"The Painted Word"

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The Painted Word

Peter Casarella
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To speak of a “painted word” is to refer to a reality not only literal but also metaphorical. Wall murals both in ancient catacombs and today’s bairros contain written words that are painted. But the notion of a “painted word” is not restricted to those words which are literally painted on visible surfaces. The broader, metaphorical significance of a “painted word” as that term is employed in this essay is at least threefold.

First, it refers to an iconographic (e.g., Col 1:15: “the icon of the invisible God”) as opposed to a verbal or an aural expression (Rom 10:17: “faith comes from hearing”) of faith. Iconography—literally, writing in the form of pictures—by itself raises the question of how painted images are related to one another for expression. In this article I would like to explore the theological significance of this relationship.

Second, “a painted word” is also a fabrication, a work of art for which labor is actually expended. This corresponds, in part, to Augustine’s distinction between natural and conventional signs. For Augustine, conventional signs like speaking and writing are of a different sort from natural signs like laughing or a rainbow. The first set follows conventions that evince arbitrariness and vary widely between different social and linguistic groups. The latter, at least in Augustine’s view, are not conventional. Nature speaks through these signs as if without a translator. As a conventional sign, a painted word is an artifact created as the result of an artistically produced, semiotic world that is different in kind but not wholly unrelated to those in the natural environment. Without translation and real labor the painted word expresses nothing.

Third, the painted word is an expression of the divine Word depicted in a visible form. The painted word in this sense is a theo- logical artifact. Through the painted word we are drawn into the mystery of who God

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Indianapolis: Liberal Arts Press.

actually is. Visible in this same word is the mystery of the one who took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ and who views us from this vantage point. The vision of the triune God vis-à-vis las criaturas de Dios is not just the dialogical encounter of a single “I” with a single “Thou.” The creative Word is omnivoyant and through that vision establishes a simultaneous cosmic relationship with all God’s criaturas. Thus, the painted word is also an avenue for exploring the relationship of theological aesthetics to the cosmos. This relationship is central to Hispanic/Latino life in the United States and therefore to the theology which purports to emanate from this cultural, linguistic, and religious matrix. A theological aesthetics which takes the U.S. Hispanic Catholic experience as its basis needs, above all, a clear vision of the beautiful. Conversely, the domain of theological aesthetics will not just be amplified or adorned by the Hispanic/Latino component as if one were appending an additional ornament to a pre-established structure. The thesis of this essay is that the vision of the glory of the Lord carried in the souls and bodies of Latina and Latino faithful is the very expression of God’s hope-filled love for humanity.

A further clarification of terms and concepts is in order. For example, when one enters the field of theological aesthetics, what, exactly, is being extolled as beautiful in or about the cosmos? The answer to this question is by no means self-evident, for the project of a theological aesthetics is beclouded by romanticism of several sorts. First of all, the universe in the modern world is no longer perceived, as St. Bonaventure once averred, as a beautifully composed poem. No modern believer (and far less a “postmodern” one) can take for granted an unmediated vision of a transcendent God in the immanence of the created order. European theologians are wont to refer to this modern phenomenon as (following Nietzsche) the “twilight of the idols” or “modern a-cosmism.” Even Cardinal Newman seemed to be aware of it. In one of his sermons he says quite plainly:


What strikes the mind so forcibly is [God's] absence (if I may so speak) from his own world. It is a silence that speaks. It is as if others had got possession of His work. Why does not He, our Maker and Ruler, give us some immediate knowledge of Himself?

A theology of an absent God of the sort adumbrated by Newman has no clear place in Hispanic/Latino theology, yet the dimming of pre-modern cosmic theophany is indeed part of the contemporary U.S. Latino experience. There is no immediate fusion of the human with the cosmos in the daily struggles of most working people. Consider the case of the multitudes of Hispanic men and women who wait at the bus stop every morning in my neighborhood in Washington, D.C., on their way to fix the rooftops or tend the babies of suburban households. Where are they supposed to see the beauty of the cosmos—solely in the tidiness of the well-painted and laboriously dusted suburban homes? Or can they also be afforded a view of vestiges of God's creative power in the very urban landscapes which they inhabit when they return home from work at night?

