

THEOLOGIES OF GUADALUPE: FROM THE SPANISH COLONIAL ERA TO POPE JOHN PAUL II

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Theologians writing on Our Lady of Guadalupe strive to articulate a Christian response to a momentous event: the conquest, evangelization, and struggles for life, dignity, and self-determination of the peoples of the Americas. This article critically examines theologies of Guadalupe from their colonial foundations, to their reconfiguration during the rise of the Mexican nation, and to the new interpretations in the post-Vatican II era. In the process it illuminates important parameters for the ongoing development of Guadalupan and other theologies that advance fullness of ecclesial and human life in the American hemisphere and beyond.

POPE JOHN PAUL II'S PROCLAMATION that "the appearance of Mary to the native Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac in 1531 had a decisive effect on evangelization" in the Americas echoed an insight from theological writings on Our Lady of Guadalupe dating back to the Spanish colonial era.¹ In the 1648 book *Imagen de la Virgen María*, the first published theological work on Guadalupe, Miguel Sánchez contended that Guadalupe bestowed many favors on the native peoples of Mesoamerica during the early years of the Spanish evangelization in order to "inspire, teach, and attract them to the Catholic faith."² The following year Luis Laso de la Vega published the Nahuatl-language work *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* ("By a Great Miracle") in which he asserted that "not only did the heavenly Queen, our precious mother of Guadalupe, come here to reveal herself in

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¹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* no. 11, *Origins* 28 (1999) 565–92.

² Miguel Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María* . . . (Mexico City: Viuda de Bernardo Calderón, 1648), as reprinted in *Testimonios históricos Guadalupanos*, ed. Ernesto de la Torre Villar and Ramiro Navarro de Anda (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982) 152–267, at 246–47. All translations of quotations from Spanish sources are mine.

order to aid the humble commoners in their earthly afflictions, she wanted even more to give them her light and aid so that they would recognize the one true deity, God, and through him see and know the heavenly life."³

John Paul's association of Guadalupe with evangelization is not surprising, given his strong emphases on Mary and the new evangelization during his pontificate. But such an emphasis from writers in mid-17th-century New Spain is striking. Indeed, from the Spanish colonial era down to the present, those who have explored the theological meaning of Guadalupe have not focused primarily on typical questions about Mary, such as her title *Theotokos*, perpetual virginity, Immaculate Conception, and Assumption. Rather, they have examined the Guadalupe image, apparitions account, and its historical context as a means to explore the collision of civilizations between the Old and New Worlds and the ongoing implications of this clash for Christianity in the Americas and beyond.

Guadalupan devotees acclaim the Nahuatl-language *Nican mopohua* (a title derived from the document's first words, "here is recounted") as the foundational text of the Guadalupe tradition. In intricate and poetic detail the text narrates the well-known tale of Juan Diego's tender encounters with Guadalupe, who sent him to request that Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico, build a temple in her honor at Tepeyac (in present-day Mexico City). At first the bishop doubted the celestial origins of this request, but he came to believe when Juan Diego presented him exquisite flowers that were out of season and the image of Guadalupe miraculously appeared on the humble *indio's* *tilma* (cloak).⁴

Analyses of the documentary evidence for the Guadalupe apparitions have frequently overshadowed theological writings in Guadalupan studies. Juan Bautista Muñoz, whom Spanish monarch Charles III appointed as official historian of the Indies, was the first to systematize arguments against the apparition tradition in a 1794 address to the Royal Academy of History in Madrid. No one doubts that a chapel dedicated to Guadalupe at Tepeyac has been active since at least the mid-16th century. The disagreement is over which came first, the chapel or belief in the apparitions. In other words, did reports of Juan Diego's miraculous encounter with Guadalupe initiate the chapel and its devotion, or is the apparition narrative a later invention that provides a mythical origin for an already existing image and pious tradition? Those like Muñoz who hold the latter position have pointed to evidence like the lapse of over a century between the 1531

³ Luis Laso de la Vega, *Huei tlamahuiçoltica . . .* (Mexico City: Imprenta de Juan Ruiz, 1649), reprinted with an English translation in *The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega's Huei tlamahuiçoltica of 1649*, ed. and trans. Lisa Sousa, Stafford Poole, and James Lockhart (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 1998) 123.

⁴ For a presentation of the original Nahuatl version of the *Nican mopohua* with an accompanying English translation, see *Story of Guadalupe* 60–93.

date given for the apparitions and the first published apparition accounts, as well as the lack of documentation about the apparitions among prominent 16th-century Catholic leaders in New Spain. Conversely, those who uphold the foundational status of the apparition tradition argue that the Spaniards' disdain for the allegedly inferior native peoples accounts for the delay of over a century before an official inquiry recorded indigenous oral testimony about Guadalupe and Juan Diego. They also contend there is written 16th-century documentation for the apparitions tradition, such as a recently discovered codex that Jesuit Xavier Escalada argues is Juan Diego's 1548 death certificate depicting his encounter with Guadalupe. Thus the heart of the debate is disagreement over the validity of oral testimony, the viability of historical arguments from silence, and especially the authenticity, authorship, proper dating, and significance of critical primary sources, particularly the *Nican mopohua* itself.⁵

Stafford Poole, in his 1995 book meticulously documenting the antiapparition position, alerted many English-language readers to these longstanding controversies. Extending the implications of the historicity debate to the works of commentators like "some liberation theologians," Poole asserts that without documented historical evidence about the apparitions "the symbolism [of Guadalupe] loses any objectivity it may have had and is at the mercy of propagandists and special interests." As I will show, theologies of Guadalupe are indeed susceptible to misappropriations of the Christian message and even to co-option. But these are potential pitfalls for any theological attempt to articulate the meaning of faith for a particular time and place, regardless of the extant historical evidence that underlies a faith community's core faith narratives and imagery. Far from inducing theologians to abandon the field of Guadalupan interpretation,

⁵ Juan Bautista Muñoz, "Memoria sobre las apariciones y el culto de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe," *Memorias de la Academia de la Historia* 5.10–12 (1817), reprinted in *Testimonios históricos* 689–701. The detailed contours of the historicity dispute, which resurfaced most recently in public debates about the 2002 canonization of Juan Diego, are too complex to address here. For recent works see, e.g., Xavier Noguez, *Documentos guadalupanos: Un estudio sobre las fuentes de información tempranas en torno a las mariofanías en el Tepeyac* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993); Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531–1797* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1995); Poole, *The Guadalupan Controversies in Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 2006); Xavier Escalada, *Enciclopedia guadalupana. Apéndice códice 1548. Estudio científico de su autenticidad* (Mexico City: n.p., 1997); José Luis Guerrero, *El Nican mopohua: Un intento de exégesis*, 2 vols. (Mexico City: Realidad, Teoría, y Práctica, 1998); Fidel González Fernández, Eduardo Chávez Sánchez, and José Luis Guerrero Rosado, *El encuentro de la Virgen de Guadalupe y Juan Diego*, 4th ed. (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 2001); Eduardo Chávez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Juan Diego: The Historical Evidence*, trans. Carmen Treviño and Veronica Montaña (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

such potential pitfalls make critical theological assessment all the more urgent. In contending that theological explorations of Guadalupe are unacceptable unless they demonstrate the “objective historical basis” of the apparition tradition with written documentation, Poole eviscerates the theological task of critically examining faith as it is expressed and lived among believers who, in the case of Guadalupe, encompass millions of devotees. Applied more broadly, Poole’s narrow documentary standards of verifying “objective reality” as a condition for valid theological investigation would deplete the significance of foundational events in salvation history ranging from the Exodus to the Resurrection.⁶

Contemporary Guadalupan studies transcend debates about historical veracity in a rapidly expanding body of scholarly and artistic works. Historical writings explore topics like Guadalupe’s formative role in the emergence of Mexican national consciousness, Guadalupe in art, the intellectual history of the Guadalupe tradition, Spanish missionaries’ efforts to promote Marian devotion among native peoples, and the evolution of Guadalupan devotion.⁷ Ethnographic studies have examined elements of Guadalupan devotion such as pilgrimage, dance, feast-day celebrations, and the influence of those celebrations on social hierarchies and collective identity in Mexican villages.⁸ Novelists, essayists, poets, and artists have sought to

⁶ Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* 14, 225. In my own work I have argued that the inordinate attention given to historical origins in Guadalupan studies—an issue repeatedly addressed but never resolved—overshadows a potentially more beneficial collaboration between history and theology, namely the social history of grassroots devotees’ evolving theological understandings of Guadalupe. This current essay on the history of published Guadalupan theologies complements my earlier explorations of the theological worldview mediated in the ritual and devotion of everyday believers. See especially Timothy Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2005).

⁷ Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531–1813*, trans. Benjamin Keen (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976); Jaime Cuadriello, Carmen de Monserrat Robledo Galván, and Beatriz Berndt León Mariscal, *La Reina de las Américas: Works of Art from the Museum of the Basílica de Guadalupe* (Chicago: Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, 1996); D. A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Image and Tradition across Five Centuries* (New York: Cambridge University, 2001); Louise M. Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature* (Albany, N.Y.: University of Albany Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, 2001); Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful*.

⁸ Paolo Giuriati and Elio Masferrer Kan, et al., *No temas . . . yo soy tu madre: Un estudio socioantropológico de los peregrinos a la Basílica de Guadalupe* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés Editores, 1998); Deidre Sklar, *Dancing with the Virgin: Body and Faith in the Fiesta of Tortugas, New Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001); Mary O’Connor, “The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Economics of Symbolic Behavior,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28 (1989) 105–19.

unveil and develop Guadalupe's meaning and potential for groups like undocumented Mexicans in the United States, Chicana and Chicano activists, and farm workers. They have frequently offered a critical analysis of Guadalupe, particularly her power in the lives of women—both the power to transform women's lives and to sanction their subordination in church, family, and society.⁹ But no previous study has focused explicitly on Guadalupan theological writings from their Spanish colonial origins to the present.

