



ESTUDIOS LITERARIOS

BEFORE “PURITY OF BLOOD”: ELEMENTS AND METAPHORS  
IN THE 1449-1450 *CONVERSO* DEBATE

ANTES DE “LA LIMPIEZA DE SANGRE”: ELEMENTOS Y METÁFORAS EN  
EL DEBATE DE 1449-1450 SOBRE LOS CONVERSOS

ERIKA TRITLE

*Coastal Carolina University*

etritle@coastal.edu

ORCID: 0000-0001-9094-8097

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ABSTRACT

This study pays careful attention to the ways in which Latin and Castilian terms for ‘blood’ and ‘flesh’ are employed in the *converso* debate centered on the *anti-converso* uprising at Toledo in 1449. It considers how those terms are used—or not used—to conceive of human relationship to one another and to Christ as well as how they convey moral and spiritual status in terms related to purity and impurity. This microscopic look at a particular moment in Castile will enrich telescopic studies that aim for synthesis across disciplinary, chronological, and geographic boundaries. In the more immediate term, this essay demonstrates that, although Iberian historiography has tended to frame the exclusion of conversos from religious and civic life in terms of blood criteria, purity of blood was not a central category in the *converso* debate of 1449-1450. Rather, the dominant concerns whose relationship to blood and flesh, purity and impurity, faith and heresy, class, king, and country was at stake were honor and lineage itself.

Keywords: *Conversos*, blood, flesh, purity, honor, lineage, sacraments, race, historiography.

RESUMEN

Este estudio presta especial atención a las formas en que los términos latinos y castellanos para “sangre” y “carne” se emplean en el debate converso centrado en el levantamiento anticonverso en Toledo, en 1449. Considera cómo se usan o no esos términos para concebir la relación humana entre sí y con Cristo, además de cómo transmiten el estatus moral y espiritual en términos relacionados con la limpieza y la impureza. Esta mirada microscópica a un momento particular de Castilla enriquecerá los estudios telescópicos que apuntan a la síntesis a través de fronteras disciplinarias, cronológicas y geográficas. En el plazo más

inmediato, este ensayo demuestra que, aunque la historiografía ibérica ha tendido a enmarcar la exclusión de los conversos de la vida religiosa y cívica en términos de criterios de sangre, la limpieza de sangre no fue una categoría central en el debate converso de 1449-1450. Más bien, las preocupaciones dominantes que estaban en juego eran el honor y el linaje mismo, pese a la relación de estos con la sangre y la carne, la limpieza y la impureza, la fe y la herejía, la clase, el rey y el país.

Palabras clave: conversos, sangre, carne, limpieza, honor, linaje, sacramentos, raza, historiografía.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Iberian historiography, the exclusion of *conversos* from religious and civic life has tended to be framed in terms of blood criteria, given the importance of the purity of blood statutes that developed during the early modern era.<sup>1</sup> Most discussions of the origins of *limpieza de sangre* ideology highlight the middle of the fifteenth century and many, following historian Albert Sicroff's assessment, point to the "Sentencia-Estatuto de Pero Sarmiento" of 1449 as "the first statute of purity of blood in Spain" (Sicroff, 1985: 52; Martínez, 2011: 29).<sup>2</sup> The "Sentencia" targeted all "*conversos* of the lineage of the Jews", "past and present and future", for discrimination and persecution on the grounds that they were not and could never be truly Christian (Sarmiento, 2012a: 23, 30). That their forcibly-vacated offices would be filled by "Old, clean Christians" (*cristianos viejos lindos*) supports assessments that an early version of the logic of *converso* exclusion based on purity and lineage appears in that document. However, the authors of the *Sentencia* did not use the language of *limpieza de sangre*; the "Sentencia's" only mention of 'blood' appears in an allegation that the *conversos*, "armed with blood and fire", posed a violent threat to the Old Christians of Toledo (25).<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that the "Estatuto de limpieza" published by the Cathedral Chapter of Toledo under the leadership of Archbishop

<sup>1</sup> Research for this study was supported by fellowships from Fulbright Israel and the Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters (CSoc) at Ben Gurion University of the Negev. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at a workshop of the CSoc in 2019; the American Academy of Religion Southeast Region in 2022, and for the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies Research and Teaching Seminar of Coastal Carolina University in 2022. I am grateful for the feedback I received on all these occasions and especially for insights from Claude Stuczynski and the anonymous reviewers.

<sup>2</sup> An important exception to this historiographical trend is Rosa Vidal Doval's careful reading that leads her to affirm the significance of the *Sentencia* for its influence on subsequent measures to exclude *conversos* from public life while pointing to key features that distinguish it from later purity of blood doctrine (Vidal Doval, 2013: 226-227). Burk and Anidjar note some scholarly evidence for earlier documents as the first to display *limpieza* logic (Burk, 2010: 17; Anidjar, 2014: 196).

<sup>3</sup> Amrán Cohén (2006) provides a useful summary of key sources in the development of *limpieza* ideology, but for an example of the way that blood criteria is often assumed rather than cited from primary sources, see the following passage: "Es aquí, en la Sentencia cuando encontramos uno de los 'componentes' anticonversos que se repetirá, formulado por primera vez, la 'limpieza de sangre': los

Martínez Silíceo almost one hundred years later in 1547 also does not use the term 'blood'. It does, however, restrict its positions to "Old Christians" and insist that they not descend "from the lineage of Jews nor of Moors nor of Heretics" (Martínez Silíceo, 1547: fol. 3).<sup>4</sup> Far from arguing that the historiography is incorrect to identify a logic of *converso* exclusion based on a notion of *limpieza*, this essay suggests that we pay more attention to the way the logic of Old Christian purity developed and ask when, how, and to what extent and effect 'purity' came to be associated specifically and especially with 'blood'.<sup>5</sup>

This historiographical habit of defining *converso* exclusion in terms of blood criteria before the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* took hold informs the work of other scholars wanting to incorporate Iberian material into their projects. In his "critique of Christianity" aptly titled *Blood*, Gil Anidjar (2014) contends that the element of blood is where we need to explore nothing less than "the origin of both nation and race" (32). He argues further that in order to understand how blood is implicated in those concepts, we need to look to the Christian "eucharistic matrix" as the source of the notion "that communities partake, or understand themselves to partake, of one substance" (32). Anidjar places Eucharist in opposition to Inquisition, two "moments" that are both about "the construction —imaginative or fictional, ritual and institutional— of a community" (42). These two moments, however, are seldom considered in relation to one another, for "they are as distant and distinct as two historical paths, an internal parting of ways within Christianity and its understandings (the rule and the exception)" (42-43). Anidjar turns to "the 1449 Statutes on the Purity of Blood (*estatutos de limpieza de sangre*)" (61), namely, the "Sentencia", as a key moment on the path toward Inquisition. Following Sicroff, Anidjar suggests that this document and its historical context show us the beginning and epitome of the code which eventually "institutionalized [the] perception whereby Christians were deemed hematologically distinct from converts", or of different "blood" (41).

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conversos, de linaje judío, tienen una 'característica' que delimitará su presente dentro de la sociedad cristiana, y también su futuro (el de sus descendientes), su 'sangre'".

<sup>4</sup> Hering Torres (2003) appears to cite a different version of this manuscript which stipulates that all office holders in the church "fuesen xristianos Viejos sin raza de Judio ni de Moro ni hereges" (10). I have not been able to verify that version, but the variant wording supports Hering Torres' argument that *raza* ('race') was used interchangeably with 'lineage' in this context. Hering Torres credits Archbishop Martínez Silíceo with the "ideological construction" of *limpieza de sangre* (Hering Torres, 2003: 3). A manuscript edition of the statute published between 1701-1800 also uses the wording I have quoted in the main text, declaring that no one may be admitted to church offices "decienda de linage de Judios ni de Moros ni de Herejes" (Martínez Silíceo 1701: fol. 4).

<sup>5</sup> The studies collected in the volume edited by García-Arenal and Pereda (2021) make an important contribution to our understanding of how discourses about 'blood' and 'milk' shape and reveal the relationships between "race and religion", as indicated by the subtitle, and "the relationship between blood and religion" (28). As the subtitle also indicates, the volume's focus is directed toward the modern Iberian world.