Another form of romanticism derives from the modern notion of the self-sufficiency of the work of art.1 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62), a pioneer in the modern, post-Kantian idea of a philosophical aesthetics, maintained that the artist does not simply imitate nature in the sense of making a copy of it. The artist, he contended, creates a unified whole out of the reality which is presented to him or her to

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1 John Henry Cardinal Newman, A Grammar of Assent (New York: Doubleday, 1955) 39, as cited in Louis Dupré, "Christian Spirituality Confronts the Modern World," Communio: International Catholic Review 12 (1985) 334. Elsewhere in Gram­mar of Assent Newman underscores the difference between the religion of merely "notional" assent, which is in accord with the "genius of modern England," and the religion "of medieval Europe, or of Spain of this day," in which divine realities are not only wholly real and personal (as opposed to notional) but "as present as if they were objects of sight." Newman thus acknowledges the Iberian heritage of visual depiction in spite of the patent lack of confidence in the visual on the part of his Anglo-Saxon contemporaries. A Grammar of Assent (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) 62.

1 See, for example, Harold J. Recinos, Jesus Weeps: Global Encounters on Our Doorstep (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992) 36: "For me the city is God's sacred place precisely because it is a creative and cosmopolitan meeting ground for people. Urban reality makes plain the vigor of cultural communities; the meaning of concentrated economic and technological power; the importance of diverse racial and ethnic groups; the heart of nation-state governments; the struggle of race, class, gender, and culture; and the vision of Hebrew-Christian religion for the city yet to come."

view. For Baumgarten the work of art is a self-enclosed whole created by the artistic genius. "This whole is unified by the artist through a coherent 'theme,' which is the focus of the representation." The artist does not simply depict reality but, through his or her own power of creative expression, adds an intangible something to the reality depicted. In the process of creating, the artist is able to lend to the depicted reality a new form of unity, a "theme" that was not explicitly present in nature itself. This theory is quite adequate to our everyday intuition that the work of art is constituted by a representation of the individual artist's unique creativity, but it also carries with it some questionable assumptions. Baumgarten ties the object of aesthetic perception to a fully formed aesthetic world which bears little or no relationship to the world outside of the work of art. For Baumgarten the medium of feeling added by the artist to the work of art is the narrow conduit by which reality is depicted in the work of art.

Alternatively, when we speak of the beautiful in a Hispanic/Latino theological aesthetics, the work of art is always still under construction. Moreover, the beauty of religiosidad popular, for example, is not the product of a single individual's creative genius. In the Hispanic/Latino tradition a communal nexus of historical traditions, cultural assumptions, and religious beliefs contribute to the constitution of what is perceived as beautiful. Alejandro García-Rivera pinpoints the way in which the beautiful makes its appearance in the context of the Hispanic/Latino community of believers; the "mosaic" is the medium in which beauty is expressed. The mosaic of the Hispanic/Latino faith and culture are works of art to which new tesserae can be added. Looked at by itself, one has no idea how the new piece will contribute to the whole. Far less conspicuous than even a single piece of a jigsaw puzzle (which must fit into a specific place), the isolated piece of the mosaic has no "genius" qualities. Once the new element is added, however, a mosaic community or, in García-Rivera's terms, a community of the beautiful, is always capable of redefining itself in terms of the new set of constituting elements. The migration of the new elements into the mosaic is treated as an opportunity to enhance the clarity of the vision. In this sense,
Latino aesthetics constantly needs to question the individualistic romantic notion of a creative genius as well as the seemingly enlightened notion of assimilation to a homogeneous “theme.” By itself no one element can change the perception of what is beautiful in the work of art without reference to other constituting elements. Moreover, the overarching “theme” of the work of art is not an abstraction created by the endowment of the elements with the personal feeling of one or a group of individuals. The “theme” is, as it were, the fluid but nonetheless concretely identifiable process by which the mestizaje of the mosaic becomes apparent both to the community and to the wider world.

