**Queer Spanish Catholicism: Miguel de Unamuno, Teresa of Avila, and the contemporary lived experiences of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics in Madrid, Spain.**

A Dissertation Proposal

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Submitted to:

Dr. Miguel De La Torre

Dr. Debora Ortega

Dr. Albert Hernández

Submitted by:

Gregorio (Grego) Peña Camprubí

Joint PhD Program in the Study of Religion

1. **Thesis and Scope**

The proposed dissertation explores the contemporary lived experiences of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics in Madrid, Spain. It includes in-depth studies of an LGBTQ Christian community (CRISMHOM) to examine a distinct ethos in the lived experiences of queer Spanish Catholics.

The description of this distinct queer, Catholic, Spanish ethos will be drawn through the examination of theoretical work and fieldwork. Theoretically, the study will engage two Catholic Spaniards – Miguel de Unamuno and Teresa of Avila, which will offer a philosophical and mystical perspective respectively. The fieldwork will engage different qualitative methods such as participant observation, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews to explore how LGBTQ Spanish Catholics relate to this distinct ethos.

This dissertation will employ Unamuno’s understanding of existentialism as its philosophical framework. Existentialism is a philosophical approach that emphasizes the uniqueness of each human existence in freely making their own self-defining choices. The adoption of existentialism as a key theory of my dissertation’s conceptual framework will shed light on the experiences of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics by centering individuals’ personal experiences as the source of epistemology. The relevance of existentialism in the work relies on the importance of subjectivity. As a key element in Queer Theory, subjectivity allows for a close examination of people’s individual experiences. This dissertation studies the intersections of queerness and religion. These two identities – traditionally regarded as mutually exclusive – coexist in my research subjects. An existentialist approach will allow for the inquiry of how LGBTQ Spanish Catholics make meaning in a world sustained by existing “life-taking” structures in place (e.g., heteropatriarchy and the Roman Catholic Church). Existentialism defends that there are no guidelines for our actions. This is particularly true for LGBTQ Catholics for whom the Roman Catholic Church has never provided a frame for existence. Thus, LGBTQ Catholics are forced to create their own moral codes and values based on their life experiences. In existentialism, the meaning of life depends on one’s choices and decisions. To live authentically is to accept the weight of our own freedom and the consequences of our actions. In the realm of spirituality, a personal understanding of God drawn by personal experiences shapes one’s spirituality and embodied actions. To summarize, an existential approach to examine the lives of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics constitutes a breeding ground for the study of lived religion.

Miguel de Unamuno (1864 – 1936) is an excellent reference to articulate the existentialist framework in this project. He is among the most relevant representative of the Spanish existentialist movement of the 20th century, particularly for religious existentialism. Unamuno was an existentialist who was largely concern with the tensions between reason and vital feeling, head and heart. In his works, he showed a particular interest in the human soul and its longing for immortality. According to Unamuno, faith – not reason – is the only mechanism to satiate this hunger for everlasting life. For him, the tensions between faith and reason resulted into an existential agony. In his book *The Tragic Sense of Life* (2014), Unamuno articulates the concept of “*tener fe*” (to have faith or to be faithful) which becomes a crucial concept in his philosophy. For Unamuno, we choose to believe what we believe, and we hope that what we believe is true. Tener fe is to harbor this hope. Similarly, Unamuno advocates for a concept of God that is relatable to human experiences. He favors the pursue of a *“Dios-biótico”[[1]](#footnote-1)* (biotic God), in contraposition to a *“Dios-idea”.*

For Unamuno, Dios-idea is a construct resulting from Western philosophy – an abstract, ungrasping deity. Unable to satisfy man’s yearning for immortality, Dios-idea is superseded by Dios-biótico. Dios-biótico is the God in whom people believe. The Dios-biótico is a graspable and relatable God, a being that is experienced. In what has been described as a preference to live over thinking (Blanco 1994, 18), Unamuno wonders why “man is said to be a reasoning animal [and] why he has not been defined as an affective or feeling animal” (Unamuno 2014, 26). For Unamuno, Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” only means that he who thinks is a thinker: “this being of the I am, which is deduced from I think, is merely a knowing; this being is knowledge, but not life” (ibid, 48). Unamuno is a vitalist. He thinks that “el hombre se decide, se hace hombre viviendo”[[2]](#footnote-2) (Villalobos de Piccone 1998, 90).

