Hagerty, 1980, 41. In 1631 the Spanish Inquisition banned dissemination of all translations of the *plomos*, and required the surrender of those in private possession: Kendrick, 108.

⁴⁴The dramatic episode at Sacromonte was remembered with indignation by the canon Martín Vázquez Siruela: see Harris, 37–46. The *plomos* would remain in Madrid for another eleven years until the papal nuncio was finally successful in obtaining them for Rome: Scaramella, 1035.

⁴⁵Scaramella, 1033.

⁴⁶Harris, 149. For the Roman perspective on this struggle, see Scaramella’s recent study of the voluminous dossier on the lead books compiled by the Vatican’s Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede.

The precarious position of the *plomos* vis-à-vis Rome gave Moscoso pause as he and his advisors contemplated how to formally authenticate the Arjona relics. This question was complicated immensely by the fact that Arjona was not only entangled with the increasingly unpopular *plomos*, but also, by extension, with the ambiguous fate of Dexter's apocryphal *Chronicle*. This overlap is most visible in the multiple strands of friendship, patronage, and intellectual exchange that connected the defenders of the lead books, false chronicles, and Arjona relics to each other. The clerics in Bishop Moscoso's service came from the same circle of learned Andalusian clerics as the *plomos'* latter-day defenders; they included individuals such as Martín Vázquez de Siruela (1600–64), a Sacromonte canon who helped draft a projected history of Arjona for the bishop, and Bernardo de Aldrete (1560–1641), the Cordoban antiquary who, after having assisted Archbishop Castro in various capacities — including the defense of the lead books — later wrote a treatise on the authenticity of the Arjona saints on Moscoso's commission.⁴⁷ Moscoso and his scholars also enjoyed a close relationship with one of the most vocal and notorious defenders of the lead books in the Andalusian Republic of Letters, the Marquis of Estepa, Adán de la Centurión, who was, naturally, also an Arjona devotee. In 1630, the son of the marquis, Don Felipe de Centurión — a Toledo cathedral canon and servant (*camarero*) to Fernando de Austria, prince and Cardinal-Archbishop of Toledo — claimed to have been healed of a gruesome groin injury by applying a poultice of Arjona relics to his hopelessly infected and constantly seeping abscesses. After his groin healed, and he was finally able to sit, Don Felipe had himself brought to Arjona on a litter, so he could offer a finely wrought silver lamp, commissioned by father and son, in gratitude to the saints.⁴⁸

For proponents such as Francisco de Bivar, the near-coincidence of the three discoveries was no accident: the Granadan texts and relics shared so many thematic and historical echoes with the false chronicles and the Arjona relics by design, because they were part of God's plan to enlighten Spain about its ancient history.⁴⁹ Bivar believed that divine will had enabled both Dexter's *Chronicle* and the lead books of Granada to be discovered beginning in 1595. The cluster of relic *inventiones* that had followed in

⁴⁷Aldrete, Martín Vázquez Siruela, "Diseño de lo que se puede escribir de los santos i reliquias de Arjona," BN, Ms. 6156, 43^r–46^v. For Aldrete's complex position vis-à-vis the lead books, see Woolard. For biographical details for the Sacromonte canon, see Gallego Morell. On Estepa and the lead books, see Gómez Gómez; Hagerty, 1991.

⁴⁸Adarve de Acuña and Saro, 415; Tamayo, 253.

⁴⁹Migne, col. 177. For some of the ties that bound Higuera to the *plomos* and Archbishop Castro, see García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, 2009.

the texts' wake made this higher purpose manifest: the *plomos*, the relics of the Granadan martyrs, the head of Saint Hierotheus — found in a Castilian monastery in 1625 — and the Arjona relics were, from this perspective, “not only one lamp shining in the foggy night, but almost a countless number, floated down from heaven” for the purpose of “winning authority for Dexter.”⁵⁰

Yet even Bivar would have had to acknowledge that, from the vantage point of certain skeptical observers in Spain and abroad, the interlocking of Arjona, the *plomos*, and Dexter's *Chronicle* actually threatened to undermine the authority of all the relics and texts in question. The potentially negative implications of this mutual association became clear to Bivar and Moscoso in 1630, when news reached Spain that the papal Congregation of the Index of Prohibited Books was scrutinizing a text that relied heavily upon Dexter — and, more specifically, upon Bivar's reading of Dexter in his heavily annotated 1627 edition of the text.⁵¹ The book in question — a learned defense of the legend that the Virgin Mary had delivered a letter from heaven to the people of Messina in Sicily — had been written by a regular correspondent of Bivar's, Melchior Inchofer (1585–1649), a Hungarian Jesuit best known to historians as the author of a 1633 condemnation of Galileo.⁵² In 1629, Inchofer's treatise was remanded for further scrutiny to the Roman Congregation of the Index, and Inchofer's Jesuit superiors recalled him to Rome. That a 1598 papal decree had deemed the Virgin's letter to the Messinans apocryphal seems to have been the Congregation's rationale. For their part, Jesuit superiors may have been concerned that Inchofer's advocacy for the Messina tradition would entangle the Society of Jesus in an ongoing rivalry between the sees of Messina and Palermo. After all, Inchofer's prominent patronage of the cause of Messina's “*Virgine della lettera*” could have been perceived as an implicit challenge to Saint Rosalia, the patron of Palermo, whose own epistle had only recently been rediscovered. Inchofer's Jesuit superiors moved quickly to bring Inchofer to Rome in the hopes of mollifying the powerful Archbishop of Palermo and his Spanish protectors. They also persuaded him to soften his claims about the authenticity of the Messina letter, which he did in a revised, 1632 edition of his text, in which Inchofer averred that it was merely

⁵⁰Bivar, 1630, 10^r: “ut non una tantum lucerna in caliginosa nocte lucens, sed pene innumerabiles e coelo delapsae auctoritatem Dextro conciliauerint.”

⁵¹For the 1630 correspondence between Bivar and Moscoso, see BN, Ms. 4033, 32^v–33^r.

⁵²Blackwell; Inchofer.

probable that the Virgin had bestowed a heavenly letter upon the lucky Messinans.⁵³

As a result, Inchofer suffered no additional censures. In fact, thanks to his move from Sicily to Rome, his career flourished. He moved effortlessly into curial circles, and soon entered the orbit of the papal nephew, Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Thanks to these connections and his formidable erudition, Inchofer also became a consultant to the very Congregation of the Index which had recalled his text.⁵⁴ Yet Bivar and Moscoso remained worried that the Congregation's scrutiny, as well as continued Roman objections to the *plomos*, might land Dexter's *Chronicle* on a list of prohibited texts. After all, Inchofer had cited Dexter as the principal evidence for the authenticity of the Virgin's letter to Messina; indeed, the *Chronicle* had memorialized the tradition with a brief but straightforward confirmation.⁵⁵ So crucial was Dexter's historical witness to Inchofer's argument that, in the treatise, he spent twenty-five pages detailing the many reasons why the chronicle was not apocryphal and could, in fact, be trusted on this question and many others.⁵⁶

Since Dexter's history was still Arjona's principle historical proof-text, its fate was naturally of great concern to the Bishop of Jaén. On the eve of his own visit to Rome in the summer of 1630, and in response to the perceived threat posed by Inchofer's own seemingly precarious position, Moscoso commissioned three texts that he hoped would not only defend Dexter's text

⁵³Cerbu concludes that the recall of Inchofer's treatise occurred "under circumstances which are still unclear." Further research may help illuminate whether the Congregation's actions were motivated by objections by the Archbishop of Palermo. Adding to the confusion, Backus reveals that another Jesuit, the Italian Paolo Belli (1588–1658), defended the tradition in a treatise published in Messina in 1647, which suggests that either political circumstances had changed, or that Jesuit superiors had recalled Inchofer for other reasons in 1629. For the rivalry between Messina and Palermo as the backdrop, see Cerbu, 590–91; Preto, 19; and, for a somewhat more dramatic characterization, Rowland, 87–89. For a learned analysis of the Messina forgery, the identification of its probable culprit as Constantine Lascaris, and Bivar's defense of the Messina letter in his edition of Dexter's chronicle, see the discussion by Backus.

⁵⁴Inchofer's glory was short-lived: he fell afoul of the Jesuit order after writing a parody of the order, *The Monarchy of the Solipsists* (1645), for which he was sentenced to life imprisonment in a Jesuit residence. See Cerbu, 589; Dümmerth.

⁵⁵To wit, in 86 CE: "Among Messinans the memory of the Virgin Mary is famous, a kind letter having been sent to them by her": Migne, col. 253; for Dexter's claim that the letter had been rediscovered in Messina's public records in the fifth century, see col. 569.

⁵⁶Inchofer, 260–85. Bivar returned the favor in his edition of Dexter, to which he appended the text of the Virgin's entire letter, an early copy of which he claimed to have discovered in a Castilian monastery: Migne, col. 253C.

against the charge of being apocryphal, but, more importantly, induce the papacy to issue a formal approval of the Arjona relics. At the very least, Moscoso imagined, the texts — which he hoped to present to Urban VIII in person — might prompt the pope to appoint learned men of religion to assess the Arjona discoveries. In this idyllic scenario, Roman scholars would also become devotees, and the pope, a protector of Arjona's relics.