Sánchez and Laso de la Vega laid the foundations for Guadalupan theology with their patristic and catechetical treatises on Guadalupe, respectively. Over the next century and a half preachers expanded on these foundations and introduced other theological perspectives on Guadalupe as liturgical celebrations in her honor proliferated and received papal approbation. The 19th-century struggle for Mexican independence and national identity led many interpreters to focus more narrowly on Guadalupe's election of Mexico as her chosen nation and her relation to the historical process of *mestizaje* (racial mixing) and nation building. Post-Vatican II attempts to engage in theological analyses from the perspective of marginalized peoples have increased interest in exploring Guadalupe's meaning for discipleship beyond the bounds of Mexico. Today Guadalupe is most frequently associated with both the struggle to overcome the negative effects of the conquest of the Americas and the hope for a new future of greater justice, faith, conversion, harmony, and evangelization. Theologies of Guadalupe are thus an ongoing effort to articulate a Christian response to one of the most momentous events of Christianity's second millennium: the conquest, evangelization, and struggles for life, dignity, and self-determination of the peoples of the Americas. An overview of the insights and the limitations of this theological trajectory reveals important parameters for the ongoing development of Guadalupan and other theologies that advance fullness of ecclesial and human life in the American hemisphere and beyond.

FOUNDATIONS

A century of Guadalupan devotion in Mexico City preceded Miguel Sánchez's influential *Imagen de la Virgen María*, which examined Guadalupe and the evangelization of Mexico vis-à-vis the wider Christian tradition, particularly the writings of Augustine and other Church Fathers and the image of the "woman clothed with the sun" in Revelation 12. *Imagen*

⁹ Ana Castillo, ed., *Goddess of the Americas/La Diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* (New York: Riverhead, 1996); Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition* (Austin: University of Texas, 1998) esp. 47–48, 139–41, 221; María Herrera-Sobek, ed., *Santa Barraza: Artist of the Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2001).

de la Virgen María elevated what had been perceived as merely a pious tradition to a topic of intense interest among clergy, theologians, and other elite residents of New Spain.

Sánchez (1596–1674) was himself a diocesan priest highly respected for his learning and preaching who studied at the Royal and Pontifical University in Mexico City, though his efforts to secure a teaching position at the university were unsuccessful. When he joined the Oratory in 1662 he was serving as chaplain of the Mexico City sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of Remedios, the Spanish Virgin whose image Hernán Cortés and his men brought as their protector and patroness in the conquest of Mexico. Subsequently Sánchez retired to the grounds of the Guadalupe sanctuary, where he lived a quiet life of prayer until his death, celebratory funeral, and burial in the Guadalupe shrine.¹⁰ His known works include a 1665 Marian novena designed for prayer at the sanctuaries of both Remedios and Guadalupe and his first major work, the full title of which was *Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe: Milagrosamente aparecida en la ciudad de México: Celebrada en su historia, con la profecía del capítulo doce del Apocalipsis* (Image of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God of Guadalupe: Miraculously Appeared in the City of Mexico: Celebrated in Her History, with the Prophecy of Chapter Twelve of the Apocalypse).

Even a cursory reading of Sánchez's work reveals his admiration and extensive study of Augustine and other Fathers of the early church. Though he cites a wide range of thinkers from Aristotle to Aquinas to his own theological contemporaries, Sánchez refers to Augustine more than two dozen times and also liberally quotes from other leading theologians of the early church as, among others, Ambrose, Jerome, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Cyprian, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, and Clement of Alexandria. In various passages his allusions to Augustine include panegyrics, such as his statement that "to St. Augustine, the archive of divine things, I attribute my desire, determination, and calling to celebrate the miraculous apparition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary Mother of God in this her holy image of our Mexican Guadalupe." He even imitates Augustine's theological method, particularly through engaging biblical analogies and presuming that the contemporary church was the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In more contemporary parlance, Sánchez follows Augustine and other patristic theologians by exploring biblical narrative and imagery as the primal lens through which to interpret historical and contemporary events.¹¹

¹⁰ *Testimonios históricos* 152; Brading, *Mexican Phoenix* 55, 73; Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* 101.

¹¹ Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María* 198. The analysis of Sánchez's work and its significance presented in this article is largely based on my essay "Guadalupe at Calvary: Patristic Theology in Miguel Sánchez's *Imagen de la Virgen María* (1648)," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003) 795–811.

Sánchez divides his erudite and somewhat convoluted book into five major sections. First he argues that Guadalupe's appearance during the conquest of Mexico is foretold in the account of the woman and the dragon in Revelation 12. Consistent with an Augustinian theology of history that posits a divine plan and purpose working through human events and even human frailty and failings, Sánchez lauds the conquest as a providential occurrence that defeated Satan and idolatry and paved the way for the destined appearance of Mary of Guadalupe and her pivotal role for the establishment of the church in Mexico. In such claims he also revealed his unabashedly Eurocentric bias, applauding Guadalupe as Spain's "assistant conqueror" and attesting that the "heathenism of the New World" was "conquered with her aid." Next Sánchez recounts the five Guadalupe apparitions, offering an extensive series of biblical and theological reflections on this received pious tradition. For example, he compares Juan Diego to Moses, Tepeyac to Mount Sinai, and Mary of Guadalupe to the Ark of the Covenant, observing that Juan Diego ascended the Mount Sinai of the New World to bring down the blessings of the "true ark of God." He then proceeds to an analysis of what pious believers can see as they gaze upon the incredible "beauty, grace, and loveliness" of the Guadalupe image, which, he posits, has clear parallels to various details in Revelation 12:1: "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." The fourth section continues the apparition narrative of section two by briefly outlining subsequent developments in the Guadalupe tradition such as Juan Diego's service as a caretaker at the Guadalupe sanctuary until his death in 1548 and the rapid growth of the devotion and the facilities at the shrine. Theologically, Sánchez professes that these developments and even the site of the sanctuary itself reflected the guiding hand of divine providence. Following established conventions for writings about miraculous images and their sacred sites, in the final section Sánchez narrates various miracles attributed to Guadalupe's intercession. He concludes the volume with a dramatic reflection on the ongoing cosmic battle for the soul of Mexico, inviting his readers and all the peoples of New Spain to take their place at Tepeyac, the Calvary of the New World, as the apostle John took his place at the foot of the cross.¹²

Collectively, the five sections of Sánchez's book are intended to incite the reader toward a deeper contemplation of Guadalupe: in Mexican history, in the apparitions, in her image, in the providential growth of piety at her chosen sanctuary, and in the favors she bestows on those who turn to her.¹³ Put another way, *Imagen de la Virgen María* is a theological odyssey

¹² Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María* 179, 191, 195, 200.

¹³ *Ibid.* esp. 257.

from chaos to Calvary, as Sánchez opens his work with his overwhelmingly negative perspective on pre-Christian Mexico and ends at the foot of the cross with echoes of Jesus' voice admonishing the Mexican people to take the place of John the Evangelist and behold Guadalupe, the loving mother who accompanies them and calls them to build the church in the New World as the apostles did in the Old.

The year after Sánchez's work appeared in print, Laso de la Vega published the relatively brief book entitled *Huei tlamahuiçoltica omonexiti illhuicac tlatocaçihuapilli Santa Maria totlaçonantzin Guadalupe in nican huei altepenahuac Mexico itocayocan Tepeyacac* (By a Great Miracle Appeared the Heavenly Queen, Saint Mary, Our Precious Mother of Guadalupe, Here Near the Great Altepétl of Mexico, at a Place Called Tepeyac). He too was a Mexico City diocesan priest, though little is known about his life. He was enrolled in a course of study in canon law at the University of Mexico in 1623 and at some point completed his licentiate. In 1647 he was appointed to serve as vicar of the Guadalupe sanctuary, a more substantial church, consecrated in 1622, to augment the original chapel. As vicar, he oversaw the rebuilding of the first chapel, as well as the construction of walls around the springs where many infirm bathed in search of healing. Subsequently he was promoted to the Mexico City cathedral chapter.¹⁴

Huei tlamahuiçoltica encompasses an author's preface, the *Nican mopohua* apparition narrative, a brief description of the Guadalupe image, the *Nican motecpana* ("here is an ordered account") relation of miracles attributed to Guadalupe's intercession, a short biographical sketch of Juan Diego, the *Nican tlantica* ("here ends [the story]") summarizing some history of Mary's influence in New Spain and exhorting the faithful to Guadalupan devotion, and a concluding Guadalupan prayer loosely modeled on the *Salve Regina*. It is a composite text, and scholars have debated for centuries whether Laso de la Vega was the sole author, worked with Nahua assistants, or outright reprinted some writings of others. In particular, a number of analysts avow that the *Nican mopohua* reflects the elegant Nahua of a native speaker; some attribute it to the 16th-century Nahua intellectual Antonio Valeriano.¹⁵

The precise relationship between the works of Sánchez and Laso de la Vega also remains a debated topic, but a comparison of their contents reveals their close correlation. Whether as compiler or as author, in *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* Laso de la Vega states that Guadalupe "cherished, aided, and defended the local people" in the wake of the Spaniards' arrival. Yet

¹⁴ Brading, *Mexican Phoenix* 81.

