

GUADALUPE AT CALVARY: PATRISTIC THEOLOGY IN
MIGUEL SÁNCHEZ'S *IMAGEN DE LA VIRGEN
MARÍA* (1648)

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[Readers of Miguel Sánchez's Imagen de la Virgen María, which contained the first published account of Our Lady of Guadalupe's acclaimed apparitions to the indigenous neophyte Juan Diego, rarely recognize that he was trained in the theology of the Church Fathers, particularly in the writings of St. Augustine. Here the author illuminates the influence of patristic thought and theological method on Sánchez, as well as the frequently ignored but foundational role of his theology and that of the Church Fathers on the Guadalupe tradition.]

MIGUEL SANCHEZ'S *Imagen de la Virgen María*¹ contained the first published account of Our Lady of Guadalupe's acclaimed apparitions to the indigenous neophyte Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac. Though the vast majority of devotees maintain that the foundational text of the Guadalupe tradition is the *Nican mopohua*, the Nahuatl version of the apparition narrative first published in Luis Laso de la Vega's 1649 volume *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*,² Sánchez is heralded with Laso de la Vega and their fellow American-born priests Luis Becerra Tanco and Francisco de Flo-

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¹ Miguel Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María*. . . (Mexico City: Viuda de Bernardo Calderón, 1648). Reprinted in Ernesto de la Torre Villar and Ramiro Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos Guadalupanos* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982) 152–267.

² Luis Laso de la Vega, *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*. . . (Mexico City: Imprenta de Juan Ruiz, 1649). Reprinted in de la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos* 282–308. An English translation of this work is in Lisa Sousa, Stafford Poole, and James Lockhart, ed. and trans., *The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega's Huei tlamahuiçoltica of 1649* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1998).

rencia as one of the four Guadalupean “evangelists.”³ Sánchez’s book, an erudite and somewhat convoluted treatise primarily intended for the clergy and other learned readers of Mexico City, was abbreviated to a more popular version in Jesuit Mateo de la Cruz’s *Relación de la milagrosa aparición de la santa imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe de México*.⁴ The extensive influence of Sánchez’s *Imagen de la Virgen María* on the Guadalupe tradition stems both from the widespread appeal of de la Cruz’s condensed volume and Sánchez’s direct influence on prominent Mexico City clergy and other *criollos*, the designation in the Spanish caste system for persons of Spanish blood born in the New World.

Miguel Sánchez (1596?–1674) studied at the Royal and Pontifical University in Mexico City and was a diocesan priest highly respected for his learning and preaching, 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 Guadalupe shrine, where he lived a quiet life of prayer until his death, celebratory funeral, and burial in the Guadalupe basilica.⁵ 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).

Readings of Sánchez’s work have encompassed positivist condemnations

³ The first author to deem these four writers the Guadalupe evangelists was Francisco de la Maza, “Los evangelistas de Guadalupe y el nacionalismo mexicano,” *Cuadernos Americanos* 6 (December 1949) 163–88. The other two works are Luis Becerra Tanco, *Origen milagroso del Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. . . (Mexico City: Viuda de Bernardo Calderón, 1666) and Francisco de Florencia, *La estrella del norte de México*. . . (Mexico City: Viuda de Juan Ribera, 1688). These respective works are reprinted in de la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos* 309–33, 359–99.

⁴ 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 de la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos* 267–81.

⁵ De la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos* 152; D.A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Image and Tradition across Five Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001) 55, 73; Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531–1797* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1995) 101.

for his lack of historical documentation, laudatory praise for his defense of pious tradition, and, over the past half century, critical examinations of his *criollo* nationalism as expressed through the baroque culture in New Spain. Rarely do readers of Sánchez accentuate that he was trained as a patristic theologian and his primary concern was to examine the Guadalupe narrative and the evangelization of Mexico vis-à-vis the wider Christian tradition, particularly the writings of St. Augustine and other Church Fathers and the image of the “woman clothed with the sun” in Revelation 12. Recognizing the patristic influences on Sánchez is essential for understanding the foundational role of his theology and that of the Church Fathers on the Guadalupe tradition.