The beauty expressed in the mosaic is greater than the sum of its individual parts. What makes the work of art beautiful to view is not fully contained or circumscribed by the practices of the community. The community remains the bearer of traditions of mediation whereby the beautiful is given expression in a perceptible form, but these traditions often clash in “a violent and unequal encounter” with other cultural traditions when the latter are unwilling to grant the constituting elements of the mosaic the freedom to be formed according to their own processes of development.12

Thus, the mosaic of Hispanic/Latino traditions of the beautiful needs to be interpreted through an epistemology of suffering.13 Such a view cannot be maintained if one adopts the neutral, aesthetic distance of a viewer to an object of art as in a museum. An epistemology of suffering must question a strict demarcation between participant and observer. Overcoming “aesthetic” distance is made necessary because the Hispanic/Latino participation in and vision of the beautiful, therefore, must also include an analysis of the conditions for the possibility of structural change in the social world.

This raises the prospect of a third form of romanticism, one which can be summarized by the guiding question posed in Roberto Goizueta’s Caminemos con Jesús: “Beauty or justice?”14 Aesthetics is indeed a rarefied brand of theology if proffered as a theory bearing no intrinsic relation to specific communal practices. Baumgarten’s definition of the work of art inadvertently severed the object of aesthetic perception from the social world of productive activity. A Hispanic/Latino theological aesthetics must recognize that beauty and justice are not reducible to one another. This is precisely why Goizueta insists that the human action of popular Catholicism is a synthesis of beauty

12Ibid., 40–57.
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and justice.13 In Goizueta’s own proposal, he tries to think beyond the
difference that divides the concerns of Latin American liberation theo-
ologists for the ethical and political character of praxis from the
romatic concerns of José Vasconcelos for the aesthetic character of
praxis. In what follows I presuppose and attempt to build upon
Goizueta’s creative integration of a liberationist theological method
and a U.S. Hispanic vision of the beautiful.16

What follows is a sketch of a possible Hispanic/Latino theological
aesthetics. It was conceived broadly to leave ample room for further
work on my part and that of others, namely, Alejandro García-Rivera’s
forthcoming Community of the Beautiful.17 As my title indicates, I have
chosen to focus on what could be called the iconography of the Hispanic/
Latino presence and to see how this aspect of a Latino theological
aesthetics plays itself out in three separate arenas. I do not mean “iconog-
raphy” only in the narrow, technical sense of the term used by art
historians.18 In the faith of the U.S. Hispanic Catholic community, leg-
able signs are inscribed in a great variety of images other than painted
ones, for example, liturgical gestures and signs, song, processions, the
actual handing on of devotional items, etc. What follows is divided
into three sections: the perception of the beautiful, theopoetics, and
eschatology. Each section attempts to disclose a more comprehensive
picture of the same iconographically depicted reality. The first section
deals with the experience of the beautiful as it relates to a vision of
faith. The second deals with the relationship of beauty and the labor of
everyday life. The third section includes an analysis of a particular
Hispanic religious tradition and attempts thereby to offer a glimpse of
the mosaic’s whole.

Theological Aesthetics: The Priority of Perception

The fundamental act whereby the beautiful is perceived as beauti-
ful is that of wonder (thaumazein). Since Plato, philosophers and theo-
logians have stood in awe before the intrinsic lure of the beautiful and

14See, for example, Goizueta, Caminemos con Jesús, 128. “I would suggest that,
rather than superseding the ethical-political, the aesthetic dimension of human ac-
ton is mediated by the ethical-political; it is encountered and lived out within ethical-
political action, as the deepest meaning and significance of the ethical-political. The
aesthetic is not a final stage beyond the ethical, but the fullest sense of the ethical—
and, for that reason, encountered only within the context of ethical-political ac-
tion.”
16Cf. Paul Evdokimov, The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty (Redondo Beach,
have spoken openly about its erotic attraction. But there is little agreement as to how in the context of a theological aesthetics one can define beauty as a tangible reality. How can something so immense which gives rise to an experience so intensely personal be circumscribed by a single, pallid definition? Beauty's intrinsic mystery mandates that the perception as such of the beautiful, its very epiphany, needs to be emphasized. Without this concrete experience of form, theological aesthetics simply becomes an exercise in aesthetic criticism, severed from its connection to the wells of spiritual experience from which the people of God draw in the struggles of everyday life.

What, concretely, is the experience of the beautiful? The beautiful as such is experienced when we allow ourselves what Charles Sanders Peirce called "museum." Museum occurs when we grant our intellectual and imaginative capacities the freedom to play with the tangible vastness and surprising interconnectedness of the universe. This experience of the beautiful is so liberating and foundational for believers that Peirce suggested basing a brand new proof for the reality of God upon it.