¹⁵ For opposing arguments on the authorship of the *Nican mopohua*, see González Fernández, Chávez Sánchez, and Guerrero Rosado, *El encuentro de la Virgen de Guadalupe y Juan Diego* 171–74; *Story of Guadalupe* 1–47, esp. 43–47.

like Sánchez he reveals his concurrence with the Spanish colonial enterprise in presuming that Guadalupe was a protagonist in the Spanish efforts to displace indigenous ways, since, because of her compassion, the natives “despised and abhorred the idolatry in which they had been wandering about in confusion on the earth, in the night and darkness in which the demon had made them live.” Discrepancies such as the ordering of the main sections of the two volumes, the inclusion of twice as many Guadalupe miracle accounts in Laso de la Vega’s work as in Sánchez’s, and the number of times Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego—five in Sánchez, four in Laso de la Vega—are minor compared to the common thematic material contained in both works. Moreover, Laso de la Vega penned a glowing commendation for inclusion in *Imagen de la Virgen María* in which he confessed that, though he had long venerated Guadalupe, “after I read the history of her miracle” in Sánchez’s book “the desire to be totally hers has grown [even more] in my heart.”¹⁶

Despite their similarities, the *Nican mopohua*’s extensive use of poetic devices, diminutive forms, and the indigenous narrative style of accentuating dialogue, along with the relative absence throughout the *Huei tlama-huiçoltica* of the theological elaboration and the numerous scriptural and patristic references found in *Imagen de la Virgen María*, demonstrate the most striking difference between the two works: Laso de la Vega’s purpose of providing a pastoral manual to promote Guadalupan devotion and Christian faith among Nahuatl-speaking residents. The book’s introduction is clearly of Laso de la Vega’s authorship and states his desire that “the humble commoners see here and find out in their language all the charitable acts you [Guadalupe] have performed on their behalf.” In an apparent apologetic about his decision to write in the Nahuas’s native language, he directs himself to Mary the Mother of God who does “not spurn the languages of different peoples when you summon them.” He also recounts that the marker above Jesus’ head on the cross was written in three languages; cites Bonaventure as saying “the great, marvelous, exalted miracles of our Lord God are to be written in a variety of languages so that all the different peoples on earth will see and marvel at them”; and notes Mary’s intercessory and encouraging presence at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to be understood in diverse tongues. Calling on that same Spirit, Laso de la Vega prayed that he might “receive his tongues of fire in order to trace in the Nahuatl language the very great miracle by which you revealed yourself to the poor humble commoners and by which you also very miraculously gave them your image.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid. 97; Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María* 263.

¹⁷ *Story of Guadalupe* 55–59.

The *Nican mopohua* apparitions narrative encompasses 40 percent of the *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*. Its primary purpose is to provide a dramatic narrative of Guadalupe's miraculous appearance and maternal care for public proclamation and the edification of the faithful. Similarly, the 14 miracles in the *Nican motecpana*, the other major section of *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*, are recounted as independent units, in seemingly random order, and with little interpretive analysis of their deeper pedagogical significance. The briefest of the miracle accounts illustrates their suitability for proclamation as illustrations in sermons or other orations, as well as their basic pattern of affliction, supplication, and celestial aid:

A sacristan named Juan Pavón, who took care of the churchly home of the heavenly Lady, our precious mother of Guadalupe, had a small child, and it contracted a swelling of the neck. It was gravely ill and about to die; it was no longer able to breathe. He took it before her and anointed it with the oil that burns in her lamp. At that very moment it was healed, favored by the heavenly Lady.¹⁸

Collectively the enumerated miracles range from petitioners being saved from a misfired arrow, horse accident, falling lamp, and an unspecified epidemic to healings of headaches, dropsy, and severe swelling of the feet and neck.¹⁹

Huei tlamahuiçoltica's treatment of Juan Diego's life articulates Laso de la Vega's view of the ideal Nahua response to the many wonders of Guadalupe. Consciously or not, this hagiographic sketch depicts Juan Diego as a model Franciscan lay brother. After his encounters with Guadalupe, Juan Diego reportedly served as caretaker of the Guadalupe image and site, where he spent the remainder of his days in prayer, fasting, penance, solitude, and with frequent confession and communion. The account even claims that, though married to a woman named María Lucía, Juan Diego remained a chaste virgin throughout his life in response to a sermon of Fray Toribio de Motolinia, one of the original Franciscan "twelve apostles" to Mexico. *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*'s description of Juan Diego's death relates a comforting vision of Guadalupe in which she welcomes him into the joy of heaven. Laso de la Vega's catechetical purpose is nowhere clearer than in the concluding invocation; after recalling Juan Diego's saintly life he writes: "May it be her [Guadalupe's] wish that we too may serve her and abandon all the worldly things that lead us astray, so that we too may attain the eternal riches of heaven."²⁰

Imagen de la Virgen María and *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* had a relatively small circulation, the former because it was primarily intended for the clergy and other learned readers of Mexico City and the latter because it was written in Nahuatl. Neither work was reprinted in its entirety until the

¹⁸ Ibid. 111.

¹⁹ Ibid. 92–113.

²⁰ Ibid. 113–15.

20th century. The immediate influence of Laso de la Vega's book on preaching and other evangelization efforts among the Nahuatl-speaking natives is difficult to assess, although over time the *Nican mopohua* was widely acclaimed as the foundational text for the Guadalupe tradition, and dramatic proclamations and reenactments of the apparitions became a common worship practice. Sánchez's volume had a more documented effect on the propagation and meaning of Guadalupan devotion during his own lifetime. Jesuit Mateo de la Cruz eliminated much of the expansive biblical imagery and theological erudition of *Imagen de la Virgen María* in a popular 1660 abbreviation of the text entitled *Relación de la milagrosa aparición de la santa imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe de México*. The more widespread appeal of de la Cruz's condensed volume was complemented by Sánchez's influence on his fellow *criollos*, the designation in the Spanish caste system for persons of Spanish blood born in the New World. For example, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's 17th-century sonnet to Guadalupe clearly echoed Sánchez when she lauded Guadalupe as the one whose "proud foot humbled the dragon's rebellious neck at Patmos."²¹

Even greater was Sánchez's influence on prominent Mexico City clergy, the vast majority of them also *criollos*. Approximately 100 published Guadalupe sermons from 1661-1802 are extant. Although during the colonial period Luis Becerra Tanco's *Felicidad de México* (1675) and Francisco de Florencia's *La Estrella del Norte de México* (1688) became the most-cited works for arguing the firm historical foundation of the Guadalupe apparition tradition, Guadalupe sermons continued to elaborate various theological themes that echoed Sánchez's patristic-based analysis of Guadalupe, such as God's providential guidance in Mexican history, Guadalupe's appearance as a foundational event for the church in Mexico, and the blessings and miracles that await those who appeal to Guadalupe and contemplate her countenance and holy image. Similarly, while the presumption that the Scriptures foreshadowed contemporary events was common in the colonial era, a number of sermons repeat directly Sánchez's biblical analogies like the association of Moses, Mount Sinai, and the Ark of the Covenant with Juan Diego, Tepeyac, and the Guadalupe image. As David Brading has observed with regard to these sermons, "Nowhere was

²¹ Mateo de la Cruz, *Relación de la milagrosa aparición de la santa imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe de México . . .* (Puebla: Viuda de Borja, 1660), reprinted in *Testimonios históricos* 267–81; Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, "Alaba el numen poético del Padre Francisco de Castro, de la Compañía de Jesús, en un Poema heroico en que describe la Aparición milagrosa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Méjico," in *Obras completas* (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1969) 143. For a recent theological analysis of Sor Juana's corpus of writings, see Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Sor Juana: Beauty and Justice in the Americas* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2003).

[Sánchez's] influence more obvious than in the application of Augustinian typology to the interpretation of the Mexican Virgin."²²

Expanding on the claims of *Imagen de la Virgen María*, the preachers also proposed various new hypotheses about Guadalupe, at times seemingly competing with Sánchez and one another in the extent of their theological audacity. Sánchez's identification of Guadalupe with the woman of Revelation 12 led preachers to postulate in Neoplatonic terms that her image authentically depicted the divine concept of Mary. Jesuits who grew increasingly prominent in Guadalupan preaching were the primary promoters of yet another innovation: just as the transubstantiation of bread and wine occurred in the Mass, so too Mary was sacramentally present in the perpetual miracle of the Guadalupe image. An often-repeated assertion was that Christ evangelized the Old World through the apostles' preaching of the word, while Mary of Guadalupe effected the evangelization of the New World through her miraculous image, a visual means of communication highly suited to the indigenous psyche.²³

The genre of the sermon conditioned such claims made within the context of the eucharistic celebration, at times elevating them to hyperbolic pretentiousness. Juan José de Eguiara y Eguren's 1756 panegyric, one of the first sermons on Guadalupe preached in New Spain after Pope Benedict XIV two years earlier sanctioned a feast day and divine office for her feast, illustrates the influence of designated scripture readings on these orations. Expounding on the Lucan reading of the visitation, Eguiara y Eguren echoed Sánchez in his assertion that "the future event of Guadalupe was prophesied and foreseen" in the Scriptures, in this case through Mary's "past journey, visit, and salutation." As Mary's greeting to Elizabeth brought her kinswoman peace, so too her salute to the New World

²² Brading, *Mexican Phoenix* 96–101, 146–68, at 165; Francisco Raymond Schulte, *Mexican Spirituality: Its Sources and Mission in the Earliest Guadalupan Sermons* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Francisco Javier Carranza, et al., *Siete sermones guadalupanos (1709–1765)* (México: Centro de Estudios de Historia de México Condumex, 1994); Luis Becerra Tanco, *Felicidad de México . . .* (1675), reprinted in *Testimonios históricos* 309–33; Francisco de Florencia, *La Estrella del Norte de México . . .* (1688), reprinted in *Testimonios históricos* 359–99. For a bibliography of the published Guadalupan sermons, see *Mexican Spirituality* 169–209.