The first prong in this triple textual offensive was Francisco Bivar's *Apologetic and Suppliant Petition for Dexter*, in which Bivar argued that, since Dexter's text contained nothing contrary to the faith, the Congregation of the Index would have no legitimate reason to limit its circulation among Catholics: "On the contrary, nothing in it is against good morals, or would offend Aristarchus [of Samothrace, the proverbial critic] himself."⁵⁷ The text, Bivar contended, was certainly more harmless than the "fables" propagated by the pseudo-antique texts forged by the fifteenth-century Dominican Annius of Viterbo (ca. 1432–1502) that, Bivar pointed out, the Church continued to allow to be reprinted willy-nilly, in spite of their deep flaws. Unlike the Annian texts — considered by modern scholars as the most notorious of early modern forgeries — Dexter's text was "lacking all blemish and suspicion." In the meantime, Annius's discredited texts were endlessly reprinted and, Bivar complained, "pointlessly occupy the hands of many [Catholics]."⁵⁸

Bivar emphasized that Dexter's text was neither heretical nor apocryphal. Even if not all of the chronicle's details about martyrs throughout Roman Hispania could be vouchsafed, "he who might accept [the text] as true does not deviate at all from the Catholic Faith or from good morals and piety, or the Christian religion, because truly they were killed either here or there, [and so] it does not interfere with faith or piety."⁵⁹ In other words, the martyrs that Dexter commemorated had died somewhere. Bivar's implication is clear: it was immaterial if Dexter were mistaken about some of the places of martyrdom, because encouraging the veneration of the saints, no matter where they died, was fundamentally good.

With an eye toward the international audience at the papal court, Bivar felt compelled to respond to European critics of Dexter's text, such as Matthäus

⁵⁷Bivar, 1630, 6^r: "Rursus nihil in eo co[n]tra bonos mores, vel ipse Aristarchus offenderet: quim potius ipsos commendat, & instruit, dum pietatis in Deum eximiae auctrix causa est."

⁵⁸Ibid.: "Non prohibet identide[m] Annianum Pseudo-Berosum cudere, & recudere, & a quibus vis Catholicis lecitari, & multos eiusmodi codices, qui infructuose multorum manus occupant." On the Annian texts in general, see Grafton; Ligota; Stephens; for their influence in Spain, see Mayer Olivé.

⁵⁹Bivar, 1630, 7^r: "quod tamen qui credat nihilo a Fide Catholica, aut bonis moribus, seu pietate, ac religione Christiana deuiabit. Quod enim ibi aut alibi occisi fuerint, Fidei non officit, aut pietati."

Rader (1561–1634), a Tyrolean Jesuit who had skewered the *Chronicle* and Bivar's commentary in his own recent edition of Martial's *Epigrams*. For example, Rader poked fun at Dexter's assertion — and Bivar's enthusiastic support — of the late-medieval notion that the Roman philosopher and playwright Seneca the Younger had been a secret Christian: "Therefore what type of Christian? I say a hidden one. Truly so hidden that, I reckon, not even Seneca himself knew he was Christian."⁶⁰ Rader's critiques reflected the perspective of a disinterested reader who shared none of the pious affection for Iberian sacred history that colored many Iberian readers' view of the text. To such a reader, the *Chronicle's* reiteration of Hispano-centric pious legends, many of which already had been discredited by Baronio and humanist scholars before him, as well as its exaltation of Hispania as the privileged locus of apostolic Christianity, seemed ridiculous. In his preface, Rader quoted an anonymous Jesuit who likened Dexter's text to medieval legends, a "hodgepodge of fables" in which "the Spanish have their Annius of Viterbo."⁶¹

Bivar contested the claims of this well-connected Jesuit not by means of direct rebuttal, but, rather limply, by demonstrating his own connections to Roman circles of learning and power — specifically, by invoking his epistolary friendship with Melchior Inchofer.⁶² In closing the treatise, Bivar included a recent letter in which Inchofer had praised Bivar for the erudite commentary that he had printed with Dexter's chronicle. Bivar explained that the letter was a riposte by one learned German Jesuit — by which he meant Inchofer — to another, namely, Rader. In fact, Inchofer's letter did absolutely nothing to rebut Rader's charges against Dexter and his

⁶⁰Rader, 1628, 7 (quoted by Bivar, 1630, 14^v): "Qualis ergo Christianus? Occultus inquis. Equidem tam occultum fuisse reor, uti nec ipse quidem Seneca sciverit se Christianum esse." Although the legendary correspondence between the apostle Paul and the Roman philosopher dated back to the second half of the fourth century, Momigliano points out that the notion that Seneca had converted to Christianity arose in the fourteenth century among early humanists, not medieval monks. Nor were Spanish authors alone in disseminating the notion; Momigliano, 30n46, cites late examples, including an anonymous seventeenth-century treatise printed in Paris, and another, penned by a Jesuit, printed in Augsburg in 1637.

⁶¹Rader, 1628, 4^r: "Hoc Chronicon nihil aliud est quam farrago fabularum partim recenter excogitarum, partim famae aliquot seculis continuatae mendacio confirmatarum. Habe[n]t nimirum & Hispani suum Annum Viterbiensem." In the copy held by the Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid), this text is bound with Rader's commentary and an edition of Martial's epigrams: see Rader, 1627.

⁶²As a formidable historian in his own right, Rader was well acquainted with the sources of sacred history: he wrote a four-volume history of Bavarian saints and holy people on commission from Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria, *Bavaria Sancta* (1615–28). For Rader's connections and historical scholarship, see Johnson, 2002 and 2006.

commentator.⁶³ Yet the substance of Inchofer's contribution was less important than its possible political valence. Bivar must have imagined that, as a colleague of the potential censors of Dexter's text, Inchofer might be able to serve as a patron and protector, and save the *Chronicle* from sanction.

A similar aspiration for a highly placed patron is evident in the second of the three texts commissioned by Moscoso in 1630. Bernardo de Aldrete dedicated his treatise — *The Phenomena or the Flashing Lights, and the Sign of the Triumphant Cross of the Holy Martyrs of Albens Urgavo, Bonosus and Maximianus, and of Others Dressed in Purple with Blood* — to the highest Roman patron of all, Pope Urban VIII. In plodding Latin exposition, Aldrete linked the Arjona martyrs to the familiar tradition of early Christian martyrdom, and detailed the manner in which martyrs generally were tortured, killed, and then dishonored after death. He outlined the evidence, chiefly from Dexter's *Chronicle* and the *Acts of Bonosus and Maximianus*, that supported the Arjona martyrs' historical existence, and linked them to the Great Persecution under Diocletian and Maximinus in Spain. Aldrete also enumerated the supernatural signs that, he asserted, confirmed the authenticity of all the manifold relics that had emerged in the previous three years.

If Aldrete's text offered a dry, albeit comprehensive, overview of the new history of martyrdom in Arjona, the *Relation and Memorial of the Investigations that Have Been Conducted into the Prodigies and Marvels That Have Been Seen . . . in Arjona* was a dazzling showcase of divine favors, a bombastic shout of acclamation whose concatenation of wonders, marvels, and mysteries would awe the reader — or so it was hoped. Rather than retaining the original form of the testimony that they had been collecting *in situ* since 1628, the editors rearranged the evidence thematically, so that all accounts of miraculous lights were grouped in the first chapter, prodigious visions in the second, visions of crucifixes in the third, bleeding relics in another, and so on. Although the text was dedicated to King Philip IV, and not to Urban VIII, the volume's editors imagined optimistically that the text eventually would end up in papal hands: after the *Relation and Memorial* had persuaded the king to become an Arjona devotee, it would also “better inform his Holiness and his Holy Apostolic See,” and “the Congregations to which His Holiness might entrust it.”⁶⁴ The expectation, it seems, was that the impression of never-ending waves of miracles upon miracles would provide fodder for serious theological discussion while also inspiring joy and devotion far beyond Arjona, in Madrid, and then, indeed, all the way to the heart of the Catholic world.

⁶³Bivar, 1630, 18^r.

⁶⁴Adarve de Acuña and Saro (unpaginated front matter): “para mejor informar a su Sd. y a su Sta. sede Apc. y a las congregaciones que su Sd. lo cometiére.”

5. DEFENDING THE RELICS IN ROME, CA. 1630

When Moscoso arrived in Rome in the summer of 1630, hoping to resolve the disquieting questions surrounding the fate of Dexter's *Chronicle*, he soon found that his anxiety had been unwarranted, at least in this arena. In August he wrote, relieved, to Bivar: "I have not found that which we feared in Spain. Here Dexter is not being discussed, as I found out from the Secretaries of the Congregations themselves, and from other people who can inform me. (Since the lead books of the Sacromonte of Granada were requested [by the papal nuncio], you know what was feared.)"⁶⁵ Yet while Dexter's text — and one of its most visible boosters, Melchor Inchofer — had been cleared of suspicion, the Arjona relics were destined to encounter a dead end in Rome. Still hoping to attract papal interest, Moscoso appealed in person to Urban VIII for guidance on the question of how to formally authenticate the Arjona relics.⁶⁶ According to a later account by one of the bishop's advisors, when Moscoso asked Urban directly how he should proceed in the matter of Arjona, the pope responded simply: "the Bishop of Jaén should perform his duty."⁶⁷ In other words, Moscoso should go home and judge the matter himself.