In the pre-Reformation Christian tradition an important but disputed form of museum is associated with the veneration of images of God and the saints. In my opinion, Hispanic/Latino theology could benefit from a reconsideration of the classic iconology of the Church. In his masterful eight-century work in defense of icons, St. John of Damascus argued that an icon is "a distinct portrayal of the prototype."

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24 A creative reworking of the Platonic theme can be found in Juan Ramón Jiménez, God Desired and Desiring (New York: Paragon House, 1987).

25 Jiménez writes: "Buscándote como te estoy buscando, / yo no puedo ofenderte, / se que tú seas; / ni tú podrías ser ente de ofensa. / . . . Gracias, yo te las doy siempre. / A quien las doy / A la belleza inmensa, se las doy, / que soy muy capaz de conseguir; / que tú has tocado, que eres tú. / Si la belleza inmensa me responde o no, / yo sé que no te ofendo ni la ofendo." God Desired and Desiring, 125.


He realized that the only way that the presence of the icons in the Church could be defended is through their direct reference to Christ’s witness of faith. In modern terms, the icons are both moral instruments and aesthetic objects but in such a way that both of those categories seem narrow and unsatisfactory. According to John, the saints depicted in the Church’s iconographic representations “were pleasing to God because of their faith.” In venerating these images, the act of worship is not offered to the matter in the image but to those portrayed through matter in the images. “Any honor given to an image is transferred to its prototype,” he concluded, citing St. Basil.

John of Damascus attends to the lives of the martyrs since they represent living images of Christ which the faithful need to encounter. This allows him to establish an illuminating tripartite comparison of martyrdom, preaching, and icon painting:

Do you understand that both images and sermon serve the same purpose? [St. Basil] says, “Let us show them forth in a sermon, as in a picture.” . . . Both painters of words and painters of pictures illustrate valor in battle; the former by the art of rhetoric; the latter by clever use of the brush, and both encourage everyone to be brave. A spoken account edifies the ear, while a silent picture induces imitation. What more conspicuous proof do we need that images are the books of the illiterate, the never silent heralds of honor due the saints, teaching without use of words those who gaze upon them, and sanctifying the sense of sight? . . . Shall I not bear witness to the martyr both by word and paintbrush?

Word and image converge, for both are expressive. In other words, faith for John comes not just from hearing but with even greater efficacy through the eyes of faith. John’s use of deliberately paradoxical language is instructive. The representation of Christ’s witness of faith in the images of the martyrs constitutes “never silent heralds of honor.” John knows that not even a martyr can imitate Christ perfectly. The images of the martyrs are living expressions whose non-verbal “speech” in painted words “imitates” the truly inimitable one. The martyrs follow Christ at a distance even though the preached and painted images of them also bring Christ into the intimacy of our Churches, homes, and hearts. Each image of the martyr puts into a

25Ibid.
26Ibid., 39. Italics added.
visible form at least as expressive as spoken words the silent presence of the prototype, who is Christ himself.

The Western European theologian in the late twentieth century who has done the most to highlight the concrete experience of the visible image of the invisible God is Hans Urs von Balthasar. Von Balthasar counters the dualistic epistemology of beauty found in Baumgarten and other modern figures. He rejects the idea that the expression of beauty refers primarily to a subjective manifestation of human consciousness and maintains that a comprehensive definition of expression must encompass all modes of manifestation in the world, not just those emanating from an individual's feelings. This is a key move in theological aesthetics, one which brings von Balthasar's vision into close proximity with the Hispanic/Latino recovery of religiosidad popular.

According to von Balthasar, expression is always in some fashion an expression of the truth of being, a truth which reveals itself as fundamentally mysterious. Every revelation of being carries with it a moment of concealment. Images are not just transparent "representations" of things. In fact, non-verbal images conceal the most, for by themselves they only reflect the surface of appearances. Words reveal the most because their signification gives expression to truth in the appearance of an image, i.e., through a sign or name.