This experientialism *unamuniano* is not just anthropological but transcends to Unamuno’s theology. For Unamuno, as man becomes man by living, so does God: “There is nothing that remains the same for two successive moments of its existence. My idea of God is different each time that I conceive it.” (Unamuno 2014, 86). The non-static nature of Unamuno’s God, as fluid as queerness itself, becomes pivotal in my project. Unamuno’s Dios-biótico opens the door to the examination of the relationships that the participants in my research harbor with the numinous. Dios-biótico allows for an exploration of an all-encompassing spirituality that integrates the lived experiences of multiple identities (i.e., religion, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, etc.).

I also find Unamuno to be a very good conversation partner to contextualize the study of lived religion. Researchers who study lived religion take a close look at how “ordinary people engage, express, create, and otherwise "do" religion and spirituality in their everyday lives.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Rather than attending to how religion is manifested through formal institutional settings, those who study lived religion pay attention to how people use and make religion in their daily lives: at work, at home, with family, friends, etc. Unamuno was an author who was extremely concerned about the quotidian (Unamuno, 2005). Much like those who study lived religion, Unamuno deemed important to pay attention to what people do every day as the breeding ground for an ethos. In his analyses, Unamuno used the term “*intrahistoria española*”[[4]](#footnote-4) as a way to refer to the history created through the banality of everyday life and all interactions that occur beneath the level of recorded history.

Unamuno states that people ought to “buscar lo eterno en el aluvión de lo insignificante”[[5]](#footnote-5) (Unamuno, 2005, 51). The Spanish existentialist seeks to explain a model for history that does not respond to a hierarchy. Through intrahistoria, all people contribute to building a web of history that becomes an eternal tradition (Medina, 2009). Furthermore, with his concept of intrahistoria, Unamuno challenges the Western perceptions of history as a single narrative. The philosopher takes a closer look at “other stories” and allows for a history with pluralist perspectives idem). In my project, intrahistoria española is relevant because it evinces the nuanced vision that Unamuno had when examining the Spanish society of the 20th century. Unamuno’s close look at the stories and narratives that flew under the radar are captured in the essays utilized in this dissertation. That, combined with reading of materials about the study of lived religion, offers a unique perspective in the examination of the lives of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics.

Unamuno is also crucial in my project to explore how ethnic identity (i.e., being Spanish) is connected to the formation of a distinct ethos for LGBTQ Spanish Catholics. In his work, Unamuno acknowledged the importance of, what he calls, the *Spanish spirit*. It is crucial to understand that, while Spain is technically in the continent of Europe, often times is not considered a part of “core Europe”, like countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands. This sentiment of disdain for everything Spanish has a historical foundation that goes as far back as the 11th century. In the *Chanson de Roland*[[6]](#footnote-6), Iberia “was the land of the Saracens, a lusty, black-skinned people that brought the darkness of Africa dangerously close; so too temptations of the soul’s darker side” (Blackmore & Hutcheson 1999, 1). The Umayyad conquest of the Visigoth Kingdom in the 8th century marked the start of the presence and control of the Iberian Peninsula by non-European Muslims until the 15th century. The strong and continuing presence of non-white people and their descendants in the Iberian Peninsula made of Spain a racially and culturally unique territory in contrast to other European nations. Spain’s racial idiosyncrasies within the European context became a target of scientific racism in the 19th century. William Z. Ripley[[7]](#footnote-7) infamously stated that “Africa begins beyond the Pyrenees” (Ripley, 1899, 272), thus evincing his disdain for non-whiteness and the categorization of Spain outside of the boundaries of the Caucasian race. The *Chanson de Roland* and Ripley’s subdivision of geographic races, constitute evidence of European racism and the exclusion of Spain from European whiteness as tainted by an Africanization of its people.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, many Spanish politicians, philosophers, and intellectuals desperately felt the need to be included in the European family. In their minds, Europe – north and continental Europe – represented modernity and progress. Spain, on the other hand, was backwards and outdated. It is in this context that Spain experienced a generalized sense of national and cultural embarrassment. This inferiority complex triggered a desire to become like other European nations. However, and despite its efforts, Spain was never considered an equal at the table of European nations and has been regarded as inferior since. The consequences of this inferiority complex are many. First and foremost, the average Spaniard has internalized a racist and oppressive narrative in which they believe to be inferior to norther European peoples. This generally is expressed in terms of racial, social, cultural, and economic (under)development. Furthermore, this internalized racism and discourse is mimicked by Spaniards against darker, non-Europeans, thus perpetuating racial oppression and white supremacy.