To secure papal sponsorship and approval of Arjona was not the only purpose of the trip, of course. Moscoso formed part of an entourage of Spanish cardinals sent by Philip IV as part of a diplomatic offensive aimed at Urban VIII, "the most pro-French pope in sixty-five years," under whom Spanish influence in Rome was reaching its nadir.⁶⁸ In light of the anti-Spanish political climate in 1630s Rome, Urban's tart retort is not particularly shocking. In the middle of the Thirty Years War (1618–48), the papal court had become just another arena for conflict between warring Valois and Hapsburg interests. A marked resistance to Spanish domination of Rome prevailed among many members of the curia. At its very center was, naturally, the Barberini pope.⁶⁹

Taking his role as royal servant quite seriously, the Cardinal-Bishop of Jaén helped feed the flames of Spanish-papal tensions, as when he threw a fit

⁶⁵BN, Ms. 4033, 33^r: "[C]omo lo he sabido de los mismos secretarios de las congrega[ci]o[n]es y de otras personas que me pueden informar que como se pidieron las laminas del Sacrom[on]te de Granada con esta ocasion se temio lo que V[uestra] P[aternalidad] sabe." I have added the parentheses to help clarify the syntax.

⁶⁶Two copies of Aldrete's treatise survive in the Vatican Library, one in the Barberini collection, where a copy of the *Relation and Memorial* is also held. I have not been able to locate an extant copy of Bivar's treatise at the Vatican.

⁶⁷Villegas, 5^v, §28: "Fungatur Cardinalis Episcopus Giennensis offitio suo."

⁶⁸Dandele, 188–206.

⁶⁹Visceglia. For Moscoso in Rome, see González Dávila, 1:287–91; Jesús María, ¶439.

in the middle of a meeting of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in December 1630. When another cardinal raised an objection in response to the bishop's attempts to pass a resolution against a proposed Dominican university in his diocese, Moscoso erupted, declaring that he was shocked by the poor behavior of the Roman clergy, and by the disregard with which cardinals were treated in Rome. He complained that the pope should treat the king better — as well as, presumably, the Spanish cardinals — considering how much the Spanish king had done for the pope in the past.⁷⁰ According to a contemporary account, when Urban was informed of the cardinal's outburst, he replied that, as far as he was concerned, the Spaniards could all go home. He had not asked them to come to Rome anyhow. Indeed, the next month, in a widely disregarded decree aimed especially at Spanish cardinals, Urban ordered all the bishops at court to return to their home dioceses.⁷¹

In this context, the political valence of the pope's laconic injunction that Moscoso should "perform his duty" seems clear: the Bishop of Jaén, along with the other Spanish cardinals, should leave Urban alone. Yet on another level, when he recommended that Moscoso do his job, Urban was also simply pointing the bishop to the plain sense of the Tridentine decrees concerning the cult of saints, which remanded adjudication of relics, images, and miracles to the presiding bishop or abbot. According to the assembled Church fathers at the Council of Trent, which met from 1545 to 1563, in the case of any "doubtful or grave abuse," or "any graver question," the bishop should consult "the metropolitan and . . . the bishops of the province in a provincial synod; so, however, that nothing new or anything that has not hitherto been in use in the Church, shall be decided upon without having first consulted the most holy Roman pontiff."⁷² In other words, the bishop

⁷⁰Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Urb. lat. 1101, 12^{r-v}, "Avvisi dell'anno 1631"; Jesús María, §473.

⁷¹On the continued conflict between Urban and the Spanish contingent in the 1630s, see Dandele, 191–206; Infelise; Visceglia.

⁷²Schroeder, 217. This represented a shift from the precedent established by canon 62 of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, which put the adjudication of relics in papal hands. In practice, newly discovered relics of previously unknown saints were distinguished from the rediscovered relics of canonized saints. The former were reserved for papal judgment, and the latter belonged to episcopal jurisdiction. Trent's decrees erased this distinction between old and new relics, reaffirmed an older, traditional episcopal prerogative to authenticate relics, and introduced a new requirement, that the prelate authenticate relics in consultation with an advisory council: Hermann-Mascard, 108–12.

should submit any sort of complicated questions to a provincial council, and appeal to Rome for judgment only in the case of a truly novel dilemma.⁷³

For Moscoso, the continuing uncertainties around the identity and authenticity of the Arjona relics were precisely this sort of matter, and warranted papal attention. Yet it was perhaps lucky, in the long run, that no papal worthies ever deigned to adjudicate the Arjona relics in the court of curial opinion. In contrast to Jaén, where Bishop Moscoso could control the terms of debate and select his interlocutors, in the papal court, as Ingrid Rowland explains in a recent study of another contemporary discovery, “[s]cholarly debate . . . to an exquisite degree, could be quick, smart, and nasty.”⁷⁴ This is what Curzio Inghirami (1614–55), a noble Tuscan youth who claimed to have unearthed a set of Etruscan texts and antiquities on his family’s property, found when his discoveries became the subject of derisive attention in Rome in the 1640s. Like Moscoso, Inghirami publicized his discoveries at home, in Tuscany, to the Grand Duke Ferdinand of Florence, and then in Rome, where he hoped to attract scholarly support and, ultimately, a “formal writ of authentication . . . from the papal nuncio to Florence.”⁷⁵ Instead, Inghirami found that Roman luminaries did not — and, perhaps, could not — share the enthusiasm of local audiences for new texts and relics.⁷⁶ Upon their debut in the papal city, Inghirami and his texts were attacked by scholars, including, significantly, Melchior Inchofer, who wrote a parodic attack on the artifacts, and on the Tuscan learned societies that supported these unlikely local causes.⁷⁷

That the Arjona relics would have met a similarly ignominious fate if Moscoso had succeeded in attracting more attention to them, is suggested by

⁷³This was the route recommended by Cardinal Charles Borromeo, the late sixteenth-century Archbishop of Milan, an oft-cited model among reforming prelates in the century after Trent. See the decrees of Borromeo’s Fourth Provincial Council in 1576: *Acta ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, 1:97–100.

⁷⁴Rowland, 49.

⁷⁵Ibid., 35. From 1634–42, Inghirami located over two hundred “scarith,” an ostensibly Etruscan word meaning hard capsules of hair and mud, that contained oracular texts written in “Etruscan” and Latin by an augur-in-training from the first century BCE. In 1636, the texts were published in a collection edited by Curzio himself, *Ethruscarum Antiquitatum Fragmenta*.

⁷⁶As *ibid.*, 88, explains, “[W]hat pleased [one’s] neighbors did not necessarily please everyone.”

⁷⁷For *ibid.*, 92, Vatican opposition to the scarith — as with its opposition to Galileo — formed part of a broader counter-reaction to Tuscan intellectual and regional pride. In this sense, both incidents “comprised part of a far larger and more ambitious project on the part of Pope Urban VIII, himself a Tuscan, to subsume Tuscan thinkers and their achievements under the dominion of Rome.”

the marginal comments in a Vatican copy of the bishop's prized *Relation and Memorial . . . of the Prodigies and Marvels That Have Been Seen . . . in Arjona*. The volume, from the library of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, bears anonymous annotations in a period hand. The marginalia seem to reveal the grave reservations and sharp critiques with which the Arjona miracles were greeted by at least one learned Vatican reader.⁷⁸ In the first three-dozen pages of the book the anonymous annotator notes several instances of testimony that was poorly contextualized, vague, and self-contradictory. Thus, in a typical response to a witness who reported supernatural lights around Arjona's castle, the Vatican reader retorted marginally: "In this testimony the day, hour, and time of day and, of course, whether it was day or night are lacking." To make matters worse, this was "a lone witness" to the event in question.⁷⁹ Canon law stipulated that at least two witnesses were required to substantiate miracles in canonization proceedings, and the protocol of canonization trials had long mandated careful and complete interrogation of witnesses.⁸⁰ This testimony had failed on both counts.

The commentator was particularly exercised by sloppy collecting of testimony and apparent credulity on the part of witnesses and examiners alike. For example, when one Francisca Ramírez asserted that she had seen the same lights as Miguel Gómez de Ocaña, the annotator noted that, in fact, their testimony did not agree, nor, he added, "does [the first witness] testify to anything of worth."⁸¹ He noted that basic details that would help a reader evaluate the veracity of testimony were missing, as when Arjona's physician, Juan Sánchez Ramírez Botija, reported having seen lights around midnight from his bedroom window. For the Vatican reader, this "lone witness" should have explained "why he did not call upon somebody else" to come see the remarkable vision, and "he should have been asked why he had gotten up out of bed."⁸² The reader also noted a number of factual and chronological errors in witness testimony, as when one witness compared the miraculous light he saw to two *antorchas* — large square candles with four

⁷⁸While the author is unknown, circumstantial evidence points to a member of the papal nephew's circles. On the Barberini library, see Jones; more broadly, see Rietbergen, 256–95, 401–04.