What is "expression?" The component parts of the Latin root (exprimere) indicate a pressing outward of inward content in all forms of "ex-pression." Yet the outward form is not a detached product or mere medium of the expression. The form poured into appearances constitutes as well as conveys meaning. For von Balthasar a medium of expression is not just an external sign, but a sign filled with manifest content. The structure of this expression is paradoxical, for the immediacy of the expression is also mediated in a concrete form. Von

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Balthasar maintains that truth as disclosed in expression lies in a sus-
pended middle between the appearance and the being that appears.
The manifestation of an expressed content is neither just in itself nor
merely in the external appearance. The disclosure of form lies in the or-
organic whole constituted by the poles of exteriority and interiority. We
as viewers of the form must hold both poles in their unity. In other
words, the form of a thing is not merely cloaked by a particular expres-
sion. The emergence of a concrete expression of the form co-determines
the expressed content.

A brief, quotidian example may help. One day on entering the sub-
way I observed a couple who were deaf and mute arguing in sign lan-
guage, which I have never studied. Their abrupt and joint departure at
the next stop caused me to feel I had glimpsed a lover’s quarrel.
Whether or not my surmise was correct, this was indeed a notable in-
stance of how interior form presses outward in ways that both disclose
and conceal.

von Balthasar offers us a helpful definition of the image: “The
image is an original expression, a creation, not a poor imitation.”30 Exp-
ression is never a mechanical reproduction of an exemplar (Ur bild) in
an image (Bild). The process of coming to expression allows for ex-
pression in a form that remains distinct from the content. Expression
itself is called “creative” because it brings to perfection a relatively in-
dependent act of the intellect without destroying or removing what
von Balthasar calls the depth or freedom of the mind. Von Balthasar
compares his theory of form to the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hop-
kins’ notion of “inscape.”31 Inscape gives language to what the poetic
eye sees in nature and thereby names the expressed form implicit in
the poet’s vision of creation. In a journal entry Hopkins described
springtime fields of “white daisies, yellower fresh green of leaves
above which bathes the skirts of the elms, and their tops are touched
and worded with leaf too.”32 Commenting on the description, von
Balthasar writes, “The form thus grasped is the key to the word, is it-
self already an objective word. Formed can also mean worded.”33 Lan-
guage imitates Hopkins’ inscape because of the implicit analogy
between the expression of the word in language and nature. In the

31Gerard Manley Hopkins, Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Lon-
don: Oxford University Press, 1959) 243. See also the poem by Juan Ramón
Jiménez, “En Dinamismo de Expresión Gloriosa (A Movement of Glorious Ex-
pression),” God Desired and Desiring, 110–11.
spoken word and in nature’s speech, expression is illuminated by an interior splendor providing concrete form and meaning.

What can C. S. Peirce’s philosophy of religion, John of Damascus’s iconology and Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theory of linguistic expression contribute to a Hispanic/Latino theological aesthetics? They show that as a theo-logical reality the beauty of popular Catholicism is greater than the sum of its parts. When Hispanic communities embrace images of La Virgen de Guadalupe or Caridad de Cobre or el Jesús Nazareno, they are making commitments that are willy-nilly countercultural in the U.S. context. These expressions of faith need to be read intratextually, i.e., as cultural-linguistic systems whose meaning can only be deduced by reading the forms on their own terms. There is no meaning “behind” the expressed form of religiosidad popular. The meaning does not lie in a generic “theme” which can then be correlated extrinsically to the “themes” of Anglo-American spirituality, liturgical practices, and expressions of faith. Following Clifford Geertz, we need to recognize that “thicker” rather than thinner descriptions of Latino cultural and religious life are now needed. In my opinion, the surest defense against parochialism and sustenance of an intellectual barrio for Hispanic Catholicism in the U.S. is to recognize that the meaning of these religious practices lies in the forms, not behind or above them.

Although von Balthasar’s polar theory of expressed form sheds a great deal of light on the act of perception, by itself any theory which focuses on perception can encourage passivity. An erotic response to beauty, on the other hand, beckons the viewer simultaneously to consider a complete transformation of her or his life. An erotic response to beauty mandates spiritual exercises of the very sort that lured the apostles who viewed the resurrected Lord to go forth and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We need to consider now the forms of productive activity that contribute to a vision of beauty in the cosmos.


Von Balthasar recognizes this point, which is why his own project of theological aesthetics is based upon the twin experiences of vision and rapture and why his theological aesthetics should not be read in isolation from his other two multivolume contributions, namely, theo-drama and theo-logic.