While Eucharist and Inquisition sustain opposing images of community, Anidjar (2014) suspects that there is an uninterrogated connection between them: “Insofar as it singularizes and exceptionalizes, insofar as it quietly governs or rules over and across the unbridged opposition of Eucharist and Inquisition, insofar as it constitutes one of the earliest and most massive instances of ‘social disciplining’, blood may well be a rule we have yet to contend with” (44). Given the weight of the “Sentencia” in Iberian historiography of *limpieza de sangre* and *converso* exclusion, it is worth looking more closely at how ‘blood’ is used in the “Sentencia” and other texts produced in relation to the 1449 *anti-converso* uprising at Toledo.

The other eucharistic element, flesh, receives attention by J. Kameron Carter, a theorist also working at the intersection of religion and race with a more sympathetic, if no less critical, position toward Christianity. While he only briefly addresses fifteenth-century Iberia, he does so in a way that highlights its importance for our understanding of broader questions regarding Western ideas about race, religion, and nation (Carter, 2008: 5-6). Carter argues that modern “racial” flesh emerged when “Christ was abstracted from Jesus, and thus from his Jewish body, thereby severing Christianity from its Jewish roots” (6-7). That severing, Carter argues, entailed the conversion of Jewish “covenantal” flesh which signified the enduring covenant between God and Israel, into “racial flesh”, by which “Jews were cast as a race group in contrast to Western Christians” (4). My reading of Carter’s theological account of race suggests how the *converso* debate in question, which Carter has not studied, can serve as a window through which we can observe what Carter describes as “the taproot of modern racial reasoning” (6-7).

The study that follows pays careful attention to the ways in which Latin and Castilian terms for ‘blood’ and ‘flesh’ are employed. It considers how those terms are used—or not used—to conceive of human relationship to one another and to Christ as well as how they convey moral and spiritual status in terms related to purity and impurity. This microscopic look at a particular moment in Castile will enrich telescopic studies such as those of Anidjar and Carter that aim for synthesis across disciplinary, chronological, and geographic boundaries. In the more immediate term, this essay demonstrates that purity of blood was not a central category in the *converso* debate of 1449-1450. Rather, the dominant concerns whose relationship to blood and flesh, purity and impurity, faith and heresy, class, king, and country was at stake were honor and lineage itself. Blood would become a useful and powerful element for imagining all the meanings that lineage could convey, but its rein was not yet established.

## 2. THE 1449 UPRISING AT TOLEDO

When the citizens of Toledo received a royal request for a war loan in January of 1449, a plurality of them responded with rioting in the streets and targeted

*anti-converso* actions including religious interrogations, property theft, expulsion from professional positions, and public executions (Benito Ruano, 1961: 35-76; Round, 1966; Netanyahu, 1995: 296-350). Their actions would have far-reaching economic, social, and political impacts (López Gómez, 2014). Under the leadership of Pero Sarmiento, chief butler (*repostero mayor*) for the current king, Juan II, the insurrectionists took control of the city and outlined their demands in a "Suplicación y requerimiento" (Sarmiento, 2012b), which they presented to Juan II in May. These demands included the removal of the king's chief minister, Álvaro de Luna, as well as all *conversos*, from the king's administration. Unsuccessful in achieving these demands, they drafted the aforementioned "Sentencia-Estatuto" on 5 June. Vidal Doval (2013) argues that in some respects the Toledan rebellion could be read as an attempt by a minority group of Old Christian urban elites to protect their own economic and political interests in the face of competition for lucrative public notary positions, among other prizes, with a well-connected *converso* kin group. This group's extended membership included the wealthy merchant Alonso Cota, who was placed in charge of the special levy and whose house was attacked at the onset of the uprising. Leaders such as Sarmiento made arguments about "the public good" and framed their actions as advocacy for the entire Old Christian population even though the immediate effects of their legislation only benefited an elite Old Christian few (221-225).

Whatever their personal economic and political motivations, the rebels drew on a combination of anti-Jewish tropes and tactics, suspicion toward neophytes in general, and ideas about the genealogical transmission of tendencies and behaviors (Vidal Doval, 2013: 232) to lump all *conversos* into one recognizable group and tie them to the royal favorite who was viewed with extreme suspicion and animosity by many of the king's subjects (Fernández Gallardo, 2018: 560). Their efforts would have far-reaching effects. By linking the *conversos* to their Jewish contemporaries and ancestors genealogically and theologically (Tritle, 2015) and defending their actions with arguments from canon law (Vidal Doval, 2020), the Toledan rebels turned *converso* status into a legal category that could be used to exclude all *conversos* "past, present, and future" (Sarmiento, 2012a: 30) from full citizenship (Vidal Doval, 2013: 323-233). The "Sentencia" that they produced provided scaffolding for the development of purity of blood doctrine (*ibid.*), though that doctrine would be fiercely resisted.

On the *pro-converso* side, Fernán Díaz de Toledo, the chief royal secretary or *Relator*, circulated his "Instruction" for Bishop Lope de Barrientos shortly after the beginning of the Toledo uprising; the bishop responded with his "Contra algunos çicañadores de la nación de los convertidos del pueblo de Israel" sometime between March and May. Both of these texts were written in Castilian. Meanwhile, bishop of Burgos Alfonso de Cartagena and cardinal at the papal curia Juan de Torquemada were composing their lengthier Latin treatises, which were published in 1450. The

bachelor Marcos García de Mora's *anti-converso* "Apelación e Suplicación", which Cartagena directly addresses, probably appeared in November of 1449.<sup>6</sup> Other texts of note for this particular *converso* debate include the anonymous *anti-converso* "Carta de privilegio del rey Juan II a un hijodalgo" (ca. Nov. 1449) and Barrientos' "Respuesta a una proposición", published in Latin and translated into Castilian by an anonymous contemporary in 1449 or 1450.

### 3. ANTI-CONVERSO ARGUMENTS

The section that follows does not aim to present an exhaustive study of the arguments for *converso* exclusion, which have been analyzed in works already cited. Instead, this study will focus on how these texts employ terms and concepts selected to help us glimpse the way the logic of exclusion developed; these terms and concepts include blood and flesh, purity and impurity, honor and lineage. Ultimately I devote less space to the *anti-converso* arguments in part because of the sheer difference in the volume of ink they used in comparison to the *pro-converso* texts on the whole. More importantly, this asymmetrical amount of attention underscores my argument about the significance of the absence of the language of flesh, of the clear attachment of blood to lineage, and of reference to the Christian sacraments in the cluster of *anti-converso* texts that were written by or in support of the Sarmiento regime.

In these texts, blood is associated not with the sacraments but with honor. Like honor, blood is vulnerable and must be protected and avenged. It appears most often in the context of violence and sacrifice as framed by the shed blood of Christ.<sup>7</sup> The "Suplicación y requerimiento" claims that because the king allowed his favorite, Álvaro de Luna, free rein, "the memory of the cross and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ is forgotten, and many heresies and infidelities have arisen" in the kingdoms of Juan II (Sarmiento, 2012b: 5). Christ's shed blood also appears as an object of devotion, albeit again in the context of that which is forgotten. In the "Apelación e Suplicación", García de Mora reproaches the pope for forgetting this devotion, asking, "who cooled and chilled your accustomed and ancient devotion... for the spilling of the blood of Jesus Christ?" (García de Mora, 2012: 228).

Christ's spilled blood accuses its spillers and demands vengeance. In his own act of faulty memory, García de Mora forgets that Roman officials and soldiers, rather than Jews, performed the crucifixion; he attributes the Roman sack of Jerusalem in

<sup>6</sup> This document is also known as the "Memorial contra los conversos" published by Eloy Benito Ruano in 1957. All citations come from the more recent edition (García de Mora, 2012). All English translations of Latin and Castilian Spanish texts are my own. A full English translation of the "Apelación" will appear as an appendix to Cartagena (forthcoming) mentioned below.