²³ Sermons exemplifying these claims include, respectively, Bartolomé Felipe de Ita y Parra, *La imagen de Guadalupe, imagen del patrocinio: Sermón panegyrico* (Mexico City, 1744); Juan de Goicoechea, S.J., *La maravilla inmarcescible, y milagro continuado de María Santísima Señora Nuestra en su prodigiosa imagen de Guadalupe de México* (Mexico City, 1709); Francisco Javier Lazcano, S.J., *Sermón panegyrico al ínclito patronato de María Señora Nuestra en su milagrosísima imagen de Guadalupe* (Mexico City, 1759). Facsimile reprints of all three sermons are in *Siete sermones guadalupanos* 51–83, 107–43, 223–54.

with the gift of her image and her protection had for 225 years wrought numerous conversions to Christ, temporal blessings, healings, and continuous peace. And just as Elizabeth expressed her joy that Mary had come to her, so too the faithful of the New World respond to Guadalupe through their prayers, processions, writings, orations, dedication of churches and altars, and now through offering the Mass, divine office, and official title patroness of New Spain which Benedict XIV providentially designated to her. In effect, Eguiara y Eguren posited an intrinsic link between the gospel vision of God's peaceful reign and the social world of New Spain as evidenced in its pervasive Guadalupan devotion, with nary a mention of any deficiencies in church or society in New Spain during the more than two centuries since the Guadalupe event. His sermon stemmed from Sánchez's foundational theological work but lacked Sánchez's attempt to elaborate the evangelical consequences of authentic Guadalupan devotion.²⁴

EMBLEM AND CONSCIENCE OF THE NATION

As Eguiara y Eguren's sermon reveals, even while they mined scriptural, patristic, and other theological sources in their analyses of Guadalupe, the criollo clergy of New Spain developed nationalist sentiments rooted in Guadalupe's celestial election of their homeland. Sánchez presumed that the Spanish conquest of Mexico was an act of divine providence, but he also proudly professed Guadalupe as "a native of this land and its first creole woman."²⁵ His assertions planted the seeds of criollo nationalism summarized in the often-repeated proclamation about Guadalupe that Benedict XIV assigned as the epigraph for the office of her feast day: "God has not done thus for any other nation" (Ps 147:20).

Boasting that they did not depend on Spain for the Catholic faith since the Virgin Mary had elected to appear in their own land and extend to them the singular gift of leaving her very image on Juan Diego's tilma, by the early 19th century the criollo elite engaged Guadalupe as a central symbol in their growing aspirations for independence. Criollo priest and father of Mexican independence Miguel Hidalgo and other insurrection leaders drew on these theological declarations of spiritual independence when they fought under Guadalupe's banner, a struggle that sealed Guadalupe's place as the national symbol of Mexico. After the war the Mexican Congress declared Guadalupe's feast a national holiday; a newcomer described Guadalupe as "the most venerated saint in Mexico, especially since independence" and testified that her image was so popular that it was "found not only in churches but even in establishments alien to the

²⁴ Juan José de Eguiara y Eguren, "Panegírico de la Virgen de Guadalupe" (1756), in *Testimonios históricos* 480–93, at 483.

²⁵ Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María* 257.

faith.” As Jacques Lafaye noted in his study of the role of myth and symbol in the rise of Mexican national consciousness, Miguel Sánchez is “the true founder of the Mexican *patria*, for on the exegetic bases which he constructed in the mid-17th century that *patria* would flower until she won her political independence under the banner of Guadalupe. From the day the Mexicans began to regard themselves as a chosen people, they were potentially liberated from Spanish tutelage.”²⁶

Extant theological writings on Guadalupe from the 19th century are relatively sparse. Her widespread acclaim as the national symbol of Mexico led to some published sermons and other writings that commented on her significance and her role as the conscience of the nation. The most influential of these writers was novelist and journalist Ignacio Manuel Altamirano (1834–1893), an ardent youthful supporter of anticlerical measures who subsequently dedicated himself to literary pursuits in which he portrayed Mexican Catholic traditions like Guadalupe with great respect and admiration. His 1884 book *Paisajes y leyendas, tradiciones y costumbres de México*, included a lengthy section entitled “La fiesta de Guadalupe.” Altamirano forcefully articulated the growing sentiment that Guadalupe not only liberated Mexico from Spain but that her feast day was the sole occasion when the Mexican nation was free from social and class divisiveness. He marveled at the way Mexicans of all castes and political persuasions gathered in “equality before the Virgin,” though he did not explore how such reported harmony in ritual and devotion could be extended to other arenas of Mexican life. Still, his concluding statement about Guadalupe’s centrality in Mexico was frequently quoted among preachers, journalists, and other commentators well into the 20th century: “The day that the cult of the Indian Virgin [of Guadalupe] disappears, the Mexican nationality will also disappear.”²⁷

A month-long series of sermons during October 1895 to commemorate the celebrated Guadalupan coronation illuminates church leaders’ evolving interpretations of Guadalupe during the 19th century. The coronation was a climactic moment in a revival of the Mexican Catholic Church. A number of factors contributed to this revival and to the coronation: the Vatican contacts that Mexican prelates established while in European exile after Mexico’s 1859 Reform Laws deestablished the Church, the subsequent return of many bishops with the easing of church–state tensions under President Porfirio Díaz (1876–1880, 1884–1911), the

²⁶ Jean Louis Berlandier, *Journey to Mexico during the Years 1826 to 1834*, 7 vols., trans. Sheila M. Ohlendorf, Josette M. Bigelow, and Mary M. Standifer (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1980) 1:127; Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe* 250.

²⁷ Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, “La Fiesta de Guadalupe” (1884), in *Testimonios históricos* 1127–210, at 1129, 1210.

international acclaim of a similar 1876 coronation for Our Lady of Lourdes, and the patronage of a small group of elite Mexican Catholic laity who helped finance Catholic publications and projects, including major renovations of the Guadalupe sanctuary as well as the coronation events. The official *Album de la coronación de la Virgen de Guadalupe* contains the texts of 16 sermons preached during the extended coronation festivities. Bishop Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona of the diocese of Yucatán was the chosen preacher for the October 12 coronation ceremony. Though illness prevented him from publicly delivering the sermon, a proxy proclaimed it from his prepared text.²⁸

The text Carrillo y Ancona chose for the sermon was a paraphrase from the Song of Songs: “Come from Lebanon, my bride, come from Lebanon and you will be crowned” (4:8). After a brief introduction he set the context for the occasion in cosmic terms: the coronation was an event that joined heaven and earth. From the heavens the Holy Trinity, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, virgins, and all the angels and saints joined with the sun and moon, the stars, and all creation to honor Mary of Guadalupe as Divine Spouse, Co-Redemptrix, Immaculate, gloriously assumed into heaven, celestial Princess, and Universal Queen. The bishop was careful to state that Catholics “owe adoration only to God.” But in keeping with the maximalist Marian theology and devotion prevailing in his day, he contended that the coronation was in fact a means to render such homage to the Almighty God and Creator of the sublime one whose “soul magnifies the Lord.”²⁹

Several of Carrillo y Ancona’s assertions echoed or expanded upon long-standing claims in Guadalupan theology. He noted her providential appearance at the outset of the evangelization of the Americas and her role in displacing the “idolatrous cult” of the Aztec goddess Tonantzin, contending that her original Nahuatl name was Coatlicauhtli, “the conqueror of the serpent,” which the Spaniards came to render as Guadalupe. He accentuated the wisdom of her appearance as a “noble American Indian” in the hieroglyphic and highly visual form of expression prevalent among the Nahuatlans. He noted various scriptural antecedents to the Guadalupe event such as the by-then often-cited texts of the visitation, the Ark of the Covenant, and the woman clothed with the sun. He extolled Guadalupe as the “patroness of our nationality and our independence” and, honoring the presence of episcopal visitors from Panama, Cuba, Canada,

²⁸ Brading, *Mexican Phoenix* 288–310; Victoriano Agüeros, ed., *Album de la coronación de la Sma. Virgen de Guadalupe*, 2 vols. (Mexico: El Tiempo, 1895–1896). I am grateful to William Taylor for graciously allowing me to use his personal copy of the *Album de la coronación*.