See Juan Ramón Jiménez’s personal testimony to beauty in his prologue to *God Desired and Desiring*, 132–7.

Matt 28:19.
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Theopoetics:
The Incalculable Dignity and Human Limits of Productive Activity

The construction of a U.S. Hispanic/Latino theology of action is a
tall order, but let us begin with a single insight, which may also offer a
view to the larger problem.6 The painting of an image upon a canvas
or a mural on the wall of a church is itself labor. In an age of hyper-
media, we lose sight not only of the physical labor that goes into the
creation of an image, but also the originality of the image. Once an
image can be downloaded from a computer, its capacity for ever being
viewed as a new creation of the artist is ipso facto questionable. The
technology that increases the speed with which we can reproduce im-
ages thereby erases a good deal of their expressivity.

The medieval had of course a very different understanding of the
creation of the work of art. The medieval scholastic theologians
praised the intelligence of craftsmanship (ars) not only for its technical
prowess or social utility, but also as an exercise that displays the
human spirit in action and delivers us from the tyranny of an overly
active life at the same time. In the words of Jacques Maritain: “the
Schoolmen defined Making as productive action, considered not with
gard to the use which we therein make of our freedom, but merely with
toward the thing produced or with regard to the work taken in itself.”

The artist in this view submits herself to the work of art not to com-
pete with God’s artwork in creation, but to allow it to continue.4 The
order which emerges in the work of art, say, the laying of thousands of
pieces of stone to create a staircase leading up to the top of a turret in
a Gothic cathedral, is a thing of beauty, but not because the viewer will
recognize the genius of the artist therein. The increase in labor’s inten-
sivity in the world of late capitalism has often developed without any

6One of the most creative impulses for a theology of action in America is being
developed by the Argentinean Jesuits publishing in Stromata. See, for example,
Juan Carlos Scannone, “Trabajo, cultura, y evangelización. Creatividad e identidad
de la enseñanza social de la Iglesia,” Stromata (1985) 17–32, and J. R. Seibold,
“Teoría y Praxis. Presupuestos ontológicos para una teología de la acción,” Stromata

6Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism and the Frontiers of Poetry (Notre Dame,
Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974). Enrique Dussel makes a similar point
about the medieval understanding of the work of art: “El ser del artefacto es la in-
teligencia efectora: la pulcritudine del artefacto tiene igualmente su fundamento o
principio en el faber. Podemos decir que en el artefacto ens, verum, bonum, et pul-
chrum convertuntur: el ser, la verdad, el bien y la coherencia formal son idénticas.”
Enrique Dussel, Filosofía de la producción (Santa Fe de Bogota: Editorial Nueva

6Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, 49–63.
regard for the ultimate value of work. The medievals knew something we as (post)moderns increasingly have difficulty putting into expression, namely, that artistic labor—like all work well done—carries with it its own rewards if one recognizes its proper dignity and place in the cosmos. The modern workplace foists more and more work upon us but silences the discussion of the meaning of work beyond mere results.

Karl Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is, to change it" is a good example of the possibilities and limits of the modern bias toward productive activity. To his credit, Marx forced philosophers and theologians to pay attention to distinctiveness of productive activity. Whereas Aristotle assumed that human life is action (praxis) and not production (poiesis), Marx reversed the relative importance of these two modalities of living. What happened to the human relation to the cosmos in the course of this reversal is a complicated affair on which scholars of Marx's thought have famously disagreed.

For our purposes, it suffices to indicate that Marx maintained a proper emphasis on praxis but accepted without criticism the quintessentially modern separation of domestic life from the beauty and order of the cosmos. The roots of this separation go deep into Marx's penetrating analysis of the capitalist economic system and can be presented here only in a summary fashion. The analysis of economic systems which lies at the heart of Marx's theory of praxis was clearly intended to overcome the alienation of workers who rightly felt that the sense of

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*The Benedictine notion of ora et labora can be taken as the basis for a spiritual theology of labor and influenced the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, Dorothy Day. See Dussel, *Filosofía de la producción*, 43, 49.

*Guizuet, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 84.

