

# Spiritual Eclipse: Private Judgment of *The Mystical City of God*

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Feast of Christ the King

[Author's Note: The following article was published in the Nov. 2015 issue of *The 4 Marks*. I offer it here on my website as an antidote for those who either *condemn* the book themselves, or are influenced by the scandalous *condemnation* of the book they have heard others express, among them even priests. If you wish to contact me regarding this please do so at [neemcog@gmail.com](mailto:neemcog@gmail.com).]

I am happy to report all 100 4-volume sets of the first printing of the *New English Edition* of *The Mystical City of God* have been sold, and the second printing of 50 sets is now available, over half of which have been sold. I thank the Editor of the *4 Marks* for the interview she published, which has greatly helped to spread the word about this important book.

In that interview I stated as my third goal to defend the book against those who claim the book is “condemned” by the Church.

I have recently had an email exchange with a traditional priest which (sadly) illustrates this point. This priest publicly voiced his opposition from the pulpit (I have an audio file of this very sermon). However, I found out recently he began to read it, and told a parishioner that he so far found nothing erroneous in it. Encouraged by this I sent a free set to him. After a few weeks I emailed him to see if he had received it. The following is his reply, along with the email exchange we had. I give it here verbatim.

**Aug. 30, 2015**

Dear Tim,

Yes, I did receive the books, and I thank you for them.

Unfortunately these books are condemned by a number of popes. Pope Benedict XIV even doubted that Mary of Agreda wrote them. He did not lift the condemnation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

N.

**Aug. 31, 2015**

Dear N.,

In reply to your email I humbly ask you to do two things.

1) Please send me evidence from Magisterial documents backing up your statements that “these books are condemned by a number of popes” and “Pope Benedict XIV even doubted that Mary of Agreda wrote them. He did not lift the condemnation.” I wish to read such evidence for myself.

2) Please read pp. 14-21 of the first book of the set I sent you, *The Conception*, in which I summarize the

decisions of the Holy See regarding the authentic *Mystical City of God*. You will there find that Very Rev. Peter Mary Rookey, OSM, Consultor General of the Servites, personally researched in 1957 the decisions of five Popes regarding the books utilizing the original manuscript *The Cause for the Beatification of the Ven. Mary of Jesus of Ágreda*, a Latin manuscript which is to this day in the archives of the Congregation of Rites. This portfolio of original, signed Magisterial documents proves the *Mystical City of God* is approved by the Holy See as containing nothing contrary to faith and morals, and hence may be kept and read by all the faithful. You will also find there that Benedict XIV, contrary to what you state above, on May 7, 1757 promulgated the following decree: “It follows the Venerable Servant of God, Sister Mary of Jesus of Ágreda, wrote in the Spanish language the work which is treated in eight volumes and distributed under the title *The Mystical City of God*.” I could send you a pdf file of the original Latin document if you wish.

I believe it to be very important to resolve this matter, since you have great influence among many traditional faithful, and hence any error in this matter would be to the detriment of souls.

Sincerely,

Tim Duff

**Aug. 31, 2015**

Dear Tim,

I have read about the works of Mary of Ágreda in various reliable sources, and they all concur that the work was condemned, except for Spain, and the condemnation was never lifted.

I am satisfied by the research I have done, and really do not have the time to give it any more attention. To me it is clear and a closed case.

[no signature]

**Aug. 31, 2015**

N.,

I do not know how “reliable sources” can trump Magisterial documents. I certainly hope one of these “reliable sources” is not the 1907 Catholic Encyclopedia.

And how is it possible, may I ask, that a book may be read in one geographical location yet nowhere else in the Church? The fact is the authentic *Mystical City of God* was never condemned, only a false French translation done by Jansenists of the Sorbonne.

I again urge you to take just a few minutes to read the summary of the research by a priest who studied first-hand the Magisterial documents in Rome.

The fact remains the *Mystical City of God* is fully approved by the Holy See, and no Catholic is permitted private judgment in this matter. To do so is an objective act of schism for refusing submission to the Roman Pontiff.

This is a serious matter which cannot be simply brushed aside. I plan to expose anyone who claims the book is “condemned”, publicly if need be.

Sincerely,

Tim Duff

[no reply to this email as of Sept. 8]

### **A few comments**

“Unfortunately these books are condemned by a number of popes.”

This statement is completely false. As a matter of fact, *no Pope has ever condemned the authentic Mystical City of God*. The *only* condemnation which *appears* to do so was a decree signed by Bl. Innocent XI on Aug. 4, 1681, but as Cardinal Aquaviva amply proved before Benedict XIII in 1729 this condemnation was of a *false French translation done by Jansenist heretics*. Hence it is false to say the authentic *Mystical City of God* has ever been condemned by the Church. This is *proven* by the historical fact that Innocent XI had the humility and sense of justice (and piety) to *read the book for himself*, and as a result suspended the Aug. 4 decree a scant three months later by a decree of Nov. 9, 1681 in which he allowed the book to be read until a final decision could be made, which was done by the aforementioned Benedict XIII on March 14, 1729. He declared the book could be kept and read by all the faithful, and *commanded* there to be no further study of the book.