²⁹ Carrillo y Ancona’s sermon is in the appendix of the second volume of *Album de la coronación* 10–18, at 12.

and the United States, called for the recognition of her hemispheric patronage beyond the bounds of Mexico.³⁰

Other theses of Carrillo y Ancona reflected the theological innovations of 19th-century prelates and preachers, particularly during the ecclesial revival that gained momentum the decade before the coronation. Though he judiciously avoided direct criticism of the Mexican government and its policies, his theological reading of Mexican history encompassed an implicit but unmistakable advocacy for the Church's leadership position in Mexican society. He boldly asserted that "Mexican history is Guadalupan history. The Mexican people are the people of Holy Mary of Guadalupe." Paraphrasing Luke 22:25 with no small degree of irony, he then stated that "the kings of nations, even though they are called the benefactors and fathers of their people, make themselves their tyrants." By contrast, he argued, Guadalupe halted both the cruelties of the former Aztec rulers and "the horrible and barbaric calamities of the warlike [Spanish] invaders," and through the Catholic faith she "united and constituted into one people the two diverse castes, indigenous and Spanish, and thus the truly American race was born." Thus, like many of his 19th-century contemporaries, Carrillo y Ancona revised their predecessors' criollo perspectives that lauded the Spanish colonial enterprise, accentuating instead the flourishing of a *mestizo* society and nation. Furthermore, he contended that, had it not been for the "worldly obstacles" that the Catholic religion faced in subsequent centuries, "how much greater, more advanced and more blessed would be today all the peoples of the New World, and very particularly the Mexican people!" Guadalupe is "the symbolic eagle of our heroic emblem, an eagle whose irresistible force subdued and destroyed the serpent of perfidy against both God and country, the serpent of apostasy, division, discord, and of all ruin and evil."³¹

Carrillo y Ancona concluded his sermon with allusions to some concrete steps that would alleviate contemporary social ills. Guadalupe's preference of the indigenous neophyte Juan Diego as her chosen messenger and her speaking with him in his native tongue provided an example for just treatment of the indigenous peoples. The bishop's words of prayer implicitly called for religious renewal in Mexico: "Oh Most Holy Mother, Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, Ark of the Divine Mexican Covenant, grant that through you and under your protection the Mexican Republic will be ever fortunate to remain and live each day more constant and firm in inalterable faith in Christ." The prayer went on to claim that, through Guadalupe, God had entered into a covenant relationship with Mexico, intrinsically linking national peace and prosperity with the extent of the people's faith and devotion. Carrillo y Ancona's final admonition was that

³⁰ Ibid. 12–14.

³¹ Ibid. 15–16.

the Guadalupe coronation initiate a covenant renewal in which Mexicans crown her not merely with a tiara of precious jewels but also with the living crown of her faithful children in fulfillment of the (once again paraphrased) counsel given in Proverbs 17:6: "Good children are the crown of their parents."³²

The call for Guadalupe to be recognized as patroness of the hemisphere and the ongoing echoes of previous Guadalupan theological themes notwithstanding, the extensive focus on Guadalupe's covenant relationship with the Mexican nation had clearly displaced an earlier emphasis on assessing Guadalupe's meaning within the context of biblical, patristic, and other theological sources. The new pattern of interpretation continued to predominate throughout the first decades of the 20th century and particularly during the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) and the Cristero Rebellion (1926–1929), conflicts that reinvigorated antagonisms between government and church officials and resulted in another period of exile for Mexican bishops, priests, religious, and laity. Many fled to the United States; at one point five Mexican archbishops and eight bishops resided in San Antonio, Texas, awaiting a change in the political climate so they could return to their dioceses.³³

The public discourse of exiled Mexican clergy revealed the ongoing primacy of their 19th-century predecessors' conviction about the intrinsic link between Guadalupe and the Mexican nation. In a 1914 sermon for the Guadalupe feast at San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, Archbishop Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete of Linares urged "the people of Mexico to return to an adoration and supplication of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a means of obtaining peace in their country."³⁴ Two decades later Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, the ordinary of Morelia and the apostolic delegate to Mexico, issued a press release from exile in the United States on Guadalupe's feast day, assuring his fellow refugees that Guadalupe "will save Mexico from the claws of atheism, the plague of materialism, and the hate of Bolshevik socialism."³⁵ Yet another clergyman contended that the Mexican government had brought a "severe and just punishment" down from heaven by its misguided efforts to banish God from schools, persecute the Church, profane sacred temples, and mock the clergy in press reports that fomented paganism. To remedy the horrific conditions in Mexico, he called his compatriots to a spiritual renewal that included the

³² Ibid. 16.

³³ Gilberto M. Hinojosa, "Mexican-American Faith Communities in Texas and the Southwest," in *Mexican Americans and the Catholic Church, 1900–1965*, ed. Jay P. Dolan and Gilberto M. Hinojosa (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1994) 9–125, at 58.

³⁴ *San Antonio Light*, December 12, 1914.

³⁵ *La Prensa* (San Antonio), December 12, 1934

rich sharing their goods with the poor, a return to mutual love as the basis of social life, parental insistence on religious instruction in their children's schools, greater respect for the things of God, and the clergy's diligence in fulfilling their duties of propagating Christian doctrine and consoling the afflicted.³⁶

Thus in U.S. exile, Guadalupean preaching encompassed protest against political and religious conditions in Mexico, the claim that Mexico's social upheaval was a divine punishment for national infidelity to the covenant God had enacted with the Mexican people through Guadalupe, and pleas for covenant renewal to remedy these ills. The 19th-century transformation in Guadalupean theologies was clearly evident: the 17th- and 18th-century theological project of seeking Guadalupe's links to the premier sources of Christianity had been reduced to an engagement of Guadalupe in Catholic interpretations and critiques of Mexican national life.

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Published theological works on Guadalupe have increased remarkably in the decades since the Second Vatican Council. The trend in theological discourse which has most influenced these analyses is the attempt to more systematically articulate the context out of which a particular theology arises, especially the efforts to develop theologies from the perspectives of marginalized peoples. Prominent among more recent theological works on Guadalupe are examinations of the *Nican mopohua* apparitions account from an indigenous perspective, as in the writings of Angel María Garibay Kintana, Clodomiro Siller Acuña, Virgilio Elizondo, José Luis Guerrero, and Richard Nebel.³⁷ In sharp contrast with the colonial and nationalistic interpretations of previous centuries, these contemporary analyses do not conclude that Guadalupe sought to obliterate all indigenous traditions, nor that she formed a covenant relationship with Mexico parallel to the biblical

³⁶ Ibid., December 13, 1916.

³⁷ Angel María Garibay K[intana], "La maternidad de María en el mensaje guadalupano," in *La maternidad espiritual de María: Conferencias leídas en los Congresos Mariológicos 7-12 octubre 1957 y 9-12 octubre 1960* (Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1961) 187-202; Garibay, "The Spiritual Motherhood of Mary," in *A Handbook on Guadalupe* (New Bedford, Mass.: Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997) 9-16; Clodomiro L. Siller Acuña, *Flor y canto del Tepeyac: Historia de las apariciones de Santa María de Guadalupe: Texto y comentario* (Xalapa, Veracruz: Servir, 1981); Virgilio Elizondo, *La Morenita: Evangelizer of the Americas* (San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1980); Elizondo, *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997); Richard Nebel, *Santa María Tonantzin, Virgen de Guadalupe: Continuidad y transformación religiosa en México* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995); Guerrero, *El Nican mopohua*. My thanks to Martinus Cawley, O.C.S.O., for providing me with copies of Angel María Garibay Kintana's theological writings.

covenant between Yahweh and Israel. Rather, they look at Guadalupe's love and respect for the conquered indigenous peoples and, by extension, her compassion for the downtrodden in other times and places. The tendency to concentrate on the *Nican mopohua* in theological studies of Guadalupe reflects a wider trend among scholars to accentuate the indigenous origins of Mexican culture and traditions. Indeed, as Raúl Gómez and others have noted, since the Mexican Revolution the pervasive national myth of a glorious indigenous past is often reflected in scholarly analyses, an "indigenismo" often accompanied by the complementary conviction that all Spanish influences in Mexico are to be ignored or disdained.³⁸

U.S. Latina and Latino theological writings exemplify the wide range of themes and perspectives presented in contemporary analyses of Guadalupe. As with other powerful religious traditions, this diversity reflects a long history of attempts to reinterpret Guadalupe, as well as the ever looming possibility of co-option to buttress one's own agenda or theological project. Latino theologians have articulated claims like Guadalupe's significance as the premier evangelizer of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, the mother of new life for the Americas, a source of empowerment for women, a symbol of hope and liberation, a sign of ecclesial unity, an inculturated expression of the Christian tradition, a symbol of grace and an expression of popular Pneumatology, a hermeneutical lens for rereading Revelation 12, a paradigm of authentic human freedom and relationships, an embodiment of beauty and a rich resource for theological esthetics, a challenging figure for Mexican American Protestant women, a vital means to foster dialogue between Nahuatl and Judeo-Christian wisdom theologies, a locus of ecclesiological insight, a bearer of cultural memory, and a vehicle for divine self-communication that can be incorporated into a Reformed doctrine of Creation.³⁹ Introductions to Latino theology such

³⁸ Raúl R. Gómez, "Beyond *Sarapes* and *Maracas*: Liturgical Theology in a Hispanic/Latino Context," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 8 (November 2000) 55–71, at 69.