THE APPARITION TRADITION

Debates about the significance of *Imagen de la Virgen María* for the Guadalupe apparition tradition dominated critical analyses of the work for three centuries after its publication. Like other fields of scholarly inquiry in Mexico and abroad, the intellectual challenges of the Enlightenment shaped Guadalupan studies, with some thinkers employing the tools of modern scholarship and others ardently contesting these thinkers’ methods and findings. No one doubts that a shrine dedicated to Guadalupe at Tepeyac has been active since at least the mid-16th century; the disagreement is whether the shrine or belief in the apparitions came first. In other words, did reports of Juan Diego’s miraculous encounter with Guadalupe initiate the shrine and its devotion, as Sánchez’s book claims, or is the apparition narrative a later invention, perhaps of Sánchez himself, that provides a mythical origin for an already existing image and pious tradition? The vague statement about historical sources in the opening pages of Sánchez’s book only serves to exacerbate this raging debate:

With determination, eagerness, and diligence I looked for documents and writings that dealt with the holy image and its miracle. I did not find them, although I went through the archives where they could have been kept. I learned that through the accident of time and events those that there were had been lost. I appealed to the providential curiosity of the elderly, in which I found some sufficient for the truth. Not content I examined them in all their circumstances, now confronting the chronicles of the conquest, now gathering information from the oldest and most trustworthy persons of the city, now looking for those who were said to have been the original owners of these papers. And I admit that even if everything would have been lacking to me, I would not have desisted from my purpose, when I had on my side the common, grave, and venerated law of tradition, ancient, uniform, and general about the miracle.⁶

⁶ As translated and cited in Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* 102. All other quotations in this essay are my translations of the texts; further quotations from *Imagen*

Those who uphold the foundational status of the apparition tradition argue, or simply presume, that Sánchez's publication is based on oral testimony or on an earlier unpublished version of the apparition narrative. In an obituary of Sánchez, for example, Antonio de Robles credited his friend with writing a "learned book" which reinvigorated a "forgotten" tradition and "seemingly has been the means by which devotion to this holy image has spread throughout all Christendom."⁷ While not doubting the veracity of Sánchez's account, some later Guadalupan writers bemoaned his failure to clearly cite his sources, such as José Patricio Fernández de Uribe, who stated in a late 18th-century book on Guadalupe that "this respectable author [Sánchez] would have done a great service to posterity had he left us with a precise record of the documents used in his volume."⁸ Others asserted that Sánchez had access to an unpublished version of the apparition narrative, an argument first advanced by 19th-century journalist Agustín de la Rosa, who claimed that Sánchez relied on a dramatized version of the apparitions which he mistakenly accepted as literal truth.⁹

Arguments against the apparition tradition were first systematized by Juan Bautista Muñoz, an Enlightenment thinker appointed by Spanish monarch Charles III as official historian of the Indies. Muñoz's 1794 address to the Royal Academy of History in Madrid laid the foundation for all subsequent *antiaparicionistas*. He argued that the lapse of over a century between the 1531 date given for the apparitions and Sánchez's published account and the lack of documentation about the Guadalupe apparitions among prominent 16th-century Catholic leaders in New Spain demonstrate the apparition tradition was not extant in the 16th century.¹⁰ Over the past two centuries the heart of the historical debate has continued to revolve around disagreements about the existence of 16th-century evidence for the apparition tradition. Most recently, the controversy resurfaced in public

de la Virgen María are cited in context with page numbers from the reprinted version of the book readily available in de la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos*.

⁷ Antonio de Robles, *Diario de sucesos notables (1665–1703)*, as cited in de la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos* 1335.

⁸ José Patricio Fernández de Uribe, *Disertación histórica*. . . (Mexico City: Ontiveros, 1801) 71, as cited in de la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos* 1158.

⁹ Agustín de la Rosa, *Defensa de la aparición de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. . . (Guadalajara: Luis G. González, 1896), as in de la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos* 1222–79, at 1223–24, 1252.

¹⁰ 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 de la Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda, ed., *Testimonios históricos* 689–701.

debates about the authenticity, authorship, proper dating, and significance of critical primary sources related to the canonization of Juan Diego.¹¹

LA CRIOLLA

Francisco de la Maza opened a new chapter in the interpretation of Sánchez's work, if not the understanding of the Guadalupe tradition itself, with the 1953 publication of his *El guadalupanismo mexicano*. A renowned art historian, de la Maza contended that "Guadalupanism and baroque art are the only authentic creations of the Mexican past."¹² Unlike previous commentators, his fascination with New Spain's baroque period enabled him to see beyond Sánchez's failure to cite written documentation for the apparition tradition, as well as Sánchez's ornate writing style and theological audacity. De la Maza's sympathetic treatment of Sánchez, the other three Guadalupean evangelists, and the Guadalupe sermons in the half century following the publication of Sánchez's volume revealed a bold new thesis: the *criollo* clergy's intrinsic association of patriotism and religious piety was the core and unifying theme for their energetic promotion of Guadalupean devotion.