For Unamuno, the Spanish spirit represented a counter-narrative to the pervasive European superiority mentality that dominated Spain in the 20th century. Unamuno not only actively rejected a European colonization of the Spanish consciousness[[8]](#footnote-8) but presented the Spanish spirit as far more exceptional than European hegemonic narratives. Unamuno understood that it was not Spain who should learn from Europe, but Europe from Spain. For Unamuno, one of the most salient characteristics of the Spanish spirit is that it does not reside in philosophy systems – like it is the case with the French and the Germans – but lives “in our life, our action, and our mysticism above all” (Unamuno 2014, 237). Unamuno’s Spanish spirit is embodied in LGBTQ Spanish Catholics. Through my fieldwork, I expect to examine how this ethnic marker manifests in the lives of my participants and their identities as queer Catholics.

As mentioned earlier, Unamuno viewed mysticism as the most salient manifestation of the Spanish spirit. Mysticism is indeed a relevant component in Spanish Christianity and in the spiritualities of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics. Saint Teresa of Avila (1515 – 1582), one of the most important Spanish Catholic mystics of all times, is the best author to contextualize my project. Teresa’s mysticism is relevant in my project because of how disruptive it was for Catholicism in 16th century Spain. Teresa’s life and her spirituality did not conform to the societal structures of early-modern Spain. Teresa’s identities posed a challenge to the religious and political authorities of the time. As a woman, Teresa was not regarded as an equal to men. That is evident in how she positioned herself in the letters to her spiritual director and how him and other religious authorities – all males – relate to Teresa. Second, recent historical accounts have revealed that Teresa’s grandfather was condemned by the Spanish Inquisition for observing *prácticas judaizantes[[9]](#footnote-9)* (Jewish practices).

The conquest of Granada in 1492 by the Catholic Monarchs marked the annexation of the last Muslim stronghold in the Iberian Peninsula. Soon after, the Spanish monarchy issued laws forbidding any religious practice outside of Christianity. Spain became indefatigable in the protection of its kingdoms from the menace of heretics, considered enemies of Spain (Pinto 1983, 106). Through the *estatutos de limpieza de sangre[[10]](#footnote-10)* (statuses of blood purity), any individual who could not proof to be an Old Christian did not have access to governmental role. That applied to any leadership position within the Roman Catholic Church, such as abbots and abbesses. As the descendant of a Jewish convert (a New Christian), Teresa should not have been able to become an abbess, let alone a Carmelite reformer in a country swamped by religious paranoia and Catholic purity.