⁷⁹Adarve de Acuña and Saro, BAV, Stampati Barberini U.IX.77 (hereafter "BAV copy"), 1–2: "i[n] hac depositione delicit dies, hora et te[m]pus nimiru[m] an de die an de nocte, testis est si[n]gularis."

⁸⁰See the collected essays in Klaniczay.

⁸¹Adarve de Acuña and Saro, BAV copy, 2: "ex nihil deponit de qualitate."

⁸²Ibid., 3: "Testis singularis cur no[n] advocavit alius. I[s]te roga[n]dus fuisset qua de eam[?] surrexerit e lecto." See also ibid., 24: "But he does not explain where he was seeing it from, why he had stirred at night, and other things."

wicks each — and then noted that the light did not shine very brightly. In the margin is the reader's succinct refutation: "This is a contradiction."⁸³

In addition to noting that much of the Arjona testimony was formally flawed, the Vatican reader also rejected the witnesses' miraculous explanations for marvels that were, from his perspective, perfectly explicable via naturalistic means. Thus, in reference to a number of lights that were seen hovering above a castle tower before and during the relic discoveries, the commentator offered that they were more likely an optical illusion created by the sun reflecting off a nearby window. When several witnesses reported a shimmering light near the castle, he responded: "That could have been [some sort of] gas in the air."⁸⁴ Regarding another light, he ventured, "It could have occurred due to the vision of some faraway light"; to another, "Maybe it was the shining of some lantern in a facing building."⁸⁵

Significantly, the antagonism of this reader toward this new Iberian devotion was of a piece with that expressed toward the *plomos* of Granada by another contemporary Vatican reader, Cardinal Desiderio Scaglia (1567–1639). In an internal memorandum composed between 1634 and 1639, Scaglia — a Roman inquisitor who also served as one of Galileo's judges — condemned the *plomos* as well as the defense of the Granadan texts by Francisco de Bivar.⁸⁶ The cardinal complained that, in the voluminous commentary that surrounded Dexter's *Chronicle* in his 1627 edition, Bivar had not only cross-referenced the *plomos* and Dexter's testimony in order to assert the authenticity of both; he had also asserted that the antiquity and authenticity of the lead books had been established by Archbishop Castro acting in the capacity of "apostolic judge." This detail, according to Scaglia, was patently false.⁸⁷ More worrying for Scaglia was that the misinformation propagated by Bivar was no longer isolated to "printed books." As he

⁸³Ibid., 23: "est co[n]tradictio." For another example, see *ibid.*, 9, the retort next to Geronymo de Granada's assertion on 28 November that he had seen lights eight days ago, in the previous month: "It happened on 28 November; the previous month was October; therefore he could not have seen it eight days beforehand."

⁸⁴Ibid., 2–3: "potuit esse vapor aerij."

⁸⁵Ibid., 15: "potuit co[n]ti[n]gere ex aspectu alicuius lucis lo[n]gigue"; *ibid.*, 26: "fortasse fuit splendor alicuius lucernae in aliqua domo ex adverso posita."

⁸⁶The document has survived in a dossier on the *plomos* compiled by a Vatican scribe, "Sommario di tutto quello, che si hà nel Santo Offitio intorno alle Lamine trovate nel Monte di Granata," in BAV. Barb. lat. 6451.

⁸⁷The Cardinal of Cremona objected to Bivar's reference to the "pieces of information received *in forma juris* by the bishop of Granada [as] Apostolic Judge," since this "could make one believe that there was an Apostolic delegation and approval, a most false thing": *ibid.*, 45^{r-v}. For the offending passage, see Migne, col. 173C. On Scaglia, see Tedeschi.

lamented, a long inscription referring to the *plomos* — written by Bernardo de Aldrete — had since been placed in the church of Sacromonte.⁸⁸ For the Cardinal of Cremona, “the proposition that these sheets [of lead] are true and Catholic is consecrated in marble for immortality,” was simply too much; in response, he suggested, “it is necessary to seize upon an energetic remedy,” which he left unspecified.⁸⁹

6. “IT IS NECESSARY . . . TO HAVE A PIOUS AFFECTION IN OUR SOUL[S]”

In their deep skepticism toward these new Iberian devotions, both Cardinal Scaglia and the Barberini commentator reflected the increasing rigor with which narratives of holiness were being scrutinized in learned religious circles, particularly in Rome.⁹⁰ A new, more critical approach toward hagiographic sources had emerged in the various efforts of fifteenth-century humanist critics, sixteenth-century Vatican reformers, and seventeenth-century Jesuit scholars to clear away a perceived overgrowth of apocryphal accretions in sacred traditions and to rewrite the lives of the saints according to more strictly historical and philological principles.⁹¹ Acknowledging the distortions created by ruptures in the process of historical transmission, the coterie of learned Jesuits known as the Bollandists — first under Flemish Jesuit Herbert Rosweyde (1569–1629) in 1628, and then under his successor, Jean Bolland — embarked on the massive collection and revision of saints’ lives published as the *Acta sanctorum* beginning in 1643. They scrutinized the sources of hagiographical information, ironed out logical and chronological gaps and contradictions in the *vitae*, and revised the texts accordingly.⁹²

⁸⁸The cardinal might have been referring to the monument to the Immaculate Conception, erected not in Sacromonte, but on Granada’s Campo de Triunfo, known as “La Virgen del Triunfo,” which was engraved with several inscriptions detailing the history of the *plomos* and of the early Christian martyrs believed to have been buried with the texts. See Kendrick, 108.

⁸⁹“Sommario,” 46^r: “Vedendosi dunque il male errore esser proceduto tant’oltre, che non solo ne’ scritti, e nelle stampe, ma anco ne’ marmi si consacra all’immortalit per vera, e cattolica la dottrina di queste lamine, e necessario prendervi quel gagliardo rimedio, che più parerà opportuno alla somma prudenza, pietà, e zelo della Santità di Nro. Signori.” For similar sentiments among Roman critics of the lead books of Granada, who included Baronio and Bellarmine, among others, and for Roman concerns about the texts’ defense of the Immaculate Conception, see Scaramella.

⁹⁰For hagiography broadly conceived as narratives of holiness with larger political, cultural, and religious significance, see Ditchfield, 2009.

⁹¹For the efforts of fifteenth-century Italian and German scholars to produce “humanist hagiography,” see, respectively, Collins; Frazier; Webb. For the reform of the liturgy in the late sixteenth century, see Ditchfield, 1995.

⁹²See Godding et al.; Knowles; Van Ommerlaeghe.

While Vatican attitudes toward relics and hagiographic sources were not univocally critical in the 1630s — as attested by the continued export of anonymous catacomb relics — a measured suspicion of new relics and texts does seem to have united Roman reactions to the Arjona relics, the Granadan *plomos*, and Dexter's *Chronicle*. Why, then, did Bishop Moscoso and his advisors seem so ill prepared for this hardnosed scrutiny? It was not that they were completely ignorant of evolving trends in the study and critique of hagiographic sources. As we shall see, Moscoso's scholars knew, for example, of the ongoing hagiographic research of the Bollandists in Flanders.

In their defense of the Arjona relics, many of Moscoso's advisors expressed a profound suspicion of what they perceived as outsiders' excessively critical heuristics. In its place, Jaén clerics advocated for a theological and devotional disposition that they referred to as "pious affection," or "pious generosity." They contrasted this attitude of courtesy and deference toward the holy — an attitude that, they believed, Vatican scholars could not (or would not) countenance — with the more rigorous and insensitive bluster with which contemporary critics of the cult of saints, like some Catholic scholars, were believed to approach such delicate matters.⁹³

This self-conscious contrast emerges in the responses that Moscoso received after he returned to Jaén from Rome, via a lengthy sojourn at the royal court in Madrid. In 1639 the bishop asked a number of learned men in Jaén and beyond to consider two questions that remained unresolved, even after his Roman visit: first, did the bishop possess the authority to canonize relics himself, or would he need to solicit papal approval? Second, if the bishop really did possess jurisdiction in this matter, as Urban had suggested, then how, exactly, did one go about determining the authenticity of relics?⁹⁴

A cluster of manuscripts and letters from ca. 1639 reveals that the question of jurisdiction seemed relatively straightforward to Moscoso's

⁹³Spain had become rather sensitive about Vatican efforts to trim legendary overgrowth in Catholic liturgy and hagiography, particularly after Cardinals Baronio and Bellarmine had challenged the historicity of the tissue of legends around Saint James the Greater — known in Spanish as Santiago — in the late sixteenth century. For the history of this polemic, see Kendrick. Spanish scholars were not immune from critiques on this point, as Juan de Mariana discovered when the Valencian royal chronicler, Gaspar Escolano, criticized him for being "too cautious" in his reading of the historical sources for Santiago's Spanish mission: Escolano, col. 216.