Jacques Lafaye, an acclaimed Latin American historian at the Sorbonne, expanded de la Maza's thesis in one of the most influential 20th-century books on Guadalupe, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531–1813*.¹³ Examining a wide range of historical actors and forces from the Spanish conquest of the indigenous peoples to the outbreak of the war for Mexican independence, Lafaye sought to uncover the role of myth and symbol in the rise of Mexican national consciousness. Significantly, the subtitle of his book delineates the years of 1531, the traditional date for the Guadalupe apparitions, and 1813, the year in which Lafaye contends Mexican leaders crystallized the independence movement under Guadalupe's protective mantle. He posits that

¹¹ See, e.g., Xavier Noguez, *Documentos guadalupanos: Un estudio sobre las fuentes de información tempranas en torno a las marionetas en el Tepeyac* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993); Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*; 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* (Mexico City: Realidad, Teoría y Práctica, 1998), 2 volumes; Fidel González Fernández, Eduardo Chávez Sánchez, and José Luis Guerrero Rosado, *El encuentro de la Virgen de Guadalupe y Juan Diego*, 3rd ed. (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 2000).

¹² Francisco de la Maza, *El guadalupanismo mexicano* (Mexico City: Porrúa y Obregón, 1953) 9.

¹³ Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531–1813*, trans. Benjamin Keen (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976).

a central theme in Sánchez's work is his *criollo* claim of New Spain's divine election, as is evident in Sánchez's biblical references such as the identification of Tepeyac with the Garden of Eden and, most importantly, the parallel between the woman of Revelation 12 in the birth of primitive Christianity and the appearance of Guadalupe at the dawning of the Church in America. Lafaye concludes that 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."¹⁴

Nonetheless, as Lafaye himself is careful to state, Sánchez's intent was not to foment rebellion against the Spanish crown. Indeed, Sánchez presumes that the Spanish conquest of Mexico was an act of divine providence and, although he proudly professes Guadalupe as "a native of this land and its first creole woman" (257), in other passages he deems her Spain's "assistant conqueror" (179) and attests that the "heathenism of the New World" was "conquered with her aid" (191). He also asserts that the *criolla* Guadalupe complements the Spanish Our Lady of los Remedios in a manner that parallels the biblical figures of Naomi and Ruth. Like Naomi, the native of Bethlehem, Guadalupe was a native of Mexico; like Ruth, Remedios was a foreigner who migrated to provide her love and assistance in a new land. Both Virgins are equally deserving of veneration (247–248). References such as these reveal that, though the seeds of *criollo* nationalism planted in Sánchez's text would soon bear abundant fruit among his fellow American-born priests and their compatriots, reading *Imagen de la Virgen María* as a patriotic oration expressed in theological language by no means exhausts the meaning of this crucial work in the development of the Guadalupe tradition.

IMAGEN DE LA VIRGEN MARÍA

Though the majority of critical commentators on Sánchez have been historians, journalists, and public intellectuals, Sánchez himself was first and foremost a pastor and theologian. His obituary boldly asserted that "it was the common opinion of many learned men that he knew all St. Augustine by heart."¹⁵ Notwithstanding the obvious hyperbole of such a claim, 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

¹⁴ Ibid. 250.

¹⁵ Brading, *Mexican Phoenix* 73.

own theological contemporaries, Sánchez refers to Augustine more than two dozen times and also liberally quotes from other leading theologians of the early Church such as Ambrose, Jerome, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Cyprian, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, and Clement of Alexandria, among others. 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” (198). At times Sánchez follows the theological consensus of his era by incorrectly attributing to Augustine and other leading Church Fathers statements which subsequent scholarship has shown are from other sources. Most notably, Sánchez’s foundational thesis that the woman in Revelation 12 is identified with the Church and Mary and, by extension, with Guadalupe (160) does not come from Augustine’s instructions to catechumens, as Sánchez claims, but from Augustine’s contemporary Quodvultdeus, who became bishop of Carthage around 437.¹⁶ Nonetheless, Sánchez gleans numerous authentically Augustinian insights to guide his analysis and, most importantly, strives to imitate Augustine’s theological method, particularly through engaging biblical typologies 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.¹⁷