An aspect of Teresa’s mysticism that I find pivotal in my project is her understanding of gnosis. Gnosis[[11]](#footnote-11) can be defined as a knowledge by personal acquaintance. For Teresa, this gnosis takes place as an *encuentro personal[[12]](#footnote-12)* (personal encounter) with God through lived experience. For Teresa, to experience is to know something in a vital and holistic way. These *encuentros personales* make of experience a lived knowledge. The concept of gnosis is important in my research because it illuminates how LGBTQ Spanish Catholics experience the divine. As it is the case with Teresa, queer Spanish Catholics encounter the divine in the periphery. My participants might experience these *encuentros personales* with God outside the boundaries of heteronormativity, and in a journey of exile from Mother Church. Both Teresa and LGBTQ Spanish Catholics live gnosis on the margins. I find Teresa to be an excellent fit for my research as she embodies a life and mysticism that were subversive to the normative systems of her time. Teresa’s authenticity resonates with the experiences of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics – who as the mystic – can flourish despite, and through, the oppressive structures.

Teresa of Avila and Miguel de Unamuno share some interesting features that are pertinent to my dissertation. First, both authors are certain that God can be “grasped by love”. This lived knowledge of the numinous can only be obtained through personal and loving encounters with God. Unamuno is notoriously known for his version of Christianity as one of fight and agony – what Rivera de Ventosa (1987) calls *divina intranquilidad[[13]](#footnote-13)* (divine restlessness). For Unamuno, a true Christian lives “at the irreconcilable conflict between reason and vital feeling” (Unamuno 2014, 109). This agonizing vision of existence matches Teresa’s who painfully longed for an encounter with God. Witness of this agony is Teresa’s famous poem *Vivo sin vivir en mí* (I live not within myself).

Besides their similarities around gnosis, this project contributes to the discourse by considering Teresa and Unamuno as existentialists– albeit not it the classical sense of the word. This distinctive categorization of both authors steams from two major differences with existentialists of renown. First, existentialism flourished as a cultural and philosophical movement in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s. This makes Teresa anachronistic to this school of thought. Second, Unamuno – but particularly Teresa – do not align with the teleology (or lack of) present in main existentialists, such as Kirkegaard and Sartre[[14]](#footnote-14). Both Teresa and Unamuno display an existentialist vital teleology that directly engages the divine and/or the eternal. For Unamuno, God is the answer to men’s thirst for immortality. Human beings embark on a quest to find God in order to guarantee the survival of their eternal souls. Teresa’s theistic existentialism is different than Unamuno’s. For the Spanish mystic, God Himself is the telos for human existence. Teresa’s spirituality is grounded in a personal connection between humans and God. This genuine relationship takes place through the engagement of the person’s soul with the human and divine natures of Christ. Furthermore, I consider Teresa and Unamuno to be existentialists as they both regard existentialism as the reality of human life. Another distinctive trait of the authors’ existentialism is how solitude and suffering are entangled with the human search for meaning. This quest for meaning does not only engage agony, but also integrates the joy that exists in life and the relationship with the divine.

Teresa and Unamuno are relevant to this project because they both are thinkers of hybridity. The anti-purist nature of their work is a compelling point to contextualize the lives of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics.

1. **Methodology**

* **University of Denver (DU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) information**

Project submitted to the University of Denver IRB on October 5, 2022.

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IRB Package number: 1896427-1

* **Research question and research approach**

The project’s research question examines how LGBTQ Spanish Catholics describe their experiences of ethnicity, religion, spirituality, gender, and sexual identities in relation to a distinct ethos. In the dissertation, phenomenology is an adequate qualitative approach to provide answers to the research question posed above. Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. In other words, phenomenology studies how people experience phenomena. Phenomenological studies describe “the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Cresswell 2013, 76). Intentionality is crucial in phenomenology as it central to the structure of an experience. The directedness of experience towards a thing generates a consciousness, which is what Husserl called “intentionality”. Scholars who use phenomenology focus on describing a phenomenon that is lived by all participants (Ibid., 76). The aim for this project is to describe a common meaning (i.e., distinct ethos) derived from the lived experiences of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics and their lived experiences.

* **Research methods**

This investigation will utilize three different research methods: (1) Participant observation, (2) Individual semi-structured interviews, and (3) Focus groups.