⁹⁴Moscoso gathered the clerics in a 1639 meeting to consider these questions and other new saints in the diocese, including the relics discovered in Baeza in the 1630s: Jesús María, ¶810–24.

advisors, who, in several letters and treatises on the Arjona relics, simply cited Trent to the effect that the authentication of relics was a matter for the bishop in the first instance. They were significantly less clear as to precisely how the bishop should proceed to authenticate the relics. The chronicler Tomás Tamayo de Vargas recommended that Moscoso inquire with Jean Bolland in Flanders about the original Acts of Bonosus and Maximianus, presumably in order to bolster the case for these two martyrs. Tamayo de Vargas also discussed evidence he had culled from the false chronicles in favor of the other, additional Arjona martyrs.⁹⁵ Martín Vázquez Siruela, the Sacromonte canon and partisan of the *plomos* of Granada, confronted the difficulties of authentication directly in his projected history of Arjona. According to his outline, Vázquez argued that the relics were not recent inventions, and he rebutted the suggestion that they could have been the physical remains of pagans, Moors, heretics, or criminals. Following this, Vázquez embarked upon a point-by-point exposition of all of the natural and supernatural evidence in support of the relics' authenticity, supported by a review of the historical evidence in their favor. The treatise ended with a consideration of the question weighing on the bishop's mind: "If these relics must be re-canonized, or if they can be approved as ancient, and if the fact that the names of the martyrs are not recorded could block their approval."⁹⁶ All agreed that

⁹⁵BN, Ms. 6184, 52^v (letter of 12 April 1639, from Tamayo de Vargas to Francisco Luis, a Jaén Jesuit).

⁹⁶Martín Vázquez Siruela, "Diseño de lo que se puede escribir de los santos i reliquias de Arjona" (BN, Ms. 6156, 43^r–46^v). Other documents in this cluster include: "Dudas que se ofrecen en el hecho i es necesaria su respuesta para la resolucion en la calificacion de las reliquias de Arjona," (BN, Ms. 6184, 36^{r-v}), a list of questions that would need to be resolved for the authentication process, including whether bleeding and other miraculous relics had been kept separate, or mixed in with others; "Títulos de los Parraphos que se contienen en el papel que assento el Padre Fray Miguel de la Ssma. Trinidad Carmelita descalzo tocantes al Santuario de Arjona" (BN, Ms. 6184, 108^r–109^f), an outline of a longer work that apparently included reflections on whether the miracles accompanying the relics' discovery were authentic, on whether the bishop could authenticate relics himself, and on the more than 500 saints who had probably been put to death in Arjona; the "Señales de martirios que envia el Abad de Sta. Cruz" (BN, Ms. 6184, 60^{r-v}), a list of the five characteristics of the graves of martyrs in the Roman catacombs; and the "Memorial de algunas diligencias que conviene hazer en la villa de Arjona en orden a la calificacion de las reliquias" (BN, Ms. 6184, 103^r), in which it was suggested that the Arjona witnesses be reexamined, and that experts be consulted to determine, for example, if the nails discovered were of recent confection, or if they "showed signs of antiquity." For two other surviving treatises, see Calderón; Pancorbo. An early twentieth-century Arjona historian attested to two additional manuscripts that, it seems, were destroyed during the Spanish Civil War: one by Francisco de Santa María, *Calificatio solemnis reliquiarum SS. martyrum urgavonensium* (1639), and another by the Jaén Jesuit Luís de Tero, *Informatorio en la Calificacion de los Santuarios de Arjona* (1645). For a bibliography, see Morales Talero.

the bishop should make a decision quickly, lest he jeopardize the special relationship between God, Arjona, and his vicar in Jaén that the discoveries had made manifest. For example, the Franciscan Manuel Tamayo argued that the many miracles that had occurred since the Arjona discoveries were themselves sufficient evidence of the relics' authenticity.⁹⁷

Francisco de Santa María, the Baeza-based Carmelite historian, evinced a more sophisticated understanding of the difficulties involved, and rued that the authentication of relics was a rather daunting "gulf" that, so far as he could surmise, few had navigated before.⁹⁸ While admitting that the precise criteria for authenticating relics remained ill defined, Santa María agreed with Tamayo that the question of the relics' authenticity should be settled quickly, preferably in discrete consultation with a council of learned and respectable men.⁹⁹ This, Santa María warned, would be preferable to the more public route that Archbishop Castro had pursued in Granada, and would help Moscoso avoid the snares that had entrapped the matter of the *plomos* at home and abroad. To authenticate the Arjona relics, letters to the king, royal councils, fellow prelates, and many others beyond the diocese would neither be necessary nor advisable; after all, "Arjona does not need as much as Granada did."¹⁰⁰

Nor did the answer lie in asking for papal approval. In his 1639 treatise on the authentication of the Arjona relics, Bernardino de Villegas, a theological consultant to the Inquisition as well as chair of theology at the Jesuit college of Alcalá de Henares, warned that if the bishop did insist upon appealing once again to the pope, it was unlikely that the case would be resolved in Arjona's favor. This was not because the relics did not have a strong case — to the contrary — but because so many of the pope's ministers were "foreigners." As such, they would never be as concerned with the glory of "our Nation" as they would be with their own.¹⁰¹ Villegas's implication was clear: Roman worthies could not be trusted to defend the local traditions of Spanish Christianity over and against those of the Church Universal. For a precedent for the independent adjudication of relics,

⁹⁷Tamayo.

⁹⁸BN, Ms. 6184, 29^{r-v} (letter to Moscoso): "I have made quite an effort in venturing to enter this sea without a guide, especially since I have not found anybody who has dealt specifically with the question of how to authenticate relics." For biographical details on Santa María, who became historian of the Discalced Carmelites in 1625, see San Gerónimo, 524–29.

⁹⁹BN, Ms. 6184, 29^{r-v}.

¹⁰⁰BN, Ms. 6184, 32^r–33^r (letter of 30 September 1639): "Arjona no necesita tanto como Granada necesita."

¹⁰¹Villegas, 111^r.

Villegas pointed Moscoso to the Archbishop of Cagliari, whose “pious generosity” moved him to sanction the relics he had discovered in 1614, in spite of the fact that the saints were not found in the Roman Martyrology.¹⁰² In other words, in Arjona as in Sardinia, the relics should be approached with a combination of historical inquiry, common sense, and, most of all, pious affection.

To do otherwise — for example, by continuing to subject the relics to increased scrutiny — was, for Villegas, to ask for a higher level of proof than a pious mind could reasonably expect from miracles and relics. Villegas suggested that the strong probability that all the human remains unearthed in Arjona were martyrs — whether formally canonized, or canonized by tradition — more than sufficed to authorize all the faithful to venerate them: “And to do the contrary would mean a lack of piety and devotion.”¹⁰³ For Villegas, the corrosive effects of Protestant critics of the cult of saints had made clear that extreme skepticism would undermine the very foundations of Christian unity, and had no place in holy matters. He echoed the ruminations of the prominent historian and antiquarian Ambrosio de Morales (1531–91), who, in a discussion of a miraculous cross that angels had crafted surreptitiously for an early medieval king of Oviedo, dismissed the hardhearted who would doubt such wonders. As Morales had reflected, “There will always be something that can be doubted in all matters, if one persists in rigorously scrutinizing minute details,” such as by subjecting such relics and miracles to the rigorous examination of a *pleito* (judicial process). Villegas cited Morales approvingly, and suggested that, rather than tempt God and the devil, the bishop should err on the side of credulity. For even if “there were some slight excess or overabundance in these matters,” it would be better “to venerate the relics of the saints with a surplus of piety and credulity, [and] disregard the metaphysical rigor of the schools that does not take piety into account.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, the rather cold logic of the academic approach was not well-suited to the adjudication of relics. The bishop should instead let himself be guided by a spirit of pious affection; after all, “not everything has to be subtle distinctions, arguments, pondering, calumniating, and objecting to everything, making theologians into severe Areopagites [judges in ancient Athens’s highest judicial court]: rather, in

¹⁰²Bonfant; Villegas, 36.

¹⁰³Villegas, 14^v: “Y hazer lo contrario seria falta de piedad y devocion.”