³⁹ Elizondo, *La Morenita*; Elizondo, *Guadalupe*; Jeanette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas, 1994); Andrés G. Guerrero, *A Chicano Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987) esp. 96–117, 139–48; Sixto García, "Our Lady of Guadalupe: A Sign of Ecclesial Unity," *Marian Studies* 44 (1993) 88–105; Roberto S. Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995) 37–46, 70–76, 104–9; Orlando O. Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997) 6–10, 73–78; Espín, "An Exploration into the Theology of Grace and Sin," in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1999) 121–52, at 137–41; Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "Biblical Interpretation from a U.S. Hispanic American Perspective: A Reading of the Apocalypse," in *El Cuerpo*

as that of Arturo Bañuelas avow that the Guadalupe tradition is among “the foundational paradigmatic events for U.S. Hispanic theology.” Indeed, Michelle Gonzalez contends that her fellow Cuban American and other “Latino/a theologians have created a *mexicanized* construction of Latino/a identity” through their consistent focus on topics like “the embodied norm of Our Lady of Guadalupe” to the detriment of traditions originating in Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Latino groups.⁴⁰ Her insightful critique nonetheless underscores the tendency to universalize what originally was a Mexican tradition and the widespread conviction that Guadalupe’s influence merits ongoing theological analyses; these even encompass a growing number of works from U.S. theologians not of Latino heritage who have added further thematic treatments of Guadalupe’s meaning, such as her significance in the liturgy, Protestant traditions, and the spirituality of immigrants.⁴¹

de Cristo: The Hispanic Presence in the U.S. Catholic Church, ed. Peter Casarella and Raúl Gómez (New York: Crossroad, 1998) 78–105; Ruiz, “The Bible and U.S. Hispanic American Theological Discourse: Lessons from a Non-Innocent History,” in *From the Heart of Our People* 100–20; David A. Sánchez, “Recontextualizing Resistance: The Revelation to John,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 59, no. 3–4 (2005) 113–21; Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio: Subverting Imperial Myths* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008); Goizueta, “Resurrection at Tepeyac: The Guadalupan Encounter,” *Theology Today* 56 (1999) 336–45; Alejandro García-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful: A Theological Aesthetics* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999) esp. 39–40, 56–59, 194; Nora O. Lozano-Díaz, “Ignored Virgin or Unaware Women: A Mexican-American Protestant Reflection on the Virgin of Guadalupe,” in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, ed. María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodriguez (Austin: University of Texas, 2002) 204–16; Juan Alvarez Cuauhtemoc, “The Lord Became Lady: A Chicano Theological Interpretation of Our Lady of Guadalupe,” *Swedish Missiological Themes* 92 (2004) 195–226; Natalia M. Imperatori-Lee, “An Inculturated Mariology: Mary in the Latino/a Context,” in *Inculturation and the Church in North America*, ed. T. Frank Kennedy, S.J. (New York: Crossroad, 2006) 163–78; Jeanette Rodriguez and Ted Fortier, *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity* (Austin: University of Texas, 2007) esp. 15–34; Rubén Rosario Rodríguez, “Beyond Word and Sacrament: A Reformed Protestant Engagement of Guadalupan Devotion,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 42 (2007) 173–95; Rodríguez, *Racism and God-Talk: A Latino/a Perspective* (New York: New York University, 2008), chap. 4 “Guadalupe: *Imago Dei* Reconsidered,” 153–75.

⁴⁰ Arturo Bañuelas, “U.S. Hispanic Theology,” *Missiology: An International Review* 20 (1992) 275–300, at 292; Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Afro-Cuban Theology: Religion, Race, Culture, and Identity* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2006) 12; see also 29–31.

⁴¹ Maxwell Johnson, *The Virgin of Guadalupe: Theological Reflections of an Anglo-Lutheran Liturgist* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Daniel G. Groody, *Border of Death, Valley of Life: An Immigrant Journey of Heart and Spirit* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

Virgilio Elizondo is widely considered the founder of U.S. Latino theology. He was also the first Latino theologian to write extensively on Guadalupe and probe the core meanings of the growing devotion to her, particularly the ways she has enabled his own Mexican American people to maintain their dignity. Expanding on the 19th-century claim that Guadalupe united conquering Spaniards with the conquered natives, he identifies Our Lady of Guadalupe as a “mestiza,” one who “is neither an Indian goddess nor a European Madonna; she is something new. She is neither Spanish nor Indian and yet she is both and more. . . . She is the first truly American person and as such the mother of the new generations to come.” As such she provides hope and inspiration for Mexican Americans who, in imitation of Guadalupe, are called to embrace their identity as mixed-race mestizos, synthesize the richness from their parent cultures, and lead the way in constructing a society in which the barriers between peoples are broken.⁴²

Elizondo’s most comprehensive examination of Guadalupe is his 1997 work *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation*, which includes an English translation of the *Nican mopohua* and is an extended theological commentary on that text. This volume highlights the theme most frequently annunciated in contemporary Guadalupan theologies, namely, justice or liberation, the breaking in of God’s reign that upends the status quo of the world: in the words of Mary’s Magnificat, the way God “has deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places.” Elizondo sees the Guadalupe event as a counternarrative to the complete defeat of the native peoples of central Mexico. Guadalupe’s first words to Juan Diego are “dignified Juan, dignified Juan Diego.” She then goes on to give him the mission of communicating to Bishop Zumárraga her desire

⁴² Elizondo, *La Morenita* 112; Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet*, 2nd ed. (1988; Boulder: University of Colorado, 2000) 65. See also Elizondo, “Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Cultural Symbol: ‘The Power of the Powerless,’” in *Liturgy and Cultural Religious Traditions*, ed. Herman Schmidt and David Power (New York: Seabury, 1977) 25–33; Elizondo, *Mestizaje: The Dialectic of Cultural Birth and the Gospel*, 3 vols. (San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1978); Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise*, rev. ed. (1983; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2000); Elizondo, “Mary and the Poor: A Model of Evangelising Ecumenism,” in *Mary in the Churches*, ed. Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann (New York: Seabury, 1983) 59–65; Elizondo, *Guadalupe*; Timothy Matovina, ed., *Beyond Borders: Writings of Virgilio Elizondo and Friends* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2000), especially Jeanette Rodriguez, “The Common Womb of the Americas: Virgilio Elizondo’s Theological Reflection on Our Lady of Guadalupe,” 109–17; Elizondo, “María de Guadalupe: Star of the First and New Evangelization,” *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 56 (2006) 353–60.

that a temple be built on the hill of Tepeyac where she “will show and give to all people all my love, my compassion, my help, and my protection.”⁴³

Her words of comfort and calling are given effect in the narrative’s dramatic reversals. At the beginning of the story only Guadalupe has trust in Juan Diego; by the end the bishop and his assistants believe he is truly her messenger. At the outset of the account Juan Diego stands meekly before the bishop; in the end the stooped indio stands erect while the bishop and his household kneel before him and venerate the image on his tilma. Throughout the account Juan Diego must journey to the center of the city from Tepeyac some three miles to the north; at the end of the narration the bishop and his entourage accompany Juan Diego to Tepeyac, where they will build the temple that Guadalupe requested. Symbolically, the presence of the ecclesial leadership and the church they are constructing are thus moved from the center of their capitol city out to the margins among the indigenous people. Thus the *Nican mopohua* encompasses the message that discipleship requires listening to the voice of the forgotten and marginalized, defending and helping them to sense their dignity as God’s sons and daughters, and preferentially choosing them as the recipients of the church’s proclamation of the gospel, service, and struggle for a more just social order.

Elizondo uncovers various other themes in the *Nican mopohua*, such as the theology of conversion which it narrates.⁴⁴ Bishop Zumárraga is called to go beyond the blindness of ethnocentrism and pride that was so imbedded in the mentality of the Spanish conquerors. To his credit, he comes to recognize the truth of the message Juan Diego announces and the indio’s dignity as a child of God called by Guadalupe. Elizondo emphasizes the radical conversion that enabled the bishop to overcome the biases and limitations of his Spanish culture and hear the voice of God’s mother speaking to him through a most unexpected messenger.

Juan Diego, on the other hand, did not need to be converted from excessive pride. On the contrary, in the *Nican mopohua* his greatest sin is a lack of self-worth, an internalization of the effects of the conquest, particularly the conquerors’ presumption that the natives were inferior or even subhuman. Ultimately Juan Diego’s internalization of the conquerors’ judgments and stereotypes led him to not accept that he too was made in God’s image and likeness. In one of the most moving passages of the apparitions narrative, he returns to Guadalupe after his first interview with the bishop and asks her to send another messenger “who is respected and

⁴³ These and all following citations from the *Nican mopohua* are taken from the translation provided in Elizondo, *Guadalupe* 5–22.

⁴⁴ See esp. *ibid.* 81–99.

esteemed,” because he is too lowly and unimportant, and she has sent him “to a place where I do not belong.” Her response was tender but firm:

Listen, my most abandoned son, know well in your heart that there are not a few of my servants and messengers to whom I could give the mandate of taking my thought and my word so that my will may be accomplished. But it is absolutely necessary that you personally go and speak about this, and that precisely through your mediation and help my wish and my desire be realized.

The conversion of Juan Diego—and by extension the call to conversion of all the conquered native peoples and anyone else who doubts their own fundamental goodness as a creation of God—is not a call from sinful pride to humble acceptance of God’s will and ways. It is a call from debilitating self-abasement to a healthy embrace of God’s love and the mission of living for God and others to which that love beckons one. Thus the pathway of conversion is not the same for all, though the call to conversion and transformation is extended to each disciple. As Elizondo states, we are all called to see ourselves and others as God and blessed Mary of Guadalupe see us: as precious, dignified, and made in God’s own image and likeness. But we are also all called to confront our sinful pride and spiritual blindness, the Juan de Zumárraga tendencies that lurk inside each of us. Elizondo is careful to note that to this day Guadalupan devotion is not a panacea for righteousness, as she has been “co-opted and domesticated by the powerful of Mexico, including the church” and has also served to “canonize and maintain [class] divisions among the Mexican American people.”⁴⁵ Christian conversion, the call that we constantly seek to conform our lives more closely to the example of Christ, demands that we follow both the pathways of Juan Diego and of Juan de Zumárraga.