<sup>7</sup> Many of the meanings of blood discussed here confirm Caroline Walker Bynum's analysis of blood in late medieval Christian Europe. Without noting every parallel, I refer the reader to her important work (Bynum, 2007).



70 CE to vengeance for Christ's death, calling Roman emperor Titus the "avenger of the blood of Jesus Christ" (García de Mora, 2012: 218). Blood links Christ with his followers, who suffer at the hands of the same enemies. In these mid-to late-fifteenth century texts, those enemies include Muslims along with Jews, even if the "Jews" are now masquerading as Christians. In the "Suplicación" Christian blood, along with Christian property, is victimized by "avenging Moors" (Sarmiento, 2012b: 7), while the "Apelación" claims that *conversos* "swallo[w] the blood and sweat of the poor Christian race (*género*)" (García de Mora, 2012: 203). The "Sentencia," as mentioned above, only uses blood to describe the violence of the *conversos* against Old Christians.

Just as Christ's sacrifice and blood must be remembered for the sake of the kingdom's spiritual protection, so the blood sacrifice of those who fought to secure and protect the land must be remembered to ensure the kingdom's economic vitality and the physical health of its Christian citizens. The "Suplicación" contends that don Álvaro's quest for power and wealth has led him to revoke the rights and privileges of "the cities and towns and villages of your kingdoms, and their grandees, with whose blood of their predecessors the kings of glorious memory, your progenitors, won what your grace has allowed and does allow to be lost because of the said don Álvaro de Luna" (Sarmiento, 2012b: 4). In this way the document links the king's progenitors with the predecessors of the high nobility through the shed blood of those noble predecessors who died in the king's service. In the Toledan rebels' view, the blood sacrifice of the ancestors should continue to link the progeny of king and nobles, but the king has severed the link by dishonoring the sacrifice.

All of these examples involve blood that is shed, the invisible internal made externally visible. Shed blood symbolizes Christ's salvific sacrifice and serves as an object of proper Christian devotion; it joins Christians to one another and to Christ and against Jews and Muslims and their baptized counterparts. Shed blood also symbolizes violence and death more generally and serves as a metaphor for the bond of alliance between king and nobility. In these symbols blood is spilled and remembered (or forgotten). Blood's spilling symbolizes performative sacrifice, voluntary in the case of Christ and the nobles who died defending the homeland, and involuntary in the case of victimized Christians. The spilling —when properly remembered— creates and sustains an exclusive bond of alliance or community. Anidjar cites Caroline Walker Bynum's observation that late medieval Christians "equated their own blood with Christ's" (Anidjar, 2014: 55; Bynum, 2007: 244). However, Bynum's statement refers specifically to those "like the cryptoflagellants of Thuringia", extremists deemed heretical by church officials. She explains that "what the authorities feared was the idea that blood was a more immediate means of access to salvation than any sacrament of the church" (Bynum, 2007: 35). It is significant that the *anti-converso* texts do not use sacramental language but do find

meaning by identifying the “sacrificial” blood of Old Christians with the sacrificial blood of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Only one reference to blood in these *anti-converso* texts evokes *limpieza de sangre* ideology in which blood, not spilled externally but transmitted internally, indicates physical genealogy. That reference appears in the anonymous “Carta de privilegio” which satirizes royal certificates of nobility.<sup>9</sup> In this text the fictive king Juan authorizes another man named Juan, of Old Christian lineage, to be a *marrano* (a derogatory alternative to *converso*) and act in all the ways that *marranos* supposedly acted. Among the various “privileges” that the king authorizes are the killing and intimidating of Old Christians by medical professionals (apothecaries, physicians, surgeons). Having killed off their Old Christian male patients, the *marranos* can marry the patients’ widows and swallow up their property and estates. Marrying Old Christian widows allows the said *marranos* to assume the offices that the dead husbands have left vacant as well as “to dirty and stain the clean blood” (“Carta de privilegio”: 86). This passage from the “Carta de Privilegio” combines several *anti-Jewish* themes, including allegations of material greed, lechery, and violent *anti-Christian* animosity. The passage attaches these themes to the fear of miscegenation not only with Jews but also with their *converso* relatives and descendants, presenting an early formulation of the concept of “purity of blood” that we recognize. This is the only such passage in this cluster of mid-fifteenth-century *anti-converso* texts.

Two other references to blood in the “Apelación” offer additional, if possibly idiosyncratic, examples of the uses and meanings of blood in this debate. At first glance, García de Mora’s statement that “by reason of blood there is no nobility before God” appears to support Christian doctrine regarding the spiritual equality of all Christians regardless of earthly social status. However, his explanation indicates a very different rationale, one that suggests a literal, material conception of blood. “[I]f a king is sick with an abscess,” he explains, “and a plebeian is healthy and well-regulated, and they bleed both of them[,] better blood will go out of the plebeian than from the king” (García de Mora, 2012: 235). Here “noble blood” refers to the substance that flows through the veins of a noble person, rather than to their lineage or kin. A sick person, noble or otherwise, will have blood of a lesser quality

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<sup>8</sup> Claude Stuczynski assesses the situation thus: “Toledo’s rebels, who contested both the sacred and the profane aspects of the mystical body promoted by the Christian Church and the Castilian Monarchy, were ecclesiastically schismatic, theologically heretical, and politically seditious” (Stuczynski, 2020: 17). Likewise, Vidal Doval notes that the rebels contravened royal authority, legal precedent, and ecclesiastical doctrine (Vidal Doval, 2013: 221).

<sup>9</sup> Concepts of nobility, noble blood, and their relationship to “purity of blood” ideology have been extensively studied and debated and are certainly relevant to the material at hand. Hering Torres, Martínez, and Nirenberg (2012) suggest that the idea of noble blood was a late medieval and early modern “pan-European” phenomenon that “early on” in Iberia became linked to racial “purity of blood” (2).



than that of a healthy person regardless of social status. García de Mora may be engaging in some class polemics with this example as well, given ongoing coetaneous debates about the nature of nobility (as witness the "Carta de privilegio"). As I will discuss below, his opponents who defend the *conversos* accuse him and his allies of class envy and mock their lower-class ancestry.

A final reference to blood in the "Apelacçión" involves criticism of the king. The author argues that Juan II has forfeited his own judgment and instead completely obeys "the said tyrant" Álvaro de Luna, the king "having no discernment nor discretion between leper and leper, blood and blood" (García de Mora, 2012: 207).<sup>10</sup> García de Mora might only have intended to emphasize the king's inability to make important judgments. However, the common medieval association of leprosy with heresy, and both with Jews and Muslims, might also inform this use of the biblical passage (Nirenberg, 1996; Moore, 2007). 'Blood' may refer to people the author regards as heretics whose blood links them, whether by descent or creed or both, to other so-called heretics, including judaizing *conversos*. If so, his interpretation of Deuteronomy (17: 8) reveals an inchoate sense of the incorporation of belief (or heresy) with lineage and especially with Jewish lineage, carried by blood.

In these *anti-converso* texts, the language of blood coexists with the language of kinship and purity but does not define them. Whereas Anidjar assigns blame for the inquisitional turn to blood solely to the church,<sup>11</sup> there were other cultural forces at play in Spain and Europe more broadly. David Nirenberg (2014), for example, has highlighted the shift to "genealogical mentalities" among late medieval Spanish Old Christians, New Christians, and Jews (143-168),<sup>12</sup> while Simon Teuscher's study of late medieval European family tree diagrams shows a shift toward thinking about kinship in terms of lineage and descent. While Teuscher (2013) cites Anita Guerreau-Jalabert's (2013) insights regarding the eucharist's higher valorization of blood as the more spiritual part of the body, and Bynum's study of Christian gravitation toward blood as the holy matter in which God could be present even when absent, Teuscher understands these eucharistic concepts as providing tools to reflect a higher valorization of kinship than had existed previously (Teuscher, 2013: 98). He explains that "[w]e can associate the metaphors of flesh and of the unification of

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Deut. 17:8: If you perceive that there be among you a hard and doubtful matter in judgment between blood and blood, cause and cause, leprosy and leprosy; and you see that the words of the judges within your gates do vary; arise, and go up to the place, which the Lord your God shall choose.