¹⁰⁴Ibid.: “Y caso, que uiesse de aver algun ligero exceso, o demasia, en estas materias, yo mas me inclinaria a venerar las reliquias de los santos con alguna sobra de piedad, y credulidad, que dexar de venerarlas con sobra de incredulidad, dexandome llevar del rigor metafisico de las escuelas, sin atender a la piedad.”

these matters there should be piety, devotion, and a willingness to believe and judge piously.”¹⁰⁵

In a revealing set of analogies, Villegas argued that the bishop should approach the authentication of relics with the same generous spirit that he would assume in matters of etiquette and charity. Excessive piety was worth the risk: “[A]s we say, in matters of courtesy, it is better to sin with too many letters, than with too few.” This was true even if an exceedingly generous spirit might expose one to deception on occasion: “In the same way also it is worse to refuse to give alms to a poor man because he does not present us with evidence that he is poor, and to examine his neediness with rigorous and impertinent examinations, than it is to just give [alms] to him, even though he might be lying to us, faking poverty, or to let ourselves be somewhat deceived with the faked appearance of his poverty. Because in the former case there is an excess of piety and goodness; and in the latter, there is an excess of malice, and less piety.”¹⁰⁶ Just as there was no danger in an overabundance of manners and charity, there was certainly no blame in excessive piety. As Morales had suggested, in matters of ancient history, even that of early Christian saints, one could not expect absolute truth. Instead, “it is necessary in such cases for us to have a pious affection in our soul: if this is lacking, one goes around examining everything, and there is nothing that will not be discarded and condemned.”¹⁰⁷

Notwithstanding the arguments of these and his other advisors in 1639, subjecting the relics to a formal litigation and judgment is precisely what the bishop proceeded to do. In 1642, Arjona’s municipal and ecclesiastical *cabildos* (councils) filed a complaint against Moscoso in his own episcopal *audiencia* (tribunal) of Jaén, in which they petitioned the bishop to issue

¹⁰⁵Ibid.: “Que no ha de ser todo sutilezas, argumentos, cavilaciones, calumniandolo, y dificultandolo todo, haziendo muy de los Theologos, o severos Areopajitas: sino que ha de aver piedad, devocion, y docilidad para creer, y juzgar piadosamente en estas causas.”

¹⁰⁶Ibid.: “Al modo, que decimos, que en materia de cortesias, vale mas pecar por carta de mas, que de menos. Y al modo tambien, que es peor dexar de dar limosna al pobre, porque no nos consta con evidencia, que lo es, andando examinando su menesterosidad, con examenes rigurosos, e impertinentes, que darsela, aunque tal vez nos engañe, fingiendose pobre, o dexandonos nosotros ligeramente engañar, con la fingida apariencia de su pobreza. Porque en lo uno abra sobra de piedad y bondad; y en lo otro sobra de malicia, y menos piedad.”

¹⁰⁷Ibid. (quoting Morales, 61^{r-v}): “Es menester, que tengamos en semejantes cosas, una piadosa aficion en nuestra alma: la qual si falta, andando examinandolo todo, no ay cosa, que no deseche, y condene.” Villegas also cites Morales’s discussion of the discovery of the relics of early Christian martyrs in Cordoba in 1575; in such matters, Morales concludes, absolute certainty is impossible, for “there cannot be evidence, or arguments, that resolve everything, but rather a moral probability, deduced from good principles and foundations”: Villegas, 14^v (citing Morales, 272^r). For Morales’s heuristic principles, see Van Liere, 2007 and 2012.

a final judgment on the authenticity of the relics (fig. 2).¹⁰⁸ The bishop himself had prompted the trial. As Licenciado Miguel Gerónimo de Prado Aragonés, the bishop's prosecutor in the case, explained in its published proceedings, a number of Moscoso's advisors had concluded that the evaluation of the Arjona relics required a higher degree of certainty than could be afforded by the non-adversarial route of adjudication the bishop had pursued thus far, which had included compiling and evaluating witness testimony, historical information, and learned opinions. Moscoso was now opting to have the relics judged in a "contentious trial [setting]" in which the matter would be debated "between parties."¹⁰⁹ The relics would be put on trial, just as Villegas had feared.

Thus, in a remarkable departure from the precedent of most other contemporary relic discoveries, the bishop's prosecutor proceeded to mount a vigorous attack on the relics, much as the *promotor fiscalis*, or devil's advocate, would later do in canonization trials held by the Sacred Congregation of Rites.¹¹⁰ Licenciado Prado, an otherwise-obscure episcopal employee, began by attacking the relics at their most vulnerable point, their virtual anonymity. As Moscoso's advisors had long recognized, the number of martyrs attested to by Dexter's *Chronicle* could not come close to accounting for the superabundance of physical remains that had been unearthed in Arjona in the past decade. Unfortunately for Arjona, God had not provided a solution like that which emerged in fourth-century Zaragoza, where, according to tradition, during the same Diocletian-era persecution as in Arjona, the Romans had burned the bones of the innumerable martyrs so that that Christians could not venerate them. According to a later tradition, God resolved the dilemma this created for the community by promptly separating the remains of the saints from the

¹⁰⁸ Arjona's petition to Moscoso is printed in the *Memorial del pleito*, an extensive record of the proceedings: "I ask and beg Your Eminence . . . that you order to proceed, and that you proceed to the last steps, and to everything proper and necessary for the authentication [*calificación*] of said miracles, veneration, cult, and placement that is owed to such holy and prodigious relics": *Memorial*, 18.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 36. On contentious versus voluntary jurisdiction in canon law, see Garner and Black, 928–31.

¹¹⁰ The relics discovered under the prelates of Cordoba (1586), Granada (1600), Cagliari (1614), Sassari (1614), and the abbot of Santa María de Sandoval in León (1625) had all been assessed in voluntary, rather than contentious or adversarial, proceedings. The role of *promotor fiscalis* (or *promotor fidei*) was introduced in 1631, as the adversarial approach was adopted during the Tridentine reforms of canonization procedures. See Ditchfield, 2007, 208; for the obstacles facing candidates for canonization, see Burke.

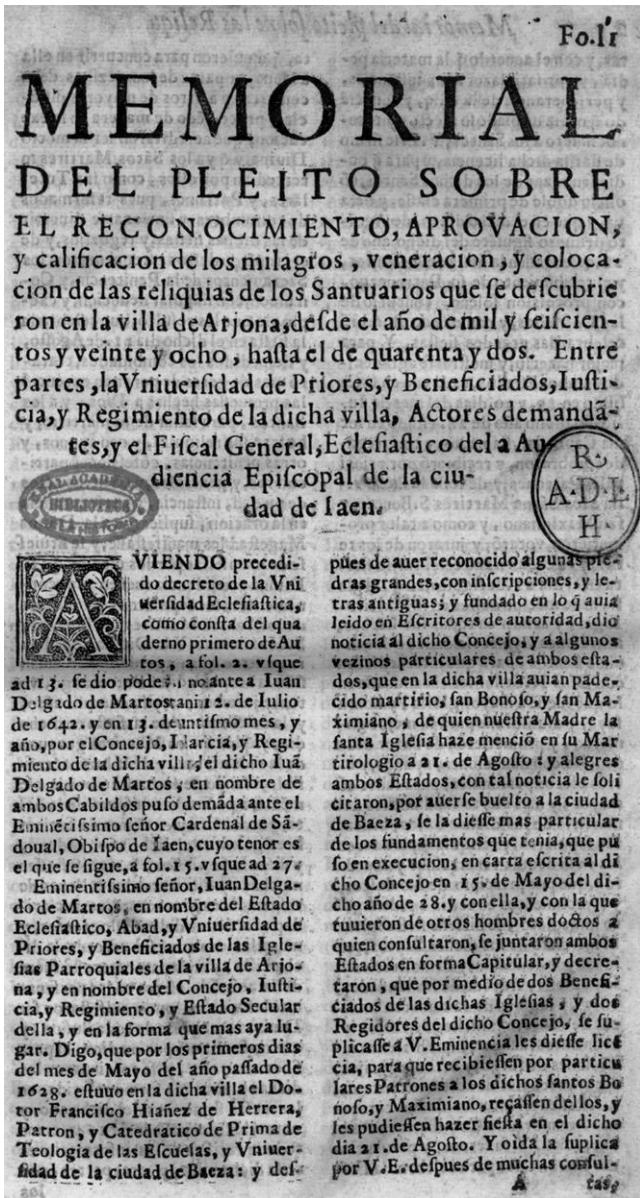


FIGURE 2. Title page of *Memorial del pleito sobre el reconocimiento, aprouacion y calificacion de los milagros, veneracion y colocacion de las reliquias . . . que se descubrieron en la villa de Arjona . . .*, ca. 1646. Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid.

sinners: the former sprinkled down to the ground in a rain of white powder, where it was collected by devotees.¹¹¹

Villegas and others had argued that the multiplicity of Arjona relics could be explained by the fact that, as in Rome and Zaragoza, Arjona's martyrs were innumerable, and their names known only to God. The local antiquaries Pedro de la Cuesta and Martín Ximena Jurado (1615–64) helpfully unearthed evidence of such a widescale persecution in 1637, when they dug up an allegedly Roman coin near the riverbank in Baeza; its inscription alluded to a massive persecution in fourth-century Arjona, such that, as the coin recorded triumphantly, “the Christian superstition had been destroyed.”¹¹² In response to this line of argumentation, Prado replied that, if there really had been a persecution widespread enough to produce so many bodies, some trace of the event should have remained in the writings and memories of contemporaries, aside from a coin that, Prado implied, was of dubious authenticity. With the exception of Dexter's *Chronicle*, no other source — “no serious history, nor any not serious history” — mentioned the five Arjona martyrs, let alone the rest of the innumerable dead. “[I]t is odd,” Prado noted damningly, “that such a great number of martyrs would remain in the dark.”¹¹³

For Prado, Arjona's counterargument — that additional historical evidence was unnecessary, since the manifold miracles had authenticated the relics already — was unconvincing and incoherent. If God really had revealed the Arjona bones and ashes to inspire communal devotion to the saints, why, then, had he failed to follow up by helpfully pointing out which were the relics of Bonosus, Maximianus, Apolo, Isacius, and Craton, still the only five martyrs who had been confirmed by any historical source at all? In

¹¹¹Castillo Maldonado, 2005a, 164; Tausiet.