*Guizuet, following Kostas Axelos, Matthew Lamb, and others, assumes that the limitation of the Marxist notion of praxis lies in its reduction of the goal of human action to the technique of social transformation. (See *Caminemos con Jesús*, 84.) Louis Dupré, on the other hand, accepts this criticism of Marx but makes the further point that Marx was the first modern philosopher to develop a conception of cultural activity that was intrinsically social and thereby gave an impetus (which neither he nor his followers was ever able to fulfill) to the renewal and transformation of the ancient ideal of cultural reintegration. See Louis Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983). Incidentally, Guizuet deserves high praise for his positive treatment of the Aristotelian notion of praxis as (at least for Marx) nonproductive activity geared toward an end in itself. Praxis in this sense corresponds with the sense of muesmation discussed above, which is, in my opinion, a positive and liberating constituent in Hispanic/Latino religiosidad popular.

The medieval church knew something of the difficulty of putting into expression work done—carries with proper dignity and place in the order of work beyond mere reproduction. The difference lies in the point of view. Marx in various ways; the point is to show the limits of the moderns. On his credit, Marx forced philosophical conviction that human life is action (praxis) on the relative importance of happened to the human relation versal is a complicated affair on which famously disagreed. It states that Marx maintained a criticism of the quintessential nature of the beauty and order of society go deep into Marx's pene-tration system and can be presented in the analysis of economic systems of praxis was clearly intended the sense that otherwise, it can be as a sacrificing of the Catholic Worker movement, laicization, 43, 49. 84. Matthew Lamb, and others, assumes that Marx lies in its reduction of the goal of transformation. (See Caminemos con Jesús, p54) in this criticism of Marx but makes the philosopher to develop a conception of social and thereby gave an impetus to the renewal and transformation. See Louis Dupré, Marx's Social Critique of Culture (Press, 1983). Incidentally, the idea of equality or equality activity geared toward an end in the sense of a movement discussed above, liberating constituent in Hispanic/Latino.

self which they invested into the products of their own labor was being divested from them when the owners of the means of production bought and sold these products to the highest bidder and for the purpose of re-generating their own capital. Marx's analysis was to lead to a society in which the alienation experienced by the worker would be overcome once new structures and the concomitant social relationships came onto the scene. Even in its purest form, however, the Prometheus's architecture of Marx's understanding of human action made it impossible for this goal to be realized. Marx maintained that so far as labour is a creator of use-value, (viz.) is useful labour, it is a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal, nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and nature, and therefore no life. By turning all labor into social utility, Marx effectively undermined his own strong desire to effect a new, more liberating relationship between men and women, on the one hand, and the cosmos, on the other. He bound his conception of human action too uncritically to the modern desire to produce ever greater results. Behind Marx's subtle analysis lies the unquestioned assumption that if we do not produce something of social utility out of nature, then we are liable to become slaves to it. In real terms, one could counter Marx's one-sided interest in the productivity of human action by asking about the productive value of the celebration of a quincenear (which in many instances is burdened with far too many fetishistic trappings) or the feast of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Marx—like most modern thinkers—lacks an adequate theology of the Sabbath.

Roberto Goizueta aims to restore the broken connection between beauty and the cosmos while taking seriously the challenge which Marx...
and his defenders have put to philosophy and theology. Goizueta puts forth the notion of "theopoetics" to advance the state of the question. To his credit, Goizueta excoriates Marx for his senseless depreciation of domestic life: "For Marx, domestic life does not exist as an arena of human self-realization independent from economic production; it is but one aspect (the reproductive aspect) of economic production." Pace Marx, the world of the home is not just an extension of social relationships. The unheralded work accomplished by women and men—especially that of the abuelitos and small children—in the space of the home has an intrinsic value that can be neither romanticized nor instrumentalized for social gain. This work takes many forms ranging from cleaning toilets to giving thanks to God at the end of the day. If one denigrates and instrumentalizes la cotidianidad as Marx does, then one is unable to recognize that the family is potentially the first locus for the deprivation of the individual and the cultivation of virtues which will enable children to be not only productive but also self-giving participants in the social world outside the home.

The social-economic model for analyzing productive activity is in some ways preferable to a romantic one which focuses on superficial aspects of Latino culture that are simply entertaining or otherwise valued commodities for North American consumers and owners of la tierra. The social model at least recognizes the real work accomplished by Hispanic laborers. But the severe limits of this model are also plain, a Goizueta indicated. Hispanic/Latino theological aesthetics needs to explore alternatives to the Promethean model of homo faber. The everyday labor of Hispanic/Latino life is not best characterized as the human struggle against nature in order to wrest from it all that he needs for purely social utility.