<sup>11</sup> "But the Spanish people did not invent the association of blood and lineage, nor did they invent the notion of pure blood as a source of worth and glorious lineage. In the passion for blood they shared with the whole of Western Christendom, the people did not invent religion and race, religion as race. Nor did the aristocracy. Nor, finally, did Spain. The church — the *corpus mysticum* of the church, heads, hands, and feet, head over heels in its passion for blood— did" (Anidjar, 2014: 78).

<sup>12</sup> Granted, this shift arose in part as a response to the mass conversions that resulted from anti-Jewish pogroms spread by a subset of Christians, but there were other factors at play as well (Nirenberg, 2014: 143-168).

flesh through sex and marriage with the older system and its stress on marriages as central hitches in an extended network of kin related by a variety of different dyadic relationships. Metaphors of blood, in contrast, are adjusted to conceptions of kinship that attached greater importance to lineage and descent" (100). The work of Teuscher and Guerreau-Jalabert suggests a process whereby a growing secular interest in descent found in blood a powerful symbol that drew strength from, but was not caused by, its theological significance.<sup>13</sup>

With respect to kinship, terms for descent abound: *desçender de* (to descend from) and *desçendientes de* (descendants of), *linaje* (lineage), *línea* (line), *los proçedientes de* (those proceeding from), *generación* (generation), *casa de* (house of), *fijos de* (sons of), *stirpe* (stock), and *ralea* (breed) all appear with some frequency. Notably, the only mention of kinship with Jesus appears embedded in the "Sentencia's" list of the *conversos*' alleged errors in faith: they are accused of claiming that "our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ is a man of their lineage, whom the Christians adore as God" (Sarmiento, 2012a: 24).

Additional terms for group identity that appear include *nación* (nation), *gente(s)* [people(s)], *pueblo(s)* [people(s)], and *género*.<sup>14</sup> Social concepts of class and citizenship are also prevalent. The "Suplicación" complains that don Álvaro has been waging war on the king's "natural citizens" (*naturales*) (Sarmiento, 2012b: 3), and the "Sentencia" writes of the crimes committed by its "enemy residents" (*vecinos enemigos*) (Sarmiento, 2012a: 23). The "Apelación" uses various terms for residency or citizenship interchangeably (*naturales*, *cibdadanos*, *vecinos*), stressing the relationship based on mutual obligation between king and citizens and claiming noble status for all residents (*vecinos*) of "the very noble and very loyal and holy city of Toledo" (García de Mora, 2012: 202). The "Apelación" never uses any of these terms of citizenship for *conversos*, not even qualified by an "enemy" adjective as in the "Sentencia", except to say that the *converso* Relator "should not be called a resident of [the city of Toledo] to its benefit, rather to its harm" (García de Mora, 2012: 236).

Faith, (im)morality, and (un)cleanness also define group identity, intertwining with and reinforcing the categories of class and nobility without reference to blood. García de Mora explains that the Relator is naked of all three forms of nobility; of civil nobility because "it is notorious that he is a Jew and of the most vile and dirty Jews of Alcalá de Henares", and of natural nobility because "he has the expression

<sup>13</sup> Stuczynski offers a similar analysis of a related theological concept, the mystical body. He explains that the concept became increasingly secularized from the thirteenth century onward such that it could be applied to a range of juridical bodies including the emerging early modern state (Stuczynski, 2020: 120).

<sup>14</sup> This term indicates something of species, type, or race, as in *género humano*. García de Mora's "Apelación" adds the modifier "Christian" (*género humano e cristiano*) (200, cf. 211). The "Apelación" also uses *género* with *cristiano* alone (203) and with *judaico* (206) or to describe the peculiar "fourth *género*" of baptized Jews (200).

(*gesto*) of a base Jew" in contrast to the bachelor who has the expression of a "Christian and Old Christian, clean (*limpio*)". The Relator is naked of theological nobility because he is "a traitor to his land and king... having evil customs, lecherous, drunkard, evil, villain", whereas the bachelor claims for himself the opposite qualities, attesting that he is "loyal to [his] king and to [his] land and to [his] friends, defender of the poor and widows and orphans and of [his] land" and thus "clothed in the honor of the Christian faith" (García de Mora, 2012: 235-237).

Both the "Sentencia" (Sarmiento, 2012a: 22, 24, 29, 30) and the "Carta de privilegio" (85) speak of "old clean Christians" (*cristianos viejos lindos*).<sup>15</sup> We have already seen the "Carta de privilegio's" reference to the "sangre limpia" of Old Christians that "all those of the generation of marranos try to dirty and stain" ("Carta de privilegio": 86). To amass all the references to the immoral behavior of Jews and *conversos* that appear in these *anti-converso* texts would be redundant. For now let it suffice to note how the category of (im)morality swirls around with the categories of (un)faith, (un)cleanness, class, and lineage as viable means for defining people, grouping them and separating them according to shifting definitions and boundaries. Let us also note the unsystematic and non-sacramental use of 'blood' in these *anti-converso* texts; only one passage presents a recognizable notion of *limpieza de sangre*, although we know that eventually blood would—pardon the pun—coagulate all these categories and means for classification in a such a way that they could be imagined to be transmitted together physically and genealogically across generations.

While there is some language of blood, plenty of language of descent and of purity in these *anti-converso* texts, there is no sacramental language or any reference to the flesh of Jesus, the other eucharistic element. 'Flesh' does not appear in the "Suplicación", the "Sentencia", the "Apelación", or the "Carta de privilegio". Whereas their opponents avoid all mention of 'flesh', the term appears with frequency in the *pro-converso* texts, calling to mind Carter's insight that modern Western racial reasoning occurred once 'Christ' had been severed from the covenantal Jewish flesh of Jesus. While Carter does not use the language of sacrament, my reading of the *pro-converso* texts in question suggests that where Carter speaks of "covenantal flesh", we could also speak of "sacramental flesh", since it is through the sacraments that Christians enter the divine covenant.

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<sup>15</sup> Hering Torres (2012) observes that *lindo* relates philologically to *limpio* (clean, clear, pure) and probably became equated with 'limpieza' in the last third of the fifteenth century, noting that "purity of blood was only an incipient juridical concept at this time" (16). He also notes the relevance of concepts of hereditary contagion and the way 'race' (*raza*) became conjoined to 'defect' on the one hand and to 'lineage' on the other in the second half of the fifteenth century, the two hands becoming joined by the mid-sixteenth century (17-18).

#### 4. PRO-CONVERSO ARGUMENTS I: RELATOR DÍAZ DE TOLEDO AND LOPE DE BARRIENTOS

The texts of the chief royal secretary, or Relator, Fernán Díaz de Toledo, and Bishop of Cuenca and royal advisor Lope de Barrientos show that the concept of lineage itself predominates ‘flesh’ and ‘blood’, all of which appear within the sacramental framework of baptism. In Díaz de Toledo’s “Instrucción” to Barrientos, ‘lineage’ (*linaje/linage*) and other terms for kinship (house, estate, descent) dominate notions of human relatedness. Of the three times that ‘flesh’ appears, it modifies ‘lineage’ and refers to Christ and once also to Jesus’ mother, the apostles, martyrs, and other saints “also of his lineage”, as in “Jesus Christ is our head and came from that lineage with respect to the flesh” (Díaz de Toledo, 2012: 107). ‘Blood’ appears only once in the text and does so to specify the “royal blood” of the noble lineages whose members’ ancestors included both Jews and gentiles (Díaz de Toledo, 2012:116). In that case the modern editors note that two of the manuscripts actually replace ‘blood’ with ‘lineage’, suggesting that while the concept of lineage dominated the Relator’s thinking in his defense of the *conversos*, the element of blood was only one, albeit powerful and compelling, way to imagine lineage.