Women writers who have examined Guadalupe in recent decades have added fresh perspectives to published articulations of Guadalupan interpretation. Among Latina theologians Jeanette Rodriguez was the first to explore systematically women’s relationships with Guadalupe. As the title of her 1994 study, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women*, suggests, Rodriguez highlights Guadalupe’s fortifying presence. Drawing on interviews conducted among Mexican American women, she details the comfort, peace, and ability to sustain relationships that Guadalupe embodies and inspires in these women’s lives. In a memorable passage, Rodriguez reports that, when she asked an indigenous woman in Mexico what makes Guadalupe such a powerful apparition of Mary, the woman simply responded “se quedó” (she stayed). This woman’s response illuminates Rodriguez’s core thesis about Guadalupe’s abiding and empowering presence in the lives of numerous female

⁴⁵ Ibid. 114; Elizondo, *Galilean Journey* 44.

devotees. Rodriguez concludes that in the faith expressions of Mexican American women Guadalupe is a symbol of God's unconditional love and even the feminine face of God. Yet she also posits that these women need to be more profoundly "challenged by the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe" to work for transformation in their lives and their surroundings and thus engage more fully in "the liberating call of mission as experienced by Juan Diego."⁴⁶

Rodriguez's theological writings complement a growing number of works in which women attempt a critical reappraisal of Guadalupe. Chicana art and literature like the writings of Sandra Cisneros exemplify this stance. Cisneros presents Guadalupe as an advocate for counteracting the "traditional" gender roles and expectations that she purportedly buttresses. During her childhood and young adult years in Chicago, Cisneros learned to perceive Guadalupe as a source of divine sanction for a familial and cultural code of silence about women's bodies and sexuality, as well as a double standard of feminine purity and masculine promiscuity. Only after a series of experiences like her visit to the Guadalupe basilica in Mexico City was she able to reclaim Guadalupe. These experiences and her association of Guadalupe with a pre-Columbian antecedent, the goddess Tonantzin, enabled her to embrace Guadalupe as a brown-skinned, feminine manifestation of divine power who dwells "inside each Chicana and *mexicana*" and can enable them to see the totality of their corporeal existence as created in the divine image. Describing herself as someone "obsessed with becoming a woman comfortable in her skin"—brown skin she sees reflected in the divine pantheon through Guadalupe—Cisneros sums up her view of Guadalupe by echoing an invocation of the Hail Mary, "Blessed art thou, Lupe, and, therefore, blessed am I."⁴⁷

Theologian Nancy Pineda-Madrid explores such interpretations in her recent dissertation, "Interpreting Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mediating the Christian Mystery of Redemption," averring that "if the full humanity of

⁴⁶ Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* 128, 162. See also Rodriguez, "Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe among Mexican Americans," in *Many Faces, One Church: Cultural Diversity and the American Catholic Experience*, ed. Peter C. Phan and Diana Hayes (Lanham, Md.: Sheed & Ward, 2005) 83–97; Rodriguez and Fortier, *Cultural Memory*. For Brazilian and Mexican theologians who have examined Guadalupe in parallel ways, see Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer, *Mary: Mother of God, Mother of the Poor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989) 144–54; María del Carmen Servitje Montull, "Mary of Guadalupe: Icon of Liberation or Image of Oppression?" in *Feminst Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World*, ed. María Pilar Aquino and María José Rosado-Nunes (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2007) 231–47.

⁴⁷ Sandra Cisneros, "Guadalupe the Sex Goddess," in *Goddess of the Americas* 46–51, at 50–51; Cisneros, "Tepeyac," in *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (New York: Random House, 1991) 21–23.

Chicanas and all Latinas is a central concern of U.S. Latino/a theology, Chicana feminist discourse must be engaged particularly when its theorists put forward critical readings of Guadalupe.⁴⁸ She examines the Guadalupan writings of Elizondo in critical conversation with the interpretations of Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Laura Elisa Pérez. Chicana theorists like Alarcón contend that “Guadalupe is a symbol that continues to exist for the purpose of ‘universalizing’ and containing women’s lives within a discrete cultural banner.”⁴⁹ This leaves women the options of either abandoning the Guadalupe tradition altogether or attempting a critical reappraisal. The latter approach is clearly evident in literature like Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and in the Chicana art that Pérez examines in her scholarship, such as Ester Hernández’s “La Virgen de Guadalupe Defendiendo los Derechos de los Xicanos” and Yolanda López’s “Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe.”⁵⁰

Pineda-Madrid explicates that “for the Chicana feminist theorists, a liberative interpretation of Guadalupe needs to create space and support for Chicanas as speaking subjects, needs to heal and transform Chicanas so as to deepen their self-esteem, and needs to enable Chicanas (and others) to know even more deeply the interconnectedness of all humankind and of all creation.” Yet she cautions that Chicana theorists tend to define Guadalupe “in strictly utilitarian, instrumental terms” and thus do not articulate a comprehensive vision of Guadalupe’s redemptive potential. Pineda-Madrid then seeks to engage American pragmatist Josiah Royce’s

⁴⁸ Nancy Pineda-Madrid, “Interpreting Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mediating the Christian Mystery of Redemption” (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, 2005) 3.

⁴⁹ Norma Alarcón, “Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism,” in *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, ed. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1994) 110–33, at 129–30.

⁵⁰ Nancy Pineda-Madrid, “Notes toward a Chicana Feminist Epistemology (and Why It Is Important for Latina Feminist Theologies),” in *Reader in Latina Feminist Theology* 241–66; Pineda-Madrid, “Traditioning: The Formation of Community, the Transmission of Faith,” in *Futuring Our Past: Explorations in the Theology of Tradition*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Gary Macy (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2006) 204–26; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2nd ed. (1987; San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999); Laura Elisa Pérez, “El Desorden, Nationalism, and Chicana/o Aesthetics,” in *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, ed. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Mino Moallem (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 1999) 19–46; Pérez, *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 2007). The Guadalupan art of Ester Hernández and Yolanda López is reprinted in various publications including Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art* 17, 140, 221, and plate 3 of color illustration insert pages. For Chicana literary and artistic works on Guadalupe, see also the references in note 9 above.

theory of interpretation as a tool for assessing the works of these Chicana writers and those of Elizondo in order “to make plain the *need* for a more critically developed theological explanation of how Guadalupe mediates the Christian mystery of redemption” in its fullness. In this initial study she does not attempt to provide such an explanation, but offers direction for this vital theological project in her conclusion that a robust Guadalupan theology must critically assess and integrate insights from Chicana feminist discourse and from Latino theologies such as Elizondo’s emphases on *mestizaje* and justice.⁵¹

Amidst the steadily diversifying and debated interpretations of Guadalupe, yet another recent development is the Guadalupan statements of Pope John Paul II, whose ardent Marian and Guadalupan piety led him to make more theological pronouncements on Guadalupe than any other pope. On the occasion of the 1979 Latin American bishops’ conference at Puebla, one of his initial acts on the first of five papal visits to Mexico was to celebrate the Eucharist at the Guadalupe basilica. His 1990 and 2002 trips to Mexico included the beatification and canonization of Juan Diego, respectively. In 1999 he formally presented the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America* during a Eucharist celebrated at the Guadalupe basilica. On all of the aforementioned as well as other occasions he explicated and developed his Guadalupan thought in homilies and public addresses.⁵²

John Paul’s encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* examined Mary in relationship to Christ, in the life of the church, and in her role as mediator and mother. In one passage he notes that the “Marian dimension of Christian life takes on special importance in relation to women and their status” and that “women, by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement.”⁵³ Yet his treatment of Guadalupe does not develop his theology of Mary and, unlike contemporary Chicana writers and Latina theologians, he does not probe the subject of Guadalupe’s significance in women’s lives. Instead, expanding on the conclusions of the 1979 Latin American bishops’ conference at Puebla, which note “the *mestizo* countenance of Mary of

⁵¹ Pineda-Madrid, “Interpreting Our Lady of Guadalupe” 91, 93, 175 (emphasis original).

⁵² John Paul II, “Pope Announces Visit to Mexico,” *Origins* 8 (1979) 449–53, at 453; “Medellín: After Ten Years (Mexico City/Pope’s Guadalupe Message),” *Origins* 8 (1979) 539–41; “Juan Diego’s Message for the Laity,” *Origins* 20 (1990) 24–7; “A Church of Hope,” *Origins* 28 (1999) 603–5; “The Canonization of Juan Diego,” *Origins* 32 (2002) 190–91. My thanks to Mariscela Méndez, a McNair Scholar whose project I supervised at the University of Notre Dame in summer 2004; her research on Pope John Paul’s statements about Guadalupe provided a bibliography of primary sources for this analysis of his thought.

⁵³ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* (1987) no. 46, *Origins* 16 (1987) 745–66.

Guadalupe, who appeared at the start of the evangelization process,⁵⁴ he accentuates another fundamental theme of his writings and pontificate: evangelization. John Paul acclaimed Guadalupe primarily as the mother of God who proclaims Christ to the Americas, an announcement of the Christian gospel in a manner that respected native symbols and cultures. In his words, she is the “star of the first and the new evangelization,” and her image and message present “an impressive example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization.” Guadalupe teaches that evangelization—the mission of proclaiming Christ in word and deed to which all the baptized have been called—is not most effectively served when we Christians impose our cultural ways as if they were intrinsic to the gospel, but when we creatively announce the gospel in a manner that incarnates it within a local cultural context. Inculturation and evangelization are intrinsically linked. As John Paul states, “In the *mestizo* face of the Virgin of Tepeyac is summed up the great principle of inculturation: the deep transformation of genuine [indigenous] cultural values through their integration into Christianity and the rooting of Christianity in the various cultures.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Latin American bishops, Puebla Conclusions (1979) no. 446. The other reference to Guadalupe in the Puebla conclusions encompassed a theme that neither John Paul II nor the subsequent Latin American bishops’ conferences developed: “From the very beginning—with her appearance in Guadalupe and the dedication of a shrine to her there—Mary has constituted the great sign of the nearness of the Father and Christ, inviting us to enter into communion with them” (no. 282). Guadalupe is briefly mentioned once in the conclusions of the 1992 Latin American bishops’ conference at Santo Domingo (no. 15) and three times in the conclusions of the 2007 conference at Aparecida (nos. 4, 7, 265). These passages echo John Paul II’s thought, which is the primary source for two of them. Similarly, Benedict XVI mirrored his predecessor’s thought in the two short references to Guadalupe in his inaugural address for the Aparecida conference. Guadalupe was not mentioned in the conclusions of the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops convened in 1968 at Medellín. See *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council: Conclusions/Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops* (Washington: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat, Committee for the Church in Latin American, 1979); *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America: Conclusions/Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops* (Washington: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat, Committee for the Church in Latin American, 1979); Alfred T. Hennelly, ed., *Santo Domingo and Beyond: Documents and Commentaries from the Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993); *Documento Conclusivo, V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe, and Discurso Inaugural de Su Santidad Benedicto XVI*, May 13, 2007, http://www.celam.org/celam.info/download/Documento_Conclusivo_Aparecida.pdf (accessed September 24, 2008).

⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* no. 11; John Paul II, “Opening Address of the Holy Father” no. 24, in *Santo Domingo and Beyond* 41–60, at 56.

Echoing previous claims that Guadalupe is a hemispheric patroness, John Paul also noted that today Guadalupe's "influence greatly overflows the boundaries of Mexico, spreading to the whole continent." He taught that Guadalupe is a mother, evangelizer, and patroness whose message calls all peoples of the hemisphere to form a united American continent. Significantly, he does not speak of "America" in the plural, but in the singular. This accentuates a claim he first made in the American hemisphere on his initial visit to the United States, when he boldly likened the split between the richer and more powerful nations and the more economically impoverished nations of the world to the rich man and Lazarus of Luke 16. Here John Paul avowed that one of the great challenges in our world today is to see the intrinsic link between the rich northern and poorer southern halves of the planet. In *Ecclesia in America*, the title of which itself denotes the interconnectedness of the hemisphere, he noted explicitly that his "decision to speak of *America* in the singular was an attempt to express not only the unity which in some way already exists, but also to point to that closer bond that the peoples of the continent seek and that the church wishes to foster as part of her own mission." Acclaiming Guadalupe as the mother and evangelizer of all America reminds us that all the peoples of America—North, South, Central, and the Caribbean—are daughters and sons of the same mother. Our destinies are intimately conjoined, and "the *mestiza* face of the Virgin of Tepeyac" both reminds us of the ties that bind us and challenges us to transcend narrow parochialism and nationalism and adopt a wider vision of our faith, our church, and our calling as disciples.⁵⁶

THEOLOGIES OF GUADALUPE

John Paul's emphasis on Guadalupe's evangelizing role first in Mexico and subsequently in the wider American hemisphere reflects the tension between the particular and the universal in Guadalupan theologies, and indeed in theology and religious traditions more generally. For instance, Guadalupe's malleability as an ethnic or patriotic symbol is striking, from Spaniards to Native Americans to criollos to Mexicans to mestizos. Intentionally or not, the engagement of Guadalupe as a symbol of national identity has obvious limitations: it connects her patronage with one particular group of people and can diminish claims of her universal care for all. Theologies of Guadalupe have on various occasions been more narrowly patriotic than biblically prophetic, particularly during the 19th century when her patronage was frequently enlisted to buttress the cult of

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* no. 5 (emphasis original), no. 11; "Do Not Leave to the Poor the Crumbs of Your Feast: Homily of Pope John Paul II at Yankee Stadium (October 2, 1979)," *The Pope Speaks* 24 (1979) 312–17.

nationalism. Yet, in stratified societies like colonial New Spain and the United States, the emphatic link of Guadalupe with conquered or marginalized peoples has enabled them to express their faith, sense of human dignity, and demands for just treatment. Like many Guadalupan devotees, theologians rightly attest that the Guadalupe narrative is true: in the vindication of the lowly indio Juan Diego, it reveals the deep truth of universal human dignity and exposes the lie of social inequalities that diminish oppressed and suffering people's fundamental sense of worth. One means of assessing the long trajectory of Guadalupan theologies is exploring the tension between Guadalupe's particular message of hope to Juan Diego and other marginalized peoples and the universal implications of that message.

Another means of assessing the trajectory of Guadalupan theologies is to examine the influence of the first two writings in this body of literature, both of which still await a critical theological edition. The theologian who has most influenced the historical development of the Guadalupe tradition is unquestionably the first of these writers, Miguel Sánchez. Besides introducing oft-repeated biblical analogies like the association of Guadalupe and the woman in Revelation 12, shaping the sermons of generations of criollo preachers, and initiating the subsequent link between Guadalupe and the Mexican nation, even the contemporary resurgence of theological works on Guadalupe entails some critical reappraisal of Sánchez, whose volume *Imagen de la Virgen María* was reprinted for the first time in 1952. Theologians like Virgilio Elizondo observe that Sánchez's book "awoke the theological imagination not only of his contemporaries but also of those who would come after" and "transformed Guadalupe from a devotion to a miraculous image to a profound conviction that this was a transcendental event in the development of Christianity."⁵⁷

Yet Elizondo and other writers also criticize the Eurocentric limitations that enabled Sánchez to so expediently attribute the violent subjugation of Mexico to divine providence. As Jean-Pierre Ruiz succinctly put it, "in arguing that the events of Tepeyac were a fulfillment of scripture that confirmed the divine design involved in the Spanish conquest of Mexico, Sánchez simultaneously argued for the hermeneutical sufficiency (and exclusive privilege) of European Christian categories for comprehending and communicating religious experience in the Americas."⁵⁸ Consciously or not, conclusions originally articulated in *Imagen de la Virgen María* and subsequently popularized by criollo preachers are echoed in some major claims of contemporary theologians, albeit from a liberationist perspective. For example, recent writers assert that Guadalupe did not justify or abet

⁵⁷ Elizondo, *La Morenita* 106.

⁵⁸ Ruiz, "The Bible and U.S. Hispanic American Theological Discourse" 107.

the Spanish conquest but broke the cycle of indigenous victimization and subjugation, that her apparitions did not merely transplant European Christianity but incarnated the Christian message in native idiom and imagery, and that her message not only converted the indigenous peoples from practices like human sacrifice but also demanded that Spanish Catholics repent of their ethnocentrism and violence. New themes contemporary interpreters have introduced in Guadalupean discourse expand on Sánchez's foundational theological project of exploring Guadalupe's significance for the encounter of the Old and New Worlds and the authentic propagation of Christianity in the American hemisphere.

Though less known among his contemporaries, Luis Laso de la Vega's *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* reflects the enduring and important link between theology and catechesis in the Guadalupean tradition. Historically, most extant theological texts on Guadalupe are sermons intended to instruct and admonish the faithful on Guadalupe's implications for Christianity in the New World. The extensive focus on the *Nican mopohua* in contemporary Guadalupean theologies is an attempt to articulate the theological meanings of a sacred narrative that gradually grew in stature among millions of devotees after Laso de la Vega first published it and promoted its public proclamation in worship. Taking as their point of departure the fact that the apparitions narrative has captured the imagination of so many, these theologies are in effect a form of mystagogical catechesis, an exposition of sacred mysteries that the faithful have already encountered in their daily lives and devotion.

Contemporary scholars offer a range of insights on the criteria for assessing theological appropriations of Guadalupe. Their various approaches include the liberationist endorsement of living Guadalupe's message in a way that uplifts the poor and marginalized, the feminist insistence that Guadalupe be engaged in a manner that affirms the full humanity of women, the doctrinal measure of an interpretation's faithfulness to Catholic teaching and tradition, and the *sensus fidelium* criterion that perspectives on Guadalupe be consistent with the core convictions of past and present Guadalupean devotees. Theologies of Guadalupe tend to bestride two or more of these criteria, though in most cases one of them predominates. The liberationist and feminist approaches focus more explicitly on Guadalupe's implications for promoting justice and living gospel hope in the here and now, while the doctrinal and *sensus fidelium* approaches primarily apply extant interpretations as guideposts to seek continuity and fidelity in present understandings. Collectively these criteria provide sound norms for the current constructive proposals in Guadalupean theology. Given the growing number and diversity of these proposals, however, at this time the most pressing theological need is for greater critical conversation, evaluation, and synthesis—a process already initiated in works like

those of Nancy Pineda-Madrid—to articulate the most significant core meanings for a faith phenomenon that continues to expand in demographic and geographic range.

Herein lies both the strength and the challenge of Guadalupan theologies. As commentators from Sánchez to John Paul II have argued, the Guadalupe tradition is deeply rooted in the soil of the New World, a proclamation of the Christian gospel that has spoken in varied ways to women, men, and devotees of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Yet the very adaptability of the Guadalupe tradition—some might say ambiguity or manipulability—has led even a few well-intentioned theologians and church leaders to interpret Guadalupe as justifying an arguably antievangelical status quo in the social order and as mediating theological formulations that are at the very least debatable. Today the increasing number of analyses from both theological and other interpreters not only reflects the Guadalupe tradition's vitality but also presents what could be deemed the postmodern challenge to Guadalupan theologies: when the meanings of traditions like Guadalupe expand dramatically, their power to unite us and move us beyond the confines of an uncritical subjectivity can easily diminish. Thus for theologians the crux of the issue is threefold: counteracting biases such as Eurocentrism, nationalism, indigenismo, and patriarchy; engaging in critical conversations about the various proposals for appropriating the Guadalupe tradition today; and synthesizing those proposals in light of the long trajectory of exploring Guadalupe theologically vis-à-vis the wider Christian tradition. These parameters, of course, are applicable to the theological task in general, but particularly in cases like Guadalupe in which the theologian seeks to unveil the meanings of a pious tradition deeply ingrained in culture and everyday life. The historical development of Guadalupan theologies is an essential resource for ongoing efforts to advance this important task.