Participant observation is a data collection method that allows researchers to engage with subjects in multiple situations in their everyday lives. Participant observation allows for an exploration of what people do. In other words, it is a method that focuses on the importance of embodiment. My investigation will include the participant observation of 8 events – 4 for worship services, and 4 for non-worship related events.

A second qualitative method in which the investigation will rely on is individual semi-structured interviews. Interviews are typically considered the primary method of data collection for phenomenological-based research (Ibid., 78). In this project, semi-structured interviews aim to explore individual experiences of identities and spirituality. For this method, 10 to 15 volunteers will be recruited. The duration of the interview will be about 1-2h, and the participant will be able to choose not to respond to any of the questions. Interview will take place in person at a location agreed by the interviewer and interviewee. The interviews will be conducted by the PI (Principal Investigator – aka. me) and will be audio recorded for analysis purposes.

Last, the PI will lead two focus groups. A focus group is a group interview that consists of a battery of questions that tackle a specific topic and aim at obtaining unified input from a group of individuals. Focus group participants are individuals who share common traits and experiences and who can relate to these experiences and each other (i.e., LGBTQ Spanish Catholics at CRISMHOM). This method intends to examine the importance that CRISMHOM[[15]](#footnote-15) has as a structure that creates and sustains identity-based relationships for LGBTQ Spanish Catholics.

Furthermore, there will be an exploration of CRISMHOM’s role in the development of a communal spirituality for my study group. In order to gain a holistic understanding of the study group, the PI will lead two focus groups. The first one will target leaders at CRISMHOM. The second focus group will include active members at CRISMHOM, who are not part of the leadership team. The duration of the focus group will be 1-2h and it will include 5 to 10 members. Focus groups will take place in person at a location agreed on by the interviewer and interviewees. Focus groups will be facilitated by the PI and will be audio recorded for analysis purposes.

* **Recruitment, consent, and safety of participants**

Recruitment of participants will take place *in situ* at CRISMHOM. The selection of potential candidates for the research will rely on an inclusion criteria based on the following items: (1) An individual who self-identify as a LGBTQ, (2) someone who self-identifies as Roman Catholic – regardless of the parameters used by the Roman Catholic Church, (3) someone who self-identifies as Spanish – regardless of country of origin, ethnicity, and legal status in Spain.

Participation in interviews and focus groups will be voluntary, and recruitment for these dynamics will be done verbally at CRISMHOM before consent is formalize in written form. Recruitment at CRISMHOM represents no greater than minimal risk for participants. That is about the same as risks encountered in daily life. However, since questions posed in individual interviews and focus groups touch on experiences of marginalized identities, some questions can trigger memories of difficult past experiences. For this reason, participants will have access to the following resources collected by the PI. In Spain and in the context of CRISMHOM, there are different resources available for people who experience LGBTQ-phobia. (1) The City of Madrid offers free services for individuals who are victims of LGBTQ -phobia. These services include psychological support and legal resources.[[16]](#footnote-16) (2) CRISMHOM also offers a free support service for LGBTQ Christians called *El Amigo Que Escucha* (The Friend Who Listens). This anonymous and confidential service is offered for free to all those who need to talk about their sexual orientation, faith, or need of social and sanitary services (e.g., STI and HIV treatment and prevention).[[17]](#footnote-17) (3) In case of an emergency, an individual can call the following numbers: 112 (emergency), 091 (National Police), 062 (Civil Guard). An individual can also alert the civil authorities through the ALERTCOPS app.

* **Confidentiality & Data protection**

All data in my research will be confidential. Confidentiality refers to “how the participant’s identifiable private information will be handled, managed, and disseminated”[[18]](#footnote-18). Confidentiality means that participants can be identified, but only by the PI. That revelation of identities to the researcher is possible through the coding of data. The use of codes allows for the de-identification of participants’ private information. Thus, while data can initially be associated to specific individuals, codes make identification impossible without a key. The key to the codes is maintained only by the researcher.