In the Relator’s text, blood does not even appear with respect to discussions of the sacraments or in the context of the violent shedding of blood. Many more times, ‘lineage’ appears on its own or with other terms such as ‘estate’ (*solar*), ‘house’, ‘family’, or as a synonym of those latter terms. Evoking the “Sentencia’s” accusation cited above while affirming the *conversos*’ orthodox Christian faith, the Relator refers to “the nation of the lineage of our savior Jesus Christ” (Díaz de Toledo 2012: 95; cf. 98). Further, for the Relator lineages, like noble houses and families, can be “mixed”, but he never indicates the mixing of blood. Thus he argues that all the noble houses of Castile can claim descent “from the Israelite lineage” whether recently or going back to the Jewish conversions of the Visigothic era (116). Reflecting a growing late-medieval development in the understanding of family trees in terms of kin groups defined by relationships of descent rather than as explorations of complex lateral relationships (Teuscher, 2013: 92-93), the Relator also speaks of ‘sides’ and ‘parts’, as in the mother’s side or father’s part (Díaz de Toledo 2012: 114-115), but not in terms of ‘blood’.

In the two Latin texts by Barrientos, then magnified in the coetaneous anonymous Castilian translation of the “Respuesta a una proposición”, ‘lineage’ sets the conditions of possible meaning for the elements of flesh and blood and appears more generally as a means of categorization. For example, the Latin text of the “Respuesta” says that the two thieves crucified with Jesus were “of the same lineage” (*ambos eiusdem generis erant*) because both were Jews, and that they received the same punishment of crucifixion (*ambo eiusdem poenae particeps*) (Barrientos, 2012b: 156) because they had committed the same crime. The Castilian translation uses the term ‘linaje’ to refer both to the thieves’ Jewish identity as noted in the Latin but additionally to the nature of their crime, saying that the thieves received the same “lineage of punishment”

(*eran penados por un linage de pena*), adding a word for 'type' where the Latin text had none (Barrientos, 2012b: 180). This version of the text also writes of "lineages of death" and "lineages of torments", using 'linage' to translate the Latin *gens, generis* (Barrientos, 2012b: 159, 184). Likewise, where the Latin texts cite the Vulgate version of Acts 10:35 affirming that God accepts all those who fear him and work justice, the Castilian translator renders "in every nation" (*in omne gente*) as "in all the lineages of the nations" (*en todos los linages de las gentes*) (Barrientos, 2012b: 155, 179).

Of all the authors under consideration here, *pro-converso* and *anti-converso*, Barrientos uses blood as lineage most frequently. He denounces the bachelor as "of low pastoral blood" (Barrientos, 2012a: 125), writes of "other lords similar in blood as in dignities" (Barrientos, 2012a: 128) and sympathizes that his addressee of mixed descent "feel[s] within [him]self both those bloods and generations" (Barrientos, 2012a: 141). His references to Christ's "lineage and blood" (Barrientos, 2012a: 133) and the "divine blood" of "our mother Holy Mary, the holy Humanity and her son, apostles, saints" (Barrientos, 2012a: 140) must be considered in view of a concern with social class distinctions that appears in the Relator's text as well. The Relator's insistence on the diffusion of those of "Israelite lineage" among all the noble houses including the royal one complements his barb against García de Mora for his "peasant lineage", because of which Marcos would be better off "plowing and digging as his father and grandparents did, and his brothers and relatives still do today" (Díaz de Toledo 2012: 116-117). Barrientos picks up this thread but includes Marcos's allies in the insult and alters slightly the use of the term 'lineage', replacing the "brothers and relatives" (*hermanos y parientes*) in the Relator's text with 'lineages' in the plural, writing of "father, grandfathers, and lineages" (Barrientos 2012a: 140).

Claude Stuczynski's work on the mystical body metaphor shows how *pro-converso* writers drew on the Apostle Paul's image to balance the theological claim that baptism made all Christians equal before God with social-political defenses of social hierarchies (Stuczynski, 2014, 2020). Thus along with these insults of the bachelor's lower-class ancestry, both the Relator and Barrientos affirm the efficacy of baptism, "which makes the one baptized a new man and washes him and removes every penalty and guilt and sin and effect of sin," leaving "stain or defect", while to declare otherwise "would be notorious heresy" (Díaz de Toledo 2012: 99). Likewise, Barrientos cites the recent Council of Basel's declaration that "it is much more worthy to be regenerated in the spirit than to be born in the flesh" (Barrientos, 2012b:164, 190). He refers to the other sacraments as well when he explains the importance of the pillars of the Church "who were of that lineage", in whose deeds and writings "we are baptized, we are married, and even commended... to eternal life... Finally, in our birth, marriage and prayer and life and death we are always with them and we never part from them, if we want to remain Christians" (Barrientos, 2012a: 132). All of Christian life, Barrientos affirms, is ordered and maintained and given meaning only through the sacraments.

## 5. *PRO-CONVERSO* ARGUMENTS II: FLESH AND BLOOD IN CARTAGENA

While Anidjar (2014) concedes the importance of flesh in Cartagena's thought, he argues that already the bishop has "long surrendered to the notion that lineage is neither flesh nor bones but blood" (73). Rather, I argue that placing Cartagena's uses of 'flesh', 'blood', and other relevant terms within the context of this debate shows that lineage itself has become a central concern onto which Cartagena and his allies are attaching different elements, metaphors, and qualities, searching for the ones with the staying power to support a more inclusive sacramental and covenantal understanding of the place of descendants of Jews within their church and country.

Cartagena's use of 'flesh' is firmly grounded in biblical usage, especially that of Paul.<sup>16</sup> While he quotes some Old Testament passages that associate flesh with the human body and human health and life,<sup>17</sup> and the circumcised flesh of the foreskin that symbolizes the divine covenant,<sup>18</sup> Paul's various uses of flesh in the New Testament provide the foundation on which Cartagena constructs a complex defense of the theological and civic status of the *conversos*. Romans (9-11) plays a central role in Cartagena's ecclesiology and political theology. There Paul stresses his kinship "according to the flesh (*secundum carnem*)" with the Israelites, his brethren (Rom. 9:3-4, quoted in *Def.* II.1.5), wishing he could "provoke to emulation them who are [his] flesh" (Rom. 11:14, quoted in *Def.* II.1.4). Paul claims ownership by the Israelites of the patriarchs (*quorum patres*) and association of the Israelites with Christ (*ex quibus Christus*) all according to the flesh (*secundum carnem*) (Rom. 9:5, quoted in *Def.* II.1.5).

The idea of kinship "according to the flesh" appears throughout the *Defensorium* and provides the foundation for the treatise's argument. In the prologue, Cartagena explains the grave implications — "disturbance of the peace or dissolution of church discipline" — of the Toledan rebels' actions, given that they "would distinguish some from others according to the birth of the flesh, trying to separate those who derive [their] origin from the Israelite people and those who derive [their] origin, according to the flesh, from illustrious gentility" (*Def.*: prologue). Already, however, we can discern some differences in nuance between Paul's notion of shared substance with brethren, kinsmen, fathers, and Christ "according to the flesh", and the prologue's stress on birth and origins, a sign of the fifteenth-century concern with lineage which was not present in the first-century context.

In the *Defensorium*, biblical 'flesh' often appears with 'blood' to symbolize humanity. Two of these passages specifically refer to Christ's humanity, as when Jesus praises Simon (who would become Peter) for recognizing Jesus' divinity under

<sup>16</sup> Citations of Cartagena's *Defensorium* are given according to section (part, theorem, chapter for part II or part, chapter for parts I and III). Translations are my own and will appear in Cartagena (forthcoming). P. Manuel Alonso published an earlier edition (Cartagena, 1943).

<sup>17</sup> See Gen. 2:21/*Def.* I.1; 2 Kings 5:10/*Def.* II.2.3; Job 2:4-5/*Def.* II.4.30.

<sup>18</sup> Gen. 17:10-11/*Def.* I.2.



the "flesh and blood" of his humanity, quoting Matthew 16:16-17 (II.1.1).<sup>19</sup> Flesh and blood also appear in Cartagena's reference to the Last Supper, when Jesus affirms that "he that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:57, quoted in *Def.* II.4.26). Anidjar (2014: 51) has noted an inchoate use of "flesh and blood" to symbolize the human being reflected in the New Testament;<sup>20</sup> the use of it here in the context of the establishment of the eucharist supports his claim that "the eucharistic matrix" informs the development of notions of communities of blood. However, whereas Juan de Torquemada gives a fascinatingly literal reading of this passage which I will return to shortly, Cartagena's eucharistic use of flesh and blood remains symbolic. Participation in the eucharist incorporates Christians into the mystical body of Christ, in which their ethnic or geographic origin becomes irrelevant and all that matters is one's correct belief or lack thereof, that is, one's spiritual status as opposed to one's physical origins, or one's flesh.