¹⁶ Quodvultdeus, *Sermo III de Symbolo*, Ch. 1, ed. R. Braun, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (CCSL) 60 (Turnhout 1953ff.) 349. Editions of Augustine attributed this sermon to him until the early 20th century, when the great Belgian scholar Dom Germain Morin was the first to argue that the three sermons *De Symbolo* (along with nine other sermons) were the work of Quodvultdeus rather than Augustine. Dom Germain Morin, “Pour une future édition des opuscules de S. Quodvultdeus, évêque de Carthage au VI siècle,” *Revue Bénédictine* 31 (1914) 156–62. For the later stages of scholarly corroboration of this attribution, see CCSL 60, v–vii. It is worth noting that the association of the woman in Revelation 12 with Mary is quite rare among early Christian writers. Indeed, few patristic authors before the sixth century comment on the book of Revelation and those that do tend to link the woman in chapter 12 directly with the Church rather than Mary. See, e.g., Hippolytus, *De Antichristo* 60–1 (J.-P. Migne, Patrologia Graeca [PG], Paris, 1857ff., 10.779–82); Methodius, *Symposium* 8.5–6 (ed. H. Musurillo; Sources chrétiennes, Paris, 1942 ff., 95.212–6); Victorinus of Poetovium, *Commentary on Apocalypse* 12.1–4 (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Louvain, 1903 ff., 49.104–12). My sincere thanks to my colleagues John Cavadini, Brian Daley, S.J., and Thomas Prügl for their counsel in examining this and other references from patristic sources, as well as to AnnaMaría Padilla for her research assistance.

¹⁷ Further analysis of patristic influences on Sánchez is in Brading, *Mexican Phoenix* 58–70.

As was customary at the time, *Imagen de la Virgen María* opens with two letters of approbation from ecclesiastical censors. It also contains a brief prologue from Sánchez and concludes with three testimonial letters lauding the volume's accomplishments, including one from Luis Laso de la Vega, at the time the chaplain of the Guadalupe sanctuary, and Francisco de Siles, an ardent Guadalupan devotee who subsequently led the Mexico City cathedral chapter's 1665–1666 inquiry of the Guadalupe apparition tradition. Sánchez divides the main body of the work into five major sections: (a) Guadalupe's role in the conquest of Mexico; (b) the apparition account; (c) a theological reflection on the image itself; (d) a summary of post-apparition developments in the Guadalupe site and tradition; and (e) a narration and analysis of seven miracles attributed to Guadalupe. Collectively, these five sections are intended to incite the reader toward a deeper contemplation of Guadalupe: in Mexican history, in the apparitions, in her image, in the providential site of her sanctuary, and in the favors she bestows on those who turn to her (257). Put another way, *Imagen de la Virgen María* is a theological odyssey 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.

Sánchez's first major section argues that Guadalupe's appearance during the conquest of Mexico is foretold 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 which defeated Satan and idolatry and paved the way for the destined appearance of Mary of Guadalupe and the establishment of the Church in Mexico. Like the woman in Revelation 12, the birth of the Mexican church occurred "in pain" (Rev 12:2) and entailed a cosmic battle between the dragon and Michael and his angels (v. 7), here respectively identified with Satan and the indigenous "gentiles," Cortés, and his fellow *conquistadores*. The woman escapes the dragon when she is "given the wings of a gigantic eagle" (v. 14), a verse Sánchez correlates with the sacrament of baptism: just as the eagle (here associated with the classical Phoenix) is the only bird with the capacity to renew itself, so too the indigenous peoples were recreated in the waters of baptism and then could "shelter and protect themselves in the nest of the Church" (172). The dragon's pledge "to make war on the rest of [the woman's] offspring" (v. 17) reveals the reason Mexico was so plagued with idolatry. But Mary of Guadalupe's appearance in Mexico overshadows this grave misfortune. Declaring that the most faithful image of God in this world was that of the Virgin Mary, a pseudo-Augustinian insight he incor-

rectly attributes to Augustine,¹⁸ Sánchez concludes that “although [the natives] have the general consolation that each person is an image of God,” their confidence was reassured once they were “accompanied by the image of Mary [who] appeared to defend them from the dragon” (164, 177).

Having outlined the broader context of the Guadalupe apparitions’ pivotal place in the history and the Christianization of Mexico, Sánchez proceeds to a recounting of the apparition narrative itself. He structures this second major section of his work around the five Guadalupe apparitions, which encompass Juan Diego’s movement back and forth from Tepeyac to the residence of Bishop Juan de Zumárraga. Though the prelate is depicted as skeptical when he first heard Juan Diego’s message that Guadalupe wanted a temple built at Tepeyac in her honor, he came to believe when Juan Diego brought him flowers that grew out of season and the image of Guadalupe miraculously appeared on the *indio*’s *tilma* (cloak). The healing of Juan Diego’s uncle, Juan Bernardino, was attributed to Guadalupe’s intercession and added further credence and cause for amazement among the bishop, his household, and devotees from throughout Mexico City who came to pray before the miraculous image once the bishop enshrined it at the cathedral.