Protection of stored data is also a relevant concern in research. Data collected for the project will be stored securely and will not include private identifying information. Digital files will be stored on OneDrive, which is only accessible via login with username and password and has adequate server security features.

1. **Proposed Chapter Outline**

**Chapter 1. Genealogy**

The first chapter of the dissertation will consist of a genealogy of the work done so far in the field of LGBTQ Spanish Catholicism. That includes historical accounts of Christianity and Roman Catholicism in connection with gender and sexuality. The genealogy will also contain materials regarding the epistemology of sex, sexuality, and gender in the context of Spain from the Middle Ages[[19]](#footnote-19) to modern times. This will also include stories around the emergence and evolution of LGBTQ liberation movements in Spain since 1970 to the present time, particularly in connection with Roman Catholicism and queerness.

**Chapter 2. Methodology**

The second chapter of the dissertation will constitute an exhaustive rationale and explanation of my methodology. First, this section will contextualize the field site. This will include a historical account of how, when, and why CRISMHOM was founded[[20]](#footnote-20). Second, the chapter will proceed with a description of why phenomenology is the approach chosen for the research project. Third, the section will provide a detailed description of the research methods used. Fourth, there will be an explanation on how recruitment worked in the research, as well as the obtention of consent, and the preservation of participants’ safety. Lastly, the chapter will elaborate on the ethical considerations of the project for the PI as an investigator, and as an individual who embodies all the identities researched in the project.

**Chapter 3. Miguel de Unamuno**

This chapter will develop a philosophical framework based on the works of Miguel de Unamuno. This section will expand on three concepts in Unamuno’s philosophy that are relevant to the experiences of LGBTQ Spanish Catholics: 1) Dios-biótico, 2) Intrahistoria, and 3) Spanish spirit.

**Chapter 4. Teresa of Avila**

Chapter 4 will elaborate on a theo-ethical framework based on the mysticism of Saint Teresa of Avila. The life and divine knowledge of this Catholic mystic from the 16th century are relevant today to queer Spanish Catholics in two ways: 1) gnosis and 2) encuentros personales.

**Chapter 5. Analysis**

The fifth chapter will constitute the analysis of the data created during fieldwork. This section will explore the concepts, materials, and theories that will emerge in light of the research at CRISMHOM. The chapter will engage the results drawn from fieldwork with the theoretical works of Teresa of Avila and Miguel de Unamuno.

**Chapter 6. Conclusions**

The last chapter of the dissertation will outline the conclusions of the project. The contributions to the discourse will include the description of a distinct ethos for LGBTQ Spanish Catholics, based on the study of the following intersecting identities: ethnic, religious, sexual and gender.

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**The Mysticism of Teresa of Avila**

Andrés Martín, Melquiades. *Los recogidos : nueva visión de la mística española (1500-1700) : obra elaborada en el Seminario Suárez de la Fundación Universitaria Española*. Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, Seminario Suárez, 1975.