Flesh and blood appear together within one other biblical passage cited in the *Defensorium*. This instance happens shortly before the Last Supper reference, when Cartagena highlights the distinction between physical and spiritual or mental affiliation and birth. He quotes from John's gospel, "[Christ] gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13, quoted in *Def.* II.4.26). In this case, blood serves as a synecdoche for physical human birth, while flesh stands in for human passions and appetites of the will; both symbolize humanity and human frailty in contrast to divinity. In other cases flesh and blood work together with slightly different meanings. Cartagena uses both 'flesh' and 'blood' to connect contemporary *conversos* to biblical Israelites and pillars of the Church. In a single passage, for example, he refers to "the pillars of faith, the holy apostles, and after them the disciples of our Redeemer, and indeed many others who descending from Israelite blood, have guided the church of God" and the "many [within the regular cloisters] who, descending from this people according to the origin of the flesh, were not a little beneficial in the Catholic Church and continue to be beneficial by word and example" (II.4.29).

With respect to Christ's humanity, Cartagena most often refers to flesh as when he asks, "what other prophet had arisen from his nation (*gente*) and from his brethren, who would be heard as Moses, if not Christ who assumed humanity from the nation (*gente*) of Israelites who were his brethren according to the flesh?" (II.1.1) He

<sup>19</sup> The biblical text uses "flesh and blood" as a synecdoche for human being to show that Peter received insight into Jesus' divinity from God and not from any human knowledge. In a debate over the nature of the flesh and blood of *conversos* and their kinship with Jesus, Cartagena here offers a reading of the relationship between humanity and divinity. Humanity, "flesh and blood", encloses and hides divinity in the person of Christ.

<sup>20</sup> Anidjar states there that this usage only appears in Paul's letters, but in addition to Matt. 16:16-17 quoted in the text above, see also Heb. 2:14 along with the Apocrypha book of Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira) 14:18 and 17:31.

also claims that attacks on the *conversos* “descending through the propagation of the flesh” from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob insult those venerable patriarchs themselves (III.10). Continuing, though, he asks, “But why am I speaking of those patriarchs, when he insults our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the lord and prince of the patriarchs, who tries to taunt with rash daring that blood from which he deemed it worthy to descend according to the flesh?” (III.10.) In this passage blood appears to work as the substance of descent which can be dishonored, while flesh serves as the symbol of humanity and human kinship that is transmitted by blood.

Flesh and blood work together in a similar way when Cartagena discusses Christ’s physical generation. He emphasizes that Christ took up his humanity “chiefly” from the flesh of the Israelites (*Def.*: II.3.1). Nevertheless, so that “in his supposite and indivisible [nature] [Christ] might make all persons one”, the bishop points to two women in Christ’s genealogy: “[I]n his generation Rahab and Ruth, who were from gentility, occasioned the mixture of blood” (II.3.1). Further highlighting the cooperation of blood and flesh, he stresses that in the “wondrous union” of Christ’s supposite nature “no gentile men gave a mixture of blood for the propagation of the flesh...although there were some women among his ancestors” (II.3.2). These examples show how Cartagena understands blood and flesh to work together as material elements comprising the human being. The terms are neither synonymous nor precisely interchangeable; he never says that one descends from flesh according to blood. He does, however, speak of both “the propagation of blood” (II.4.20) and “the propagation of flesh” (II.1.5), as well as “descending from” flesh (II.4.31) and “descending from” blood (III.9), whether Israelite or gentile.<sup>21</sup> These parallel uses of ‘flesh’ and ‘blood’ show that lineage, as well as honor, are central concerns whose relationship to those elements and to purity and faith are under negotiation.

As the editors of the collection of essays exploring the relationship between *Blood and Kinship* from European antiquity into the present argue, blood acquired meanings of kinship later than flesh (Johnson *et al.*, 2013: 5, 11). The Hebrew scriptures do not conceive of blood as the substance of kinship (Anidjar, 2014: 46); the biblical passages that Cartagena cites which include ‘blood’ understand blood as symbolic of life and its ending. He cites Solomon’s enumeration of the “six things there are which the Lord hates”, which include “hands that shed innocent blood” (Prov. 6:16, 17; *Def.* III.1). The sins of King Manasseh of Judah included “the innocent blood that he shed, filling Jerusalem with innocent blood” (2 Kings 24:3-4; *Def.* III.5).<sup>22</sup> While the New Testament speaks little of blood with respect

<sup>21</sup> “For those things written in the beginning of your decree are sufficient that are most correctly about Judaizers, whether they descend from Israelite or from gentile flesh” (*Def.* II.4.31); “Some of these [heretics] have descended from Israelite, others from gentile blood over the passage of time” (*Def.* III.9).

<sup>22</sup> Note that both biblical examples subordinate the sin of shedding innocent blood to that of sowing discord or schism among brethren.

to the crucifixion when compared to the intense interest in blood to be found in much late medieval European piety, Cartagena does quote a key passage that links Christ's death to the previous examples of shedding innocent blood. He cites the acceptance of collective guilt on the part of the Jews when they cry out in Matthew, "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. 27:25, quoted in *Def.* II.4.5). In these three biblical passages blood stands for wrongful death caused by sinful people. It also stands for the innocence of the lives of those killed and the guilt of those responsible. In the case of the Matthew passage, the guilt for shedding the innocent blood of Christ extends to the perpetrators' children. In opposition to purity of blood ideology, however, Cartagena insists that the guilt that transmits to the "children" is not transmitted through physical procreation. Rather, it is a matter of the will; the guilt inheres in all who assent to that guilt by resisting the grace of baptism regardless of their descent. Moving beyond biblical references to blood and flesh allows Cartagena more flexibility with the terms. Both 'flesh' and 'blood' connect fifteenth-century Jews and *conversos* to the biblical Israelites through kinship, and both also inform our understanding of Christ's humanity. Importantly in view of the emphasis on purity or cleanness of blood that would crystallize in the coming century, in the *Defensorium* both flesh and blood can bear purity or impurity. However, a careful analysis yields key differences that can begin to help us understand the complexities and potentialities of the concepts within Cartagena's thought.

In terms of descent, while Cartagena does write of "descent from" Israelite or gentile flesh, more often he writes of descent or origins "according to the flesh"<sup>23</sup> suggesting a physical or biological descent that contrasts with other forms of relationship, such as kinship through adoption or affiliation through faith. These more spiritual relationships ultimately bear the most importance for Cartagena; one's faith and moral behavior weigh more heavily than one's biological descent or lineage, especially with respect to salvation. However, his adversaries weaponized the *conversos'* biological kinship with Jews by using it to attach the negative moral and spiritual traits associated with Jews to the *conversos* (Tritle, 2015). To parry such attacks, Cartagena highlights the fact that fleshly kinship with Jews entails kinship with Jesus Christ himself. While no one could claim biological descent from Christ, one could certainly follow Paul to claim more lateral kinship with the Savior "according to the flesh", given that flesh could encompass a broad array of kinship relations beyond direct lines of descent. Stressing the *conversos'* fleshly relationship with Christ, Cartagena declares, "I reckon no one to be so out of his mind as to suppose the savior of Israel, taking up flesh from Israel and dwelling in Israel, should have excluded Israel from the good health of his salvation" (*Def.* II.2.1).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See *Def.* II.4.10; II.1.5.

<sup>24</sup> See also, "Thus the reason for the distinction granted to that people is derived from the flesh of Christ, which was taken up from them" (*Def.* I.4).