Whatever his historical sources (or lack thereof) for this account, Sánchez’s exposition reads like a series of biblical and theological reflections on a received pious tradition. When Juan Diego returns to Guadalupe dejected after the bishop’s initial incredulous response to his request, for example, the Virgin’s refusal to heed Juan Diego’s plea that she send a “more credible” (182) messenger leads Sánchez to cite and then paraphrase Luke 10:21 (and its parallel in Mt 11:25): “Virgin Mary my sovereign mother, lady of heaven and earth, I confess, celebrate, and thank you that, though you could commend this work of such celestial mysteries to superior and excellent subjects, you have commended it to one who is humble, poor, and unlearned” (182). He also 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” (195). Sánchez’s primary purpose is to evoke wonder and awe in his readers at the “most holy image, appeared and born for universal joy” at Tepeyac (196). He concludes this section with the contention that those who gaze on the Guadalupe image have the singular blessing of experiencing the fulfillment of St. Augustine’s prayer: “My heart communicates with you in secret,

¹⁸ The text Sánchez attributes to Augustine is from Ambrosius Autpertus, who wrote in the eighth or ninth centuries. Ambrosius Autpertus, *Sermo de Assumptione Sancte Marie*, Ch. 5, ed. R. Weber, CCSL 27B, 1030.

saying that it desires no other reward than to see you, and that it must live persevering in the diligences of seeking you and the hope of seeing you” (197).¹⁹

Next Sánchez dedicates the lengthiest and most complex section of his volume to an analysis of what pious believers can see as they gaze upon the incredible “beauty, grace, and loveliness” of the Guadalupe image (200). Once again he structures this part of the work around select references from Revelation 12, a passage that has clear parallels to various details in the Guadalupe image: “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (v. 1), who was accompanied by the archangel Michael and “was given the wings of a gigantic eagle” (v. 14). From a theological perspective, this section is a mariological tract designed to maximize what can be said of Mary of Guadalupe, pressing the boundaries of doctrinal orthodoxy to their limit before ending with a properly christological affirmation of Mary’s role to support and illuminate the saving work of her divine son. At times Sánchez is at pains to demonstrate Guadalupe’s primacy over other Marian images, as in his avowal that “in all of Christendom” Guadalupe is the “unique, singular, only, and rare” miraculous image of Mary “painted with flowers” (206). Recounting various biblical images associated with Mary such as the Ark, the Burning Bush, Jacob’s Ladder, and the Rose of Jericho, he contends that, in her image which remains on Juan Diego’s *tilma*, Guadalupe is also the “Vesture of Christ” (214). Expanding on Augustine’s comment that the torn and divided garment of Christ represents the dissemination of the Church throughout the world,²⁰ Sánchez asserts that the divided garment also represents the distribution of miraculous Marian images like Guadalupe throughout all of Christianity (214). But this miraculous image is also a new Eve in a singular way: she appears in the new paradise of Tepeyac which, unlike the original Garden of Eden, is not sealed off to humanity and, in fact, relinquishes the precious relic of Guadalupe’s image so that Christianity and the grace of her favor could flourish among the “new Adam” (229) Juan Diego and all the inhabitants of Mexico. Sánchez’s varied reflections on the Guadalupe image conclude with the observation that the cross of Christ is represented both by the eagle’s wings around the angel at the base of the image and by a small insignia on Guadalupe’s tunic. In these symbolic representations Sánchez sees a great reversal: Adam and Eve hid in shame under the shadow of a tree in Eden, but now the devotees who stand before Guadalupe come under the protective shadow of the

¹⁹ Sánchez’s quotation is an altered version of the text in S. Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, En. 1, Ps. 26, Par. 8, ed. E. Dekkers, J. Fraipont, CCSL 38.153.

²⁰ S. Augustinus, *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus*, Tract 118.4, J.-P. Migne, Patrologia Latina (Paris, 1841ff.) Vol. 35, Col. 1949.

cross. He then marvels at the wondrous way that the image of Guadalupe fulfills the words attributed to Cyril of Alexandria, "Through you, O Mary, the cross of Christ is celebrated and adored in all the world" (235).²¹