“Pope Benedict XIV even doubted that Mary of Agreda wrote them.”

It could not be more opposite. It was the *enemies* of the book who made this claim in a foul and impious attempt to slander Ven. Mary. Hence under Benedict XIV a decree was promulgated on May 7, 1757 stating once and for all that Ven. Mary wrote the book, and Clement XIV followed this with a decree dated March 11, 1771 stating she personally composed the book (and thus had not gleaned it from other authors).

“He did not lift the condemnation.”

This statement contains a grave and insidious error, since it is based on the assumption that there *was* a condemnation to lift, which there was not.

### **What do you think?**

Having read this email exchange, what do *you* think? Does this priest somehow have the right to oppose Catholic Magisterial documents with *his own research* which he refuses to divulge? And tell me, how are Catholic laity to respond to such a claim? Certainly we must obey the clear and objective mandates of the infallible Magisterium of the Church rather than any private opinion or judgment which conflicts with it.

### **Private judgment**

This is indeed the crux of the matter, for here we have a priest who is following his own private judgment, or that of others, in clear opposition to the decrees of the Holy See.

Ven. Mary spoke of such private judgment in the *Mystical City of God*, and let *all* traditional Catholic clergy and laity understand this well (*Coronation* par. 183):

“In all matters that are not to be decided merely by private judgment, such private judgment implies presumption.”

It cannot be stated better than this. This priest is exalting private judgment over the public judgment of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. This is a serious matter, for to refuse subjection to the Roman Pontiff in a matter upon which final judgment has been promulgated is a textbook example of *schism*.

This situation was perfectly expressed by none other than the incomparable Dom Guéranger, author of the monumental *Liturgical Year*. He was skeptical of the *Mystical City of God* until *he read it*; he also read the same dossier regarding Ven. Mary mentioned above, as well as much of what had been written for and against the book. Having done proper and extensive research, he wrote a series of 24 articles in *L'Univers* (Paris) in 1858-9 expressing his high recommendation of the book and admiration for Ven. Mary. Speaking of private revelation he said:

“What counts for the Christian who wishes to know the things of God in the measure which is permitted to us here below is to know that beyond the teaching generally imparted to all the children of the Church, there are also certain lights which God communicates to souls whom He has chosen, and that those lights pierce through the clouds when He so determines, in such a way that they spread far and wide for the consolation of simple hearts, and also to be *a certain trial for those who are wise in their own opinion.*”

In my work I am trying to reach such *simple hearts*, and when necessary for this end the error of *those who are wise in their own opinion* must be exposed as null and devoid of any authority. Did not St. Paul say (Rom. 12:16) *be not wise in your own conceits*?

### **Spiritual eclipse**

So what is the point of this article? To win an argument? This cannot be the case, for when the Holy See promulgates its final decision *there is no argument.*

No, the point is this: Almighty God has said *all souls are mine* (Ez. 18:4), and as our Creator He has an infinite and divine right to enlighten souls when and how He chooses. He has chosen our time for the revelation of the most holy History and Life of His Mother for this very purpose. For anyone, especially a priest, to block this light results in what I call a *spiritual eclipse*, much like the recent lunar eclipse in which the earth blocked the light of the sun. How can souls receive and reflect the *lumen Christi* when it is being eclipsed?

It is the role of the priest to nourish and direct souls in the spiritual life, allowing the light of Christ and His Mother to shine upon them, *not to get in the way*, which certainly grieves the Holy Ghost (Eph. 4:30) who desires to see souls devoted to His chosen Spouse.

I am sure this priest believes the four dogmas infallibly defined by the Church regarding Our Lady. But is mere *belief* enough? Certainly not, for it is written the *devils believe and tremble* (James 2:19). Salvation does not consist in *faith* and *belief* alone, but in virtuous action, since *faith without works is dead* (Ib. 20, 26). I wonder if this priest even prays the daily Rosary.

### **Action required**

I humbly ask this priest to issue a public retraction of his opposition to *The Mystical City of God* and never again prevent souls from reading it. This is a duty of justice he owes not only to our Holy Mother the Church but to the Blessed Mother herself, for by opposing her book he is opposing *Her*, certainly something no Catholic would want to do.

When someone asks him (or any priest for that matter) about the book, the least he could say is the Church has approved it and therefore all Catholics are allowed to read it. Moreover, if he would but read the book for himself, he would come to understand what Our Lady said of the revelations She gave in *The Mystical City of God* (*Coronation* par. 622):

“Those who take care to attain a worthy concept and appreciation of me shall find no difficulty in believing me.”