¹¹²On its face was an imperial portrait of the fourth-century Emperor Maximian, who ruled the western half of the empire during the Great Persecution, and his name: “IMP. C. MAXIMIANVS. P.F. AVG.” On the back were inscriptions reading “MUN[ICIP]IUM] A[L]B[ENSE] VRG[ABONE]” (“In the Municipality of Alba Urgabone”) and “SUPERSTITIONE CHRISTIAN[ORUM] DELETA” (“The Christian Superstition Destroyed”). In the center, a pair of laurels surrounded what Ximena Jurado refers to as “hieroglyphics.” These included an altar with flames atop, and a small cup for wine: Martín de Ximena Jurado, “Explicacion de un antiguo numisma de Arjona,” BN, Ms. 1180, 296^r–307^v. Ximena Jurado was also Moscoso's secretary; Cuesta staffed Baeza's only printing press. For Ximena Jurado's presentation of the coin to Arjona's municipal council, see Parejo Delgado, 1982. For the broader context of Andalusian antiquaries, see Beltrán and Gascó; for the antiquaries from an art-historical perspective, see Morán Turina.

¹¹³*Memorial*, 21: “ni otro alguno, ni historia graue, ni no graue hable de otros”; *ibid.*: “es cosa rara, que tan a escuras esté numero tan grande de martires, que ni quien hablo de los Santos Bonoso y Maximiano.”

light of this fact, it would have made sense for God to provide the means by which their remains might be identified, and thus honored suitably. If God truly were furnishing the relics to induce the community to render devotion to these martyrs, as Arjona's representative Juan Delgado de Martos had argued, why, then, would God withhold the very information needed to institute a public cult to them — including, at the very least, their names?¹¹⁴

A more serious problem was the lack of any information whatsoever about the lives and morals of the individuals who had died in Arjona. Prado argued that this made the miracles unconfirmable, and, thus, completely worthless as evidence of the relics' authenticity. As any canon lawyer knew, miracles were evaluated according to the worthiness of the individual.¹¹⁵ In the case of the relics that belonged to canonized saints, whose good character had been confirmed — either by the pope, or, as in the case of saints like Bonosus and Maximianus, by the tradition of the Church — this was not a problem. If any of the bleeding relics or healing miracles could have been attributed to these named martyrs, then those, at least, could have been verified. Yet since not one Arjona relic had been matched with a name, the lives and morals of those to whom the physical remains belonged remained an open question: therefore, not a single miracle could be verified, much less cited as evidence.¹¹⁶

To the circular notion, forwarded by Arjona's representative, that the validity of the relics was simply self-evident due to the many miracles that had accompanied the discoveries and had continued to proliferate thereafter, Prado countered that, in fact, it was the other way around.¹¹⁷ The more bones and ashes that were uncovered, the less likely it was that they belonged to saints. After all, as the writings of various fathers and doctors of the Church had made clear, miracles were, by definition, rare. In Arjona, the proliferation of miracles — including a number of relics that seemed to bleed on demand for large audiences in the nearby towns of Alcalá la Real and Marmolejo — actually made it less likely that the relics belonged to actual saints, and more likely that the marvels had nefarious causes.¹¹⁸ How, then, to explain the abundance of miracles? Prado attributed these to natural causes, popular credulity, and, possibly, diabolical intervention. Like the

¹¹⁴As Prado stated tartly in *ibid.*, "If [it was for] their honor and veneration that God revealed them, it is likely ["verosimil"] that he would make known who they were."

¹¹⁵As canon law stipulates, in order to evaluate the miracles, the relics would need to be identified, and the lives of these distant dead, evaluated: *ibid.*, 22.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 49.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 53.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 29.

anonymous Barberini reader, this Jaén ecclesiastical prosecutor also noted that earthquakes, solar and lunar eclipses, and other alterations in the natural order could produce the sort of strange lights, smells, and apparitions that many in Arjona had reported before the relics were discovered.¹¹⁹ Human frailty was also a contributing factor, particularly among the common people (*vulgo*), who, excited by news of the martyrs, had become convinced that the martyrs were buried near the castle. Propelled by their uncritical enthusiasm, the people had become victims of their own suggestibility, as well as more vulnerable to possible diabolical influence.¹²⁰ Matters snowballed from there, and once some in Arjona claimed to have seen miraculous lights, others followed, either out of curiosity or the desire to be included.¹²¹

Prado also complained, like the Roman reader, that the examination of the witnesses, as recorded in the *Relation*, had not been rigorous, and violated basic judicial procedures: the witnesses were all questioned together, not separately; questioning was not conducted with secrecy; most witnesses were not reexamined, that is, asked to ratify and correct their testimony at a later point; examiners did not follow up on contradictions in testimony; and many of the alleged miracles were attested by only one witness. Nor had the character of the witnesses been scrutinized in the least.¹²²

Prado's relentless attack unwittingly echoed the Barberini commentator's acid marginalia. That this otherwise-unknown provincial *licenciado* (university graduate) was able to argue just as vociferously against the relics, and on many of the same points, suggests that local cults were not immune, even at the local level, from the rigorous heuristic principles employed by many outside observers. Furthermore, it also suggests that regional support for the Arjona relics was not just a natural, reflexive assertion of local pride as against universal Roman Catholicism, but a conscious choice, even among proximate observers in Jaén.

Yet the skepticism of the bishop's prosecutor had its limits. After having argued in his several petitions to the court that, due to all of these serious problems, Moscoso should reserve judgment on the relics until he could summon a provincial council (the findings of which he should then submit

¹¹⁹Ibid., 21.

¹²⁰Ibid., 50–51.

¹²¹Ibid., 20–21, 50–51. For a similar critique of the credulity of the common people vis-à-vis miracles, see Benito Arias Montano's devastating assessment of the *plomos*, in a letter to Pedro de Castro printed in Villanueva, 3:279.

¹²²Prado cites the particularly deplorable case of one witness who openly admitted to having removed relics from Arjona in spite of the order of excommunication prohibiting the practice: *Memorial*, 27.

to the pope for assessment), Prado admitted another possibility, namely, that the bishop could simply put the matter before God. Prado reasoned that, if a provincial council was not possible, Moscoso should order that in the diocese — and, if possible, the rest of Christendom — fervent prayers be offered for divine guidance on what should be done.¹²³ Afterward, the bishop could once again seek the counsel of pious and learned men regarding how he should proceed. In other words, like medieval bishops who subjected relics to judicial ordeals when all other means of verifying their authenticity had been exhausted, Moscoso would pray for a sign of whether the relics were real or not; or, at the very least, he would ask for some further illumination of this difficult matter.¹²⁴

Far from resolving his dilemma, this third way left Moscoso right where he had started in 1628. Unlike one medieval bishop, who fasted for three days to prompt a sign from God about whether a relic was genuine, Moscoso, as far as we know, did not undergo any sort of ascetic exercises to prompt divine judgment of the relics. Nor did Moscoso follow the medieval route of subjecting the relics to trial by fire, for example.¹²⁵ For if canonization standards had become more rigorous since the golden age of the ordeal in the High Middle Ages, so had the expectations for divine guidance. Medieval bishops might have been content with the authenticity of otherwise-unobjectionable relics if, as Patrick Geary explains, they “performed as relics — that is to say, if they worked miracles, inspired the faithful, and increased the prestige of the community in which they were placed.”¹²⁶ Measured by these criteria, the Arjona relics had already excelled. Yet for this Counter-Reformation bishop, the complex historical, theological, and legal questions they had raised remained unresolved. Could they be addressed by concerted prayer and yet more advice from the bishop’s learned advisors?

Evidently not. After both parties submitted their final petitions in the spring of 1645, the bishop made no move whatsoever toward resolving the Arjona case. In the meantime, Moscoso’s circumstances changed dramatically: in June 1645, he received papal bulls formalizing his appointment as Archbishop of Toledo.¹²⁷ After twenty-seven years in the

¹²³*Ibid.*, 32.

¹²⁴*Ibid.* For ordeals as one way of authenticating relics when all other means of verification had been exhausted, see Bartlett; Geary, 1983; Head.

¹²⁵For ordeals by fire, which were at their height from the sixth to mid-twelfth centuries, see Hermann-Mascard, 134–36.

¹²⁶Geary, 1990, 54–5.