The fourth section of Sánchez's volume continues the apparition narrative of section two by briefly outlining subsequent developments in the Guadalupe tradition: the procession from the Mexico City cathedral two weeks after the miraculous apparitions to enshrine the image in a hastily constructed chapel at Tepeyac, 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, which by the early-17th century included a large cemetery, lodging for visitors, and a new and more ample worship edifice. Theologically, Sánchez professes that these developments and even the site of the sanctuary itself reflected the guiding hand of divine providence. As had various authors since the famous 16th-century Franciscan chronicler Bernardino de Sahagún, Sánchez identifies Tepeyac as a pre-Christian pilgrimage site of the goddess Tonantzin. Unlike Sahagún, however, who opposed Guadalupan devotion as a thinly-veiled continuation of indigenous religion and worship, Sánchez states that Guadalupe's appearance on Tepeyac enabled her to providentially take Tonantzin's place in the lives and devotion of the natives and thus win them for the Christian faith. Moreover, he observed that the hill of Tepeyac was strategically situated at a crossroads which enabled Guadalupe's benefits to be extended "throughout the diverse roadways of all New Spain" (240). A well at the base of Tepeyac marked the site of Guadalupe's fourth apparition to Juan Diego and, as in the case of numerous Marian shrines, provided medicinal waters to which devotees attributed miraculous cures. In a word, Sánchez concluded, the sanctuary, site, and piety at Tepeyac reflected a celestial plan to provide a sacred ambiance in which, to paraphrase I Corinthians 13:12, "Now we see and contemplate the Virgin Mary in mirrors and obscurely, hoping we will clearly see her, accompany her, and rejoice with her in heaven" (245).

Following established conventions for writings about miraculous images and their sacred sites, in the final section of his work Sánchez narrates various miracles attributed to Guadalupe's intercession. He contends that Guadalupe bestowed many favors on the natives during the early years of the Spanish evangelization in order to "inspire, teach, and attract them to

²¹ Cyril's authorship of this text is disputed, though it is attributed to him in *S. Cyrilli Alexandrini Homilia contra Nestorium*, PG 77.992 B11–12. E. Schwartz questioned the authenticity of Cyril's authorship in the critical edition of this homily, but most scholars still accept it as genuine. E. Schwartz, ed., *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* I, 1, 2, 102; Mark Santer, "The Authorship and Occasion of Cyril of Alexandria's Sermon on the Virgin (Hom. Div. IV)," *Studia Patristica* 12, Texte und Untersuchungen 115 (Berlin, 1975) 144–50.

the Catholic faith and the shelter of her intercession” (246–247). Significantly, in this section he narrates seven miracles: the first three benefited indigenous devotees, the next three involved persons of Spanish heritage, and the final miracle was the rescue of Mexico City from the disastrous flood of 1629–1634, a rendering of celestial aid that indiscriminately saved residents of indigenous, Spanish, *criollo*, and other caste backgrounds. His relatively lengthy explication of Guadalupe’s intervention in this deluge, which Sánchez apparently experienced firsthand, encompasses a return to the image of Mary of Guadalupe as the Ark which, as in the time of Noah, served as protection from the raging flood. Then he echoes another earlier theme, Mary as the Vesture of Christ, in this case Christ’s garment which the woman with the flow of blood touched in order to receive healing (Mk 5:25–34 and parallels). Noting that Mexico City archbishop Francisco Manso y Zúñiga temporarily had the Guadalupe image transferred to his cathedral where devotees asked that her intercession abate the floodwaters, Sánchez professed that with the Guadalupe image “attending, accompanying, abiding, and touching the infirmed city, she healed it, dried it out, liberated it, redeemed it, restored it, and conserved it” (253).

Dramatically, Sánchez then ends the volume with a reflection on the ongoing cosmic battle for the soul of Mexico. He extends his earlier analysis of Revelation 12 into the first verses of the 13th chapter, in which the Antichrist arises as a wild beast out of the water, supercedes the powers of the dragon, and seduces the whole world with his might. In response to the perceived threat of this false idol and deceiver, Sánchez invites 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. There they will hear Christ say to them: “behold your mother; behold her image of Guadalupe . . . behold the protector of the poor; behold the medicine of the infirmed; behold the comfort of the afflicted; behold the intercessor for the suffering; behold the honor of the city of Mexico; behold the glory of all the faithful inhabitants in this New World” (260).

PATRISTIC THEOLOGY AND THE GUADALUPE TRADITION

Sánchez’s obituary eulogized him correctly. He is best remembered not as a baroque *criollo* nationalist, nor as the first of the four Guadalupe evangelists, nor as a historian. Rather, Sánchez was primarily a 17th-century *criollo* pastor and theologian renowned for his knowledge of Augustine and other patristic writers. His contribution to the Mexican Guadalupe tradition was to codify and examine that tradition in light of the Christian Scriptures, particularly as filtered through the interpretive lens of the Church Fathers. Such a reading of Sánchez’s *Imagen de la Virgen María*

necessitates reexamining the extensive patristic influences on the foundation and development of the devotion, preaching, and theological writings dedicated to Guadalupe.