An alternative to Prometheus is the Herculean model of labor. The ancient figure of Hercules symbolized both ingenuity and hard work. When Hercules was asked to clean the Augean stables for the first time in thirty years, he cleverly built a trench that would divert a local river through the stables, accomplishing in just one day what no one

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53 Goizueta, Caminemos con Jesús, 115.
phy and theology. Goizueta puts his senseless deprecation to shame in his treatment of the question.**

It is not just an extension of social practice accomplished by women and small children—in the space of society that can neither romanticized nor vilified with impunity, but also self-giving to the home.###

Analyzing productive activity in terms of social creativity and the cultivation of virtues productive but also self-giving to the home.###

It features a case study of the work accomplished by labor,###

The tasks involved are both ingenuity and hard work.###

Chmielowski, S.J., 


thought possible. The countless hours of work being undertaken by U.S. Hispanic women and men at literally every level of economic life, but especially among the most recent and least appreciated of the immigrants, need to be recognized as intrinsic social goods.###

One must exercise great care in championing work for its own sake. Extolling the dignity of labor relapses into a new form of romanticism if it reflects our attention away from questions of structural ethics. On the other hand, the priority of Hispanic/Latino theoepoetics over the Marxist model of social transformation consists precisely in the recognition of the real limits of human productivity in the overall history of the cosmos. The progress and enlightenment afforded by modern life have convinced virtually no one that man’s work can save the cosmos. “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now” (Rom 8:22). Theoepoetics must open up to an authentic Christian eschatology, one which still recognizes the dignity of life being sustained by the Hispanic/Latino contributions to the social sphere and even the manner in which these contributions may lead indirectly to real transformations of economic systems.

Eschatology: Urbis et orbis

It has been estimated that 88 percent of U.S. Hispanic Americans lived in urban areas in 1988.### This fact alone has generated a number of important proposals regarding the urban character of Hispanic theology and the close connection between urban, ministry, and the social fabric of Hispanic American life.### Furthermore, as Ana María Díaz-Stevens has noted, the segregation of Latino neighborhoods (which are often multi-Hispanic) from the rest of society is increasing rather than decreasing within U.S. society.### If one defines a barrio as the Census


### See Ana María Díaz-Stevens, “The Hispanic Challenge to U.S. Catholicism: Colonialism, Migration, and Religious Adaptation,” Cuerpo de Cristo, 157–79 (for this and what follows in this paragraph.
Bureau does, namely as a tract with 50 percent or more Latino population, then 36 percent of all Latinos and 46 percent of all poor Latinos lived in such barrios. According to Diaz-Stevens, between 1980 and 1990 the number of Latino barrios in which 40 percent or more of the families had incomes below the poverty line increased from 15 to 21 percent. These statistics paint a sobering picture of the daily life of the average urban Latino.

While the urban character of Latino life should not be taken as a totalization, it is a salient fact of life and not without theological implications. Jean-Pierre Ruiz has recently contributed a remarkable set of theological reflections upon urban Hispanic Catholicism in his essay, “Biblical Interpretation from a U.S. Hispanic Perspective: A Reading of the Apocalypse.” In considering a contextual reading of the book of Revelation from the viewpoint and lived experience of U.S. Hispanic Americans, Ruiz brings together the cosmopolitan theme that pervades that book with its liturgical character. Far from mere millenarianism, the Apocalypse of John contains a genuine social critique in which rulers, merchants, and seafarers lament the downfall of Babylon and the faithful worshipers of the slain Lamb (cf. Rev 5:9, 12) greet with hope-filled liturgical praise the coming of the new Jerusalem. The author of the Apocalypse both rejected the imperial mercantilism of the Roman world and attempted to absorb it in a reinterpretation of the Roman world and attempted to absorb it in a reinterpretation of the cosmos.

The urban foregrounding of the book enabled the readers to participate communally in the apocalyptic vision from the specific location of their own social context; they were never forced to flee into the false consolation of an otherworldly utopia. The urban liturgies with which they respond have a universal character to them. They are addressed, if I may transpose a particularly