¹²⁷Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Segr. Stato, Cardinali, 15, 38^f; Jesús María.

see of Jaén, Moscoso departed for Toledo in the fall of 1646.¹²⁸ Yet the cardinal continued to support the new saints of Jaén. According to one of his biographers, en route to Toledo, Moscoso stopped in Arjona to visit the shrine he had sponsored. He also paid his respects to Santa Potenciana, whose relics he had helped enshrine in Villanueva de Andújar.¹²⁹ The bishop's approach to the Arjona relics had been cautious and equivocal, but as primate of the Spanish church, he showed very little timidity. During his frequent and sometimes contentious presence at the royal court in Madrid, the man who had been a fierce defender of royal interests in 1630s Rome became a vocal advocate for ecclesiastical immunities and privileges, which often put him at odds with the king and his ministers.¹³⁰

7. CONCLUSION

Moscoso's ponderous and halting efforts to find a canonically acceptable manner of adjudicating the Arjona relics generated a rich documentary base from which to study the saints of Arjona, but no formal resolution. No record of any verdict in the lawsuit has survived. This is perhaps because, in spite of the ongoing historical, theological, and procedural research conducted by his advisors, the central question of how to determine the authenticity of relics seemed unresolvable to the bishop. This possibility is suggested by the fact that, on the last pages of two copies of the printed proceedings of the Arjona trial, Moscoso's secretary, the antiquary and chronicler Martín de Ximena Jurado, appended a handwritten list of three questions, which apparently remained unanswered. Unsurprisingly, they were the following: First, was there enough proof to authenticate some of the miracles, and if so, which ones? Second, could the places where these miracles had been witnessed, and where the bones and ashes had been found,

¹²⁸The cardinal's fortunes had improved in the years after the fall of the Count-Duke of Olivares and the rise in 1643 of Luis Méndez de Haro as Philip IV's new *válido*, for which see Lynch.

¹²⁹Jesús María, ¶1066. For contemporary debates about the authenticity of Potenciana, see *Alegación apologetica*; Pancorbo; *Un autor que parece mas devoto*.

¹³⁰For example, in 1654 Philip IV expelled Moscoso from the court, due to the scandal that erupted after the archbishop's servants hid an accused murderer — who claimed ecclesiastical immunity from secular jurisdiction — in the archiepiscopal palace. Unperturbed, in 1657 Moscoso excommunicated the king's tax collector because he was levying the controversial *millones* tax on members of the clergy: see BN, Ms. 1433, 1159^r–1161^v, “Decreto en que SM, manda, al Cardenal Sandoval Arçobispo de Tholedo Salga de la Corte dentro de 24 oras y que no buelba, a ella sin su real liçençia, y la respuesta de el Cardenal. Madrid, 19 agosto 1654”; Jesús María, ¶1910–1988; BAV, Barb. lat., 3603 (letter from Philip IV to Moscoso, 28 January 1657).

be declared holy, and could the relics as well? Finally, could the bones found with signs of martyrdom be confirmed as real, or, since there were so many, was this a more serious matter that should be judged by a provincial council or the Holy See?¹³¹ In the long run, the option of greatest caution seems to have prevailed, at least at the level of legal formalities. A later Bishop of Jaén noted in a periodic report to the papacy on the state of the diocese, submitted in 1661, that the investigations into the relics were waiting in the archives, to be used, in time, “to make an appropriate presentation to the Apostolic See.” In other words, although the Arjona relics had been investigated thoroughly, the matter still awaited the formal sanction of the Holy See.¹³²

Moscoso's apparent inability to find an acceptable manner of formally judging the relics should not be confused with indifference toward the relics themselves, nor mistaken for ambivalence about Dexter's chronicle and the three other apocryphal texts that underwrote these and other new saints. In addition to his continued sponsorship of the Arjona martyrs, Moscoso supported a variety of other new saints that continued to come to light, in the diocese of Jaén and beyond, thanks also to the four false chronicles. For example, Moscoso gave his backing to nine saints whose relics had been disinterred in Baeza between 1629 and 1640, thanks to a local Jesuit, Francisco de Bilches, who had read about the various Baeza martyrs in the *Chronicle* of Julián Pérez. As in Arjona, news of the martyrs' existence prompted the bishop to authorize local processions in the saints' honor, which were followed by miraculous lights, digging, and the discovery of relics that occurred largely without ecclesiastical sanction.¹³³ The members of the theology faculty of the University of Baeza recommended that

¹³¹The same annotations appear in both the *Memorial del pleito* held by the Instituto de Estudios Giennenses (IEG), Jaén, 5.082, and in RAH, 5/1559.

¹³²ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec. 364, 131^{r-v} (*visitatio ad liminum* submitted on behalf of Bishop Fernando Andrade de Castro): “[Arjona] is very well known and celebrated for the marvels whereupon [in] the year[s] 1629 and [16]30 many bodies were discovered there, that, due to the seemingly supernatural lights that were seen, as well as the blood that the bones shed, and the fragrance and softness that was sensed in them, and because of other wonderful things, it was presumed that they were the bodies of saints, about which many certified inquiries [*ynformaciones autenticas*] were conducted, that are in the Archives in order to make the representation that, in its time [*a su tiempo*], would be agreeable to the Apostolic see.”

¹³³The martyrs were Bishop Victor of Baeza and his companions, Alexander and Mariano, as well as Justus, Abundius, Straton, Rufino, Rufiniano, and Fausto. For Moscoso's decree of 17 August 1629, in which he encouraged the processions, see Rus Puerta, 225^v; for the chaotic excavations, and the largely unsuccessful attempts of secular and ecclesiastical authorities to stop them, see *ibid.*, 227^r; Olds, 2009b.

Moscoso authorize a public cult to the martyrs, which, in spite of some setbacks and tergiversations, he eventually did in 1639.¹³⁴

The bishop also continued to patronize works of scholarship that would help legitimize and historicize these new cults, as well as the texts where they had been remembered. In Jaén, Moscoso underwrote a cluster of sacred histories that drew liberally on the false chronicles to publicize the Arjona and Baeza relics, as well as the Christian antiquity of the diocese in general.¹³⁵ These efforts did not stop when he became Archbishop of Toledo. Moscoso commissioned a survey of the saints of the Toledan archdiocese from the Seville Jesuit Antonio de Quintanadueñas (1600–51) which introduced several new martyrs from the chronicles of Dexter, Maximus, Luitprandus, and Julián Pérez.¹³⁶ In an attempt to provide a more authoritative edition of the second of these texts, the archbishop also sponsored a new edition of the chronicle of Marcus Maximus, which had been prepared by Moscoso's longtime ally and advisor, Francisco Bivar, before his death.¹³⁷

Although it seems that no Bishop of Jaén, nor any other ecclesiastical official, ever issued a formal writ of authentication of the Arjona relics, the relics endured. The relics were enshrined in a new sanctuary completed under Moscoso's sponsorship in the 1650s, where statues of Bonosus and Maximianus — the patron saints of Arjona — still stand today.¹³⁸ Moscoso's decades-long attempt to address the questions raised by the relics may not have yielded a clear resolution, but in the end the bishop succeeded by default in granting these and other new local devotions a permanent place in the religious landscape of Spain. When, beginning in the 1630s and '40s, the

¹³⁴Moscoso y Sandoval, 1639 and 1640. The bishop reaffirmed the Baeza martyrs in 1644, when he included them, as well as the Arjona saints, in Jaén's revised liturgical calendar, for which see Moscoso y Sandoval, 1871. Three other new saints introduced in the 1644 calendar were Ctesiphon (Tesifón in Spanish), who had also been commemorated in the lead books of Granada, a saint known as "The Apostle Andreas," and, finally, Gregory of Baeza, an early Bishop of Iliberitanus (near Granada).

¹³⁵The first was by Francisco de Rus Puerta, who wrote a two-part ecclesiastical history of Jaén under the bishop's aegis while parish priest of Bailén. Moscoso's longtime advisor, the Jaén antiquary Martín Ximena Jurado, drew liberally on the works of Rus Puerta in his own account of the diocese's prelates and saints. A Baeza Jesuit named Francisco de Bilches wrote a survey of the region's saints and sanctuaries: see, respectively, Bilches; Rus Puerta; BN Ms 5737 (the unpublished second part of Rus Puerta's history); Ximena Jurado, 1991. For biographical details on the first two, see Parejo Delgado, 1982 and 1987.

¹³⁶Quintanadueñas had written a similar survey of Seville's saints over a dozen years beforehand: see Quintanadueñas, 1637 and 1651.

¹³⁷Bivar, 1651.

¹³⁸Martínez Ramos.

scholars in his service wrote these new devotions into histories of the diocese, the very shape of Jaén's history and memory was altered definitively. This was possible thanks to remarkable gaps in both Counter-Reformation theory and practice regarding the cult of saints and relics, gaps that effectively enabled these relics to be canonized by time, tradition, and local acclamation, much as had been the practice in the early Church. In spite of the increasingly strict standards of holiness being forwarded by scholars and theologians in Rome and beyond, the relics of Arjona seemed to exist in a blind spot. Although his apparent scruples regarding the canonical procedures pertaining to relics hobbled his attempts to proceed formally, Bishop Moscoso enshrined the new devotions in Arjona, and elsewhere in the Diocese of Jaén, through alternative channels of authentication that seemingly bypassed Rome and the evolving standards of authenticity. This, perhaps, was Moscoso's Ambrosian move: providing the community with a short circuit to its ancient martyrs, and thus to its past, whether real or imagined.

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