Teuscher (2013) has observed that medieval kinship metaphors understand flesh as a substance either shared or not shared. Blood, by contrast, is a substance that can be imagined as shared to varying degrees, divided into larger and smaller portions, and mixed with other 'bloods' (98-99). Cartagena writes of descending "from whichever part of ancient blood" (II.3.3). He also writes of the mixture of Israelite and gentile blood in Christ's human generation, a mixing that joins descendants of Jews and descendants of gentiles in Christ's incarnation, who are also united in the act of crucifixion and finally in the salvation Christ offers to humanity. Cartagena repeatedly reminds readers that grace from these acts of Christ is mediated through the sacraments.

We have seen the Relator's concern with noble lineages and royal blood.<sup>25</sup> Cartagena builds on this association to argue for many *conversos*' latent nobility which smoldered like a live coal in their breasts, ready to shine anew once the smoke of theological slavery that had blackened it was removed in baptism (*Def.* II.4.20). Blood allows this latent nobility to be made manifest, serving as the substance that transmits the disposition toward virtue from one generation to the next: "For, as Aristotle would have it, among the dispositions toward virtue, none is so derived through the propagation of blood in descendants as the disposition that tends toward courage" (II.4.20). The original passage from Aristotle that Cartagena cites does not use language of the propagation of courage through blood,<sup>26</sup> an indication of how concepts of descent and virtue are coming to be associated with blood during the fifteenth century.

## 6. *PRO-CONVERSO* ARGUMENTS III: PURITY AND SACRAMENT IN CARTAGENA AND TORQUEMADA

Given that the *limpieza de sangre* ideology to come would connect purity and impurity to lineage through blood, we might well ask to what degree such connections appear in these *pro-converso* sources. Purity and impurity, or related notions of cleanness and cleansing, purification, filth, stain, and rust, appear several times in the *Defensorium*. Purity and its related terms are aligned with morality and faith, while impurity and its cognates imply sinfulness and unfaith (*Def.* III.9). Theologically, Cartagena stresses the purity and cleansing that occur through baptism (*Def.* II. theor. 3). Conversely, sinfulness and heresy "stain" one with impurity and filth (*Def.* III.2). In contrast to later *limpieza de sangre* ideology, Cartagena does not suggest that purity or impurity can be inherited, but that each new generation must seek baptism for the cleansing that Christ's sacrifice made sufficient for all people and all sins. 'Blood' appears only twice in the *Defensorium* with reference to

<sup>25</sup> Cartagena affirms this relationship when he bolsters the authority of St. Isidore of Seville by noting his descent "from royal blood" (*Def.* II.4.33).

<sup>26</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III, chap. 8.

(im)purity or (un)cleanness, while 'flesh' appears in such respect once. These small numbers are instructive in themselves, because they demonstrate that the notion of "purity of blood" as we know it was still inchoate at this time. It is worth looking more closely at the way Cartagena does discuss purity along with blood and flesh in order to enhance our understanding of the way at least one influential thinker was grappling with these concepts within the context of efforts to exclude *conversos*.

The first two theorems of the second part of the treatise demonstrate that both the Israelites and the gentiles received salvation "sufficiently" through Jesus Christ. In both examples, we see Cartagena working with the tension between the literal and the symbolic, the material and the spiritual. With respect to the Israelites, he writes:

It is not without cause that whatsoever faithful person can be called an Israelite; indeed they are true Israelites who join the Catholic faith to good and pious characters. Truly, others who have blackened Israelite blood with faithlessness (*infidelitate*) or other depraved acts, while they may descend from Israel, we will not call them true Israelites. The Truth says, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile* [John 1:47]. For in order for Israelite purity to penetrate, it must be removed from guile. Therefore every faithful one can rightly say with the apostle concerning all the faithful, *They are Israelites: so am I. They are the seed of Abraham: so am I* [2 Cor. 11:22], for in the name of Israel every chosen person can be included ... And under the seed of Abraham all the faithful are likewise contained... But not because of this should they who descend from Israelite stock be excluded from this honor, if the mystical sense is joined together with carnal propagation, when they are faithful and they have included with Israelite flesh a Catholic, and indeed an Israelite, mind without guile or the rust of faithlessness. For if such was the purity of Israel, that under this name we include all the faithful, by what manner should that very Israelite flesh, if Israelite purity is present in it, be shut off from Israelite honor?<sup>24</sup> (*Def.* II.1.2)

In this passage, Cartagena posits Israelite purity as the standard against which other purity should be measured, countering his adversaries' claims that purity or cleanness belonged to Old Christians precisely in their not having Jewish ancestry. Of special interest is the notion that "Israelite blood" could be "blackened". The English cognate "to denigrate" captures the metaphorical valence that coexists in the Latin along with the literal concept of coloring something black. Because elsewhere in the treatise Cartagena discusses the "blackening" of reputation, nobility, and "virtues, faith, and fidelity", it follows that we should also understand the blackening of blood metaphorically, as denigration. Indeed, the blood is blackened not with any corporeal miscegenation but with faithlessness. That the faithlessness has appeared in those with "Israelite blood" does not, however, tarnish anyone else's "Israelite blood" unless they share in that faithlessness.<sup>27</sup> Further, anyone can be "the

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<sup>27</sup> See also Barrientos's claim that the *conversos*' opponents "dirty themselves with envy and greed" by trying to injure conversos who are not only "good" but who "proceed from the divine blood"

seed of Abraham” through faith regardless of from which “stock” they descend, an example of the mixing of terms and concepts (‘seed’ and ‘stock’ instead of ‘blood’ and ‘flesh’) along with the mixing of the literal and the symbolic in Cartagena’s treatise. Despite his insistence on the greater weight of faith and the purity of spirit in comparison to the relevance of fleshly descent, Cartagena does not dismiss the material and the literal. He insists, rather, on the “purity” that especially can be “present in” “Israelite flesh”.

The other passage that combines a notion of purity with blood and flesh builds on Augustine’s discussion of baptism:

[A]s the same Augustine says, “if the flesh of Christ, which was without sin, was baptized, in order to be an example for imitation, how much more should the flesh of a corpse be baptized in order to avoid the judgment of damnation?...From this it is concluded that no one, if he has not been born, could be reborn in his parent... [B]y the sacrament of regeneration the children from the remaining antiquity of the parents avoid the damnation of sin transmitted to ancient flesh”. This is Augustine. Therefore everything which the spite of the envious ones may have presumed to produce in daring temerity in detraction of the Israelites or of the Israelite blood<sup>28</sup> of the descendants who live cleanly under the Catholic faith, this same thing ought to be forced to extend onto the ones issuing from gentility, since the purity of baptism is not extended beyond the bounds of the baptized. (*Def.* II.4.12)

Here Christ’s flesh, which was without sin, was baptized as an example for the baptism of the flesh of ordinary human beings (or “corpses”) which contain original sin. We could construe Christ’s flesh as “pure” and that of ordinary human beings as “tainted”, but significantly Cartagena does not use such language. Elsewhere the bishop describes the baptismal water as “reddened” by Christ’s blood (*Def.* II.4.4). Thus human flesh, understood universally, is baptized in Christ’s blood through the water of baptism and cleansed of sin. Clearly Cartagena did not imply that the baptismal water was literally reddened with blood. The reddening and the cleansing are metaphorical. Cartagena critiques the hyper-literal implications of his adversaries’ understanding of baptism when he explains that baptism does not extend “beyond the bounds of the [one] baptized”, or as elsewhere, that it does not penetrate the womb (II.3.5). Thus those who blacken “the Israelite blood of the descendants”

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(Barrientos, 2012a: 140). Teuscher (2013) argues that one of blood’s advantages over flesh was its ability to “be thought of as pure or tainted” (100). Cartagena’s description of purity in Israelite flesh contradicts that claim. However, this example may be an exception that proves the rule. While neither flesh nor blood transmits purity for Cartagena, once the concept of purity “in” flesh or blood gained traction, only blood could be imagined to transmit purity or impurity through the generations.