The most obvious indication of an enduring patristic influence on the Guadalupe tradition is the consistent association of Guadalupe and the woman in Revelation 12, a correlation Sánchez borrowed from Augustine's contemporary Quodvultdeus, who avowed that this woman is Mary. References linking Guadalupe and the famous woman of the Apocalypse extend from Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's 17th-century sonnet to Guadalupe, which lauded her as "she whose proud foot made the dragon humbly bend his neck at Patmos,"²² to Virgilio Elizondo's 1997 book *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation*,²³ which cites the first two verses of Revelation 12 as an epigraph. Countless preachers, devotees, and writers have also connected Guadalupe to the biblical woman clothed with the sun, both as a means to place Guadalupe within the scriptural tradition and to explore her significance for Christian faith.

More broadly, preachers, especially *criollos* who were the primary readership of *Imagen de la Virgen María*, disseminated some of its core theological ideas in the century and a half following the book's publication. Though the contents of Sánchez's work have not been widely known, much less the patristic theology that shaped it—*Imagen de la Virgen María* was not reprinted until 1952 and has never been translated into English—these preachers assured Sánchez's foundational influence on the collective imagination of Guadalupan devotees and writers. Nearly 100 published Guadalupe sermons from 1661–1802 are extant and, as the research of Francisco Schulte has shown, together they elaborate various themes that echo Sánchez's patristic-based analysis of Guadalupe. Schulte concludes that preaching on the Guadalupe event served to foster belief "in God's election of Mexico for a mission within the broader Church as revealed through Mary's love for Mexico, her active participation in the founding of their nation and church, and her unique, continuing presence in their midst through her sacred image."²⁴ Though he does not explicitly link these theological convictions to Sánchez, the central themes in *criollo* Guadalupe preaching have clear resonances with Sánchez's articulation of God's

²² As cited in Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "The Bible and U.S. Hispanic American Theological Discourse: Lessons from a Non-Innocent History," 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) 100–20, at 109.

²³ Virgilio Elizondo, *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997) ix.

²⁴ Francisco Raymond Schulte, *Mexican Spirituality: Its Sources and Mission in the Earliest Guadalupan Sermons* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002) 167.

providential guidance in Mexican history, Guadalupe's appearance as a foundational ecclesiological and salvific event, and the blessing and opportunity of contemplating Mary's countenance in the sacred *tilma*, all reflections on Guadalupe that Sánchez rooted in the works of Augustine and other early Christian writers. David Brading's analysis confirms that sermons after Sánchez borrowed extensively from his insights and imagery, such as the varied sermons which repeated Sánchez's association of Moses, Mount Sinai, and the Ark of the Covenant with Juan Diego, Tepeyac, and the Guadalupe image. According to Brading, "Nowhere was [Sánchez's] influence more obvious than in the application of Augustinian typology to the interpretation of the Mexican Virgin."²⁵

Though extensively focused on the *Nican mopohua*, the Nahuatl apparition account first published by Laso de la Vega, the contemporary resurgence of explicitly theological works on Guadalupe entails some critical reappraisal of Sánchez. Theologians like Elizondo observe that Sánchez's book "awoke the theological imagination" of Guadalupan writers 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."²⁶ Yet Elizondo and other writers also criticize the Eurocentric limitations which enabled Sánchez to so expediently attribute the violent subjugation of Mexico to divine providence. As biblical scholar 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."²⁷ Given such an assessment of Sánchez, it is not surprising that Elizondo, Clodomiro Siller Acuña, Jeanette Rodriguez, Roberto Goizueta, Richard Nebel, and other contemporary theologians who write on Guadalupe focus heavily on the *Nican mopohua*,²⁸ which follows the indigenous narrative style of accentuating dialogue and is devoid of the

²⁵ Brading, *Mexican Phoenix* 96–101, 146–68, at 165. See also de la Maza, *El guadalupanismo mexicano*.

²⁶ Virgilio Elizondo, *La Morenita: Evangelizer of the Americas* (San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1980) 106.

²⁷ Ruiz, "The Bible and U.S. Hispanic American Theological Discourse" 107.

²⁸ Elizondo, *La Morenita*; Elizondo, *Guadalupe*; 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); Jeanette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas, 1994); Roberto S. Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995) 37–46, 70–6, 104–9; Richard Nebel, *Santa María Tonantzin, Virgen de Guadalupe:*

theological elaboration and the numerous scriptural and patristic references employed in Sánchez's Eurocentric analysis.