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1. Unamuno was deeply concerned about human longing for immortality. Unamuno agreed with Kant that humankind needs God to satisfy their thirst for immortality (Mateo, 1995). Unlike Kant, Unamuno believed that what pushes individuals to project themselves to the infinite is not a logical God (*Dios-idea*), but a vital God – a *Dios-biótico* (Unamuno, 2014, 139). For Unamuno, this *Dios-biótico* is a human self-projection. However, this does not discredit the existence of God, and implies that is much more than a mere subjective human fantasy (Mateo, 1995). *Dios-biótico* is understood as a reality outside of the human physicality, but that exists as an internal reciprocal relationship between God and humans – between two subjects that are personally inseparable (idem). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Man decides himself and becomes man by living” (my own translation). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. University, S. C. (n.d.). *What is "Living religion"?* What is "Living Religion"? - Santa Clara University. Retrieved October 24, 2022, from <https://www.scu.edu/livingreligions/about-the-lrc/what-is-living-religion/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Spanish philosopher did not regard history as a collection of tales of the past. Rather, Unamuno believed in a history that is alive and takes place in the present. The concept of intrahistoria honors peripheral actors, to which Unamuno gives the leading roles of history (Medina, 2009). For Unamuno, it is those who do not aspire to be heroes, who make history in an unconscious manner by embodying “living tradition” in a paradoxical tradition of the present (idem). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “Seek the eternal in the barrage of the insignificant” (my translation). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. La Chanson de Roland (The Song of Roland) is an Old French epic poem dated from 1100. Considered a masterpiece in the genre of “chanson de geste”, the poem describes the Battle of Roncesvalles and the defeat of the Saracens in the Iberian Peninsula by Charlemagne. Retrieved October 24, 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/La-Chanson-de-Roland> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. William Zebina Ripley (1867 – 1941) was an American economist and anthropologist. His book *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (1899) directed the attention of American social scientists to the existence of subdivisions of “geographic races”. Retrieved October 24, 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/W-Z-Ripley> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Here, the phrase “European colonization of the Spanish consciousness” describes the imposition of a continental European superiority narrative onto the Spanish spirit. This discourse is rooted in racial superiority (i.e., notions of whiteness, purity, and lack of racial intermixing) that perfuses economic, social, and philosophical systems. However, the use of the term “colonization” in this context is not without problems. The acknowledgement of internalized discourses of oppression – described here as a “colonization of the consciousness” – does not exonerate Spain from its imperial colonial past. The abuses committed by the Spaniards during global colonization from the 15th to the 20th century were rooted in Spanish racial, social, and cultural supremacy. The consequences of colonization for those who were invaded by Spain run deep into the social fabrics of all of Spain’s former colonies and their peoples. The use of the phrase “colonization of the consciousness” does not intend to erase or dilute the experiences of those who suffered under the yoke of Spanish colonialism worldwide. Rather, it is a way to demonstrate how colonization can exist at many levels and manifest differently depending on the context those who are colonized. While the European colonization of the Spanish consciousness and imperial Spanish colonialism represent historically distinct events, both cases are rooted in white supremacy. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The term refers to the cultural and/or religious practices performed (or perceivably performed) by new Christians in Spain after 1492. New Christians were individuals – mostly Jews who converted to Roman Catholicism – in the advent of the Alhambra Decree, in which the Catholic Monarchs ordered the expulsion of practicing Jews from the Crowns of Castile and Aragon and its territories. New Christians were regarded by Old Christians and the Inquisition as suspicious – Catholic in appearance and Jews at heart. The term “marrano” was coined to refer to those who practiced the Jewish religion in secret. When caught performing *prácticas judaizantes*, individuals were handed to the Inquisition who delivered punishment according to the ecclesial and civil laws of the time. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The *estatutos de limpieza de sangre* were ordanances that required the demonstration of one’s status as an Old Christian in order for them to join an institution or hold a specific position, either civil or religious. The *estatutos de limpieza de sangre e*nsured that a person did not have any ancestors of Jewish or Muslim origin. Beyond its bureaucratical nature, the *estatutos de limpieza de sangre w*ere a matter of honor and created a social distinction between Old Christians and the descendants of converts (i.e., New Christians). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Gnosis is a Greek term that refers to the acquisition of knowledge of the divine and its mysteries derived from one’s own experiences. Thus, gnosis indicates a knowledge of God that emerges from a personal relationship between a human being and a deity. In the Christian context, this gnosis is articulated around the figure of Jesus Christ. While gnosis is connected to faith, it goes beyond it. Gnosis is the gain of a high knowledge of God connected to revelation in a unitive vision. For Teresa, gnosis manifested as a perfect union to God through love – what the mystic named the “grasping of God by love”. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The humanity of Christ is a central theme in the spirituality of Teresa of Avila. For the Spanish mystic, Christian life must be articulated in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship climaxes in a union with Jesus through His love and grace. In her texts, Teresa invites the reader to fall in love with Christ and His humanity through prayer. For her, this union with God through love is the result of a yearning of the soul to possess God, that only God can give (Andrés 1975, 102). When talking about this divine union, O’Keefe understands it as an “existential sense of incompleteness and yearning for union with God” (2019, 134). This affective aspect to an encounter with the divine, places a greater importance on “the power of the human will, which is the source of our ability and decision to love” (idem 134). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The concept of *divina intranquilidad* in Unamuno’s Christianity emerges from the tensions between believe (*“fe sencilla”)* and the rationalization of faith. For Unamuno, a true Christian does not try to extinguish this contradiction but tries to live in peace in the midst of this paradox. Unamuno alludes to this concept of *divina intranquilidad* several times in his works. In *The Tragic Sense of Life* (2014), Unamuno relies on the Gospel of Mark to illustrate this struggle with God: “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24 NIV). For Unamuno, a true Christian “waves war to the contradictions of his head and heart (2014, 106). Furthermore, the notion of *divina intranquilidad* appears recurrently in *La agonía del cristianismo* (2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Teleology is an explanation of something that refers to its end, goal or purpose. Sartre denies the existence of God, and thus a teleology connected to a salvific divine figure. Kirkegaard can be considered a theistic existentialist. For the Danish philosopher, God made the world with no particular purpose in mind. As a result, all humans are born into a universe in which our lives and the world lack any real, inherent component. Existence then becomes an absurd, and humans must then roam the world searching for answers in an answerless word. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. CRISMHOM is the acronym for *CRIStianas y cristianos de Madrid HOMosexuales* (Christian Homosexuals in Madrid), which was the first denomination that the organization adopted upon its creation on June 3, 2006. While the acronym has been maintained, the official name of the organization has changed to “*CRISMHOM Comunidad cristiana LGTBI+H*” to encompass other sexual and gender identities. CRISMHOM’s statutes define the organization as a sexually diverse and ecumenically Christian entity, which is autonomous, and has no political affiliation. CRISMHOM is part of the FELGTB (*Federación Española de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales*). CRISMHOM’s mission encompasses three commitments: 1) With society by promoting awareness and solidarity around all the issues that affect LGBTQ Christians. 2) With the Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Orthodox Churches establishing bridges for dialogue and creating spaces for LGBTQ persons. 3) With the LGBTQ community by bearing witness of the compatibility between Christianity and sexual and gender diversity. Retrieved October 25, 2022, from <https://crismhom.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Individuals can reach the municipal services for victims of LGBTQ -phobia via phone at +34623533035 and by email (serviciolgtbi@imaginabienestar.com). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Individuals can access the service in person on Fridays from 7 to 9pm at CRISMHOM. Participants can also reach the service via phone at +34 915212249 (daily from 5-9pm) or anytime via email at amigoqueescucha@crismhom.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. J.1 section of the Part I – Human Research Application for the University of Denver IRB. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. LGBTQ, queer, or even homosexual are not transhistorical identity markers. They are modern constructs that emerged from fields such as medicine, religion, and psychology. For centuries, the word used in Europe to refer to same-sex practices was sodomy. Written records containing the word sodomy go back to the 13th century (Martínez 2017, 30). While the concept of sodomy is the result of historical processes of (re)interpretation, medieval categorization distinguished between “perfect sodomy” and “imperfect sodomy”. Until the 19th century, sex acts were not associated with a particular gender or sexual identity (e.g., homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, etc.). Crompton (2003) reminds the reader that Medieval and early Modern “Christian legislation usually fixed on sexual acts rather than classes of persons” (154). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. CRISMHOM (LGBT+H Christian community) was created on June 3rd of 2006. CRISMHOM was founded as an ecumenical Christian and queer organization to provide support for LGBTQ Christians in Madrid, Spain. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)