<sup>28</sup> Cartagena seems to be countering claims by adversaries about the impure blood of the conversos. While the only *anti-converso* document in this particular cluster of texts to indicate a knowledge of purity of blood ideology is the “Carta de privilegio”, Cartagena’s approach here might indicate that such ideology was present elsewhere, perhaps made in oral rather than written arguments.



of Jews, living "cleanly under the Catholic faith" sin by not granting the efficacy and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. In baptized flesh, water reddened with Christ's blood, blood flowing in descendants, we slip between metaphor and material.<sup>29</sup> Baptism is a material sacrament that cleanses human beings embodied in materiality. Cartagena urges the recognition of this materiality and the importance of wedding it to moral uprightness and faith without granting that that materiality should carry paramount importance. Further, the purity or blackness of the blood came not from genealogy and lineage but from sin and unbelief and could arise internally or be imposed externally by the defamation of others.

As I have noted, Cartagena does not use either 'blood' or 'flesh' exclusively, or even primarily, in relation to notions of kinship and descent. While he does use both terms to refer to the elements of the eucharist, we might be surprised, given the centrality of the eucharist to much late medieval European piety and Anidjar's "eucharistic matrix", by how little Cartagena explicitly does so, only twice (*Def.* II.4.25, II.4.26)<sup>30</sup> and without extended discussion. Torquemada similarly limits the discussion of either term with respect to the eucharist. His one reference to the flesh and blood of Christ communicated to Christians through the eucharist is, however, important to discuss. He writes, "it cannot be said without insult that the lineage (*genus, generis*) of the Jews is condemned and unbelieving in faith, since the true flesh of Christ was taken up from that lineage (*genus, generis*) and his most precious blood, which is offered in this sacrament for the vital sustenance of our souls, according to John 6[56-57]: For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (*De Torquemada*, 2002: 4.3). Drawing on Carter's insights, if the *anti-conversos* are trying to sever Jesus from his covenantal Jewish flesh by omitting all references to either, Torquemada here grasps that flesh as materially as possible.

With respect to sacramental references to 'flesh' and 'blood', Torquemada, like Cartagena, makes more frequent reference to baptism (*Torquemada*, 2002: 2.6, 14.6, 15.2d-e, 15.12), in which the blood of Christ's sacrifice washes not only the flesh, but more importantly the heart, of the one baptized (*Def.* II.2.3). It may be that baptism as rebirth offered a more compelling answer to the pull of kinship as lineage; baptism produces a new kin group in which participants receive a new name (Christian), a new mother (Church), and new brothers (Christians) (*Def.* II.4.33, 34), whose honor the baptizee was bound to defend.<sup>31</sup> Flesh

<sup>29</sup> Teuscher (2013) explains the need to recognize a medieval system of knowledge different from our modern binary of matter and metaphor, in which "descriptions of natural entities (such as animals, plants, flesh, or, for that matter, blood) were not separated from descriptions of the symbolic meanings attributed to them" (85).

<sup>30</sup> Note that the first example refers to the "body" (*corpus*) rather than the "flesh" (*carnis*) of the Lord.

<sup>31</sup> See also Torquemada, who draws on St. Paul's mystical body language and baptismal formulae, to explain that all who receive baptism are rendered co-heirs with Christ with one father God and one mother Church (*Torquemada*, 2002: 14.4-14.6). Stuczynski suggests that Cartagena stresses baptism

also appears with reference to circumcision, in which the sign of God's covenant with the chosen people resided as a mark on the flesh. Indeed, Cartagena reasons that God allowed only gentile women to join in Christ's human lineage by mixing their blood so that the mark of circumcision on the flesh would continue uninterrupted between Abraham and Christ (*Def.* II.3.2).<sup>32</sup> Torquemada mentions blood only once with respect to the eucharist as discussed, and flesh once with respect to the circumcision of Christ as a mark of his human sonship of Abraham (Torquemada, 2002: 6.5).

While acknowledging the cultural weight of physical or genealogical descent, Cartagena insists on the ultimate precedence of faith and spiritual versus physical inheritance. Stressing that one's spiritual affiliation is more important than physical genealogy, the bishop explains that the legal precedents his adversaries want to use to condemn all *conversos* "are most correctly about Judaizers, whether they descend from Israelite or from gentile flesh" (*Def.* II.4.31). Similarly, he argues that heresy can infect anyone without respect to physical kinship or genealogy. Heretics are found all over the world: "some of these have descended from Israelite, others from gentile blood over the passage of time" (*Def.* III.9). A nuanced look at the language used by both Cartagena and Torquemada shows that they are grappling with concepts of flesh, blood, kinship and faith and the place of lineage with respect to those concepts, working with burgeoning notions of lineage transmitted through a blood which differentiates to construct a community unified sacramentally by Christ's flesh and blood.

All of the *pro-converso* writers insist that faith, moral character, and virtue are what matter, not one's lineage, or one's origins according to the flesh, or from whose blood one descends. In a telling passage, Torquemada adapts the metaphorical blood of a prophetic warning to this concern when he writes, "when one makes such a difference [between converts of the Israelite people and other Christians], one gives honors not to the virtues, to which they are due, but to the origin of the flesh and the succession of the blood, which would be highly dishonorable, according to the words of Habakkuk 2: *Woe to those who build a city with blood!*" (Hab. 2:12, quoted in De Torquemada, 2002: 15.8).

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because of "the immediate consequences of conversion" that it produced (Stuczynski, 2020: 121-122). Meanwhile, Burk (2010) posits that as *limpieza* ideology took hold, a growing mind/body division allowed the body to be seen as an obstacle to conversion and as "the singular, generative source of difference between populations".

<sup>32</sup> Cartagena does not discuss the blood of circumcision, which Biale (2007) has shown played a role in Jewish-Christian polemics over the relative merits of blood and water and of different sacramental bloods. Torquemada might refer to this polemic when he insists that baptism has not lesser but greater efficacy than circumcision, although he too avoids mentioning blood with respect to circumcision (Torquemada, 2002: 95-100).

## 7. CONCLUSION

Let us return to Carter and Anidjar, to flesh and blood. Carter (2008) argues "that modernity's racial imagination has its genesis in the theological problem of Christianity's quest to sever itself from its Jewish roots" (4). He contends that theologically speaking, Jesus as the Christ discloses the transcendence of God and enables human beings to understand all created reality in relationship to God/YHWH (13-14). For Carter, the particularity of Christ's Jewish flesh and of the history of Israel and its relationship to God stand outside the tyranny of anthropological hierarchies (race, gender, etc.). Instead, they orient creation toward the God of Abraham and the covenant that transforms and liberates where the racial imagination reinscribes and enslaves. Perhaps Carter's concept of conversion from covenantal flesh to racial flesh can help us understand what is happening in this *converso* debate.<sup>33</sup>

Turning from flesh to blood, Anidjar (2014) argues that the eucharist, through which medieval Christians became "Jesus' kin", played a foundational role in the notion of a community constituted by blood that could, in certain historical circumstances, become a community of "pure blood" (32). Anidjar makes a convincing case for looking closely and seriously at the "rule of blood" that functions largely invisibly at the intersection of racial and religious imaginations on both sides of modernity and the Atlantic Ocean. However, he overstates the causal role of the eucharist and of "the church" in attaching blood to lineage and the definition of community. Nirenberg's exploration of the development of "genealogical mentalities" and Teuscher's observations about an increased valorization of kinship as descent hint at broader cultural contexts in which "the church" was embedded, an influential but by no means unison voice of power that was acknowledged as well as constantly challenged. The *conversos'* opponents avoided any reference to the sacraments, while resistance to a racialized "purity of blood" ideology on the part of the *conversos'* Christian advocates was made precisely on sacramental grounds. In this reading, Anidjar's moments of Eucharist and Inquisition might helpfully symbolize two complementary potentials of community definition in which the church participates in dynamic cultural processes, while blood symbolizes the rule by which those potentials become realized. At one pole divine blood mediates grace, while at the other it demands protection via exclusion and persecution. In this formulation, *conversos* stand at the crossroads of Eucharist and Inquisition, of sacrament and race.

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<sup>33</sup> If so, then this aligns with the "hermeneutic of the flesh" that I have previously observed working among these *anti-converso* authors who conflate the Pauline metaphors of flesh as immorality and hermeneutical disability with Paul's Jewish "kinsmen according to the flesh". Perhaps this fleshly hermeneutic facilitated the conversion that Carter identifies (Tittle, 2015).

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