Consciously or not, however, the current emphasis on the *Nican mopohua* employs Sánchez's central themes, albeit as reexamined from a liberationist perspective. Indeed, taken as a whole, contemporary theologians' primary claims present a reversed mirror image of major conclusions originally articulated in *Imagen de la Virgen María* and subsequently popularized by *criollo* preachers. For example, various recent theological works claim that Our Lady of Guadalupe did not justify or abet 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, that her message not only converted the indigenous peoples from practices such as human sacrifice but also demanded that Spanish Catholics repent of their ethnocentrism and violence. Sánchez's acclamation of Guadalupe as the first *criolla* is transformed in the works of U.S. Latino theologians like Elizondo, who notes that Guadalupe has successively been seen as an indigenous woman, as "the first Lady of Criollo society," and, finally, in more contemporary times, as a "Mestiza [woman of mixed European and Native American ancestry], if not in the biological sense, certainly in the sense that she became the mother of all Mexicans."²⁹ Claims such as these do not reflect the usual trajectory of theological writings on Mary, which tend to examine topics such as her Immaculate Conception, Assumption, virginity, title of Theotokos, role in the lives of women, and modeling of discipleship. Rather, like Sánchez, theologians who write on Guadalupe today examine the Guadalupe image, apparition 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.

Further study is needed to assess with greater precision Sánchez's knowledge and use of patristic sources, the extent of patristic influences on *Imagen de la Virgen María*, and how subsequent Guadalupe preachers and writers selectively employed, developed, and altered Sánchez's core ideas. It is clear, however, that rereading Sánchez and the Guadalupe tradition in light of their patristic influences has at least two significant implications for contemporary theology. On the one hand, the tendency to concentrate narrowly on the *Nican mopohua* in theological studies of Guadalupe reflects a wider trend among Latino/Latina theologians and scholars to accentuate the indigenous origins of Hispanic cultures and traditions. As

Continuidad y transformación religiosa en México (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995).

²⁹ Elizondo, *La Morenita* 112.

thinkers such as theologian Raúl Gómez have noted, since the Mexican Revolution the pervasive national myth of a glorious indigenous past is often reflected in scholarly analyses, along with the complementary conviction that all Spanish influences in Mexico are to be ignored or disdained.³⁰ A more ample understanding of the Guadalupe tradition and its theological development requires that Sánchez's *Imagen de la Virgen María* and its patristic influences be reexamined along with the *Nican mopohua*. More broadly, the retrieval of Sánchez's thought illuminates the need for a wider theological examination of other essential sources in Guadalupan studies, particularly of works like the *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*, the virtually unstudied book in which the *Nican mopohua* was first published, and the *criollo* sermons which disseminated and expanded on Sánchez's core ideas. Even more broadly, the need to recover significant theological writings in the Guadalupe tradition illuminates the nascent trend to uncover the theological treatises of Latinas/Latinos in the Americas, as is evidenced in recent works like those of Luis Rivera on the 16th-century theological debates about the evangelization of the New World, Gustavo Gutiérrez on Bartolomé de las Casas, Claudio Burgaleta on the 16th-century Peruvian Jesuit José de Acosta, and Michelle González on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.³¹ Just as renewed study of the Church Fathers was a key intellectual precursor to the Second Vatican Council, the *ressourcement* of Guadalupan and other Latin American theological works is a crucial step in the project of developing theologies that are rooted both in the life and faith of Latino/Latina communities and in the wider Christian tradition.

A second implication of reexamining Sánchez is that, in addition to echoing the thought of Augustine and other early Christian writers, theologians writing on Guadalupe have reflected the Fathers' approach of not primarily focusing their work on interpreting the scriptures in their own contexts, but rather on interpreting historical and contemporary events in light of the sacred world of the biblical text. Just as Augustine's *City of God* engaged Christian revelation in developing a response to the theological crisis of the collapsing Roman Empire, Sánchez's *Imagen de la Virgen María* scrutinized the Christian biblical and theological heritage in formu-

³⁰ 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.

³¹ Luis N. Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993); Claudio Burgaleta, *José de Acosta, S.J., 1540–1600: His Life and Thought* (Chicago: Jesuit Way, 1999); Michelle A. González, *Sor Juana: Beauty and Justice in the Americas* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2003).

lating a response to the dilemma of rooting the faith in a world previously unknown to Europeans. Like Sánchez, contemporary theologians who write on Guadalupe seek to articulate the core Gospel themes of this fervently held tradition in response to their pastoral context, in this case one marked by such radical transformations as unprecedented migration and *mestizaje* (mixing) of peoples, the shrinking of the hemisphere and the planet, and, in the oft-quoted words of Gustavo Gutiérrez, the “irruption of the poor” in human history.”³² As theologians and Catholic faithful of all social classes and racial and ethnic groups face John Paul II’s recent challenge of uniting as one America under Guadalupe’s patronage, the Guadalupe tradition is a rich source for developing a theology that adapts not just patristic thought but also patristic theological methods to meet contemporary ecclesial and societal needs.

³² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988; orig. English ed., 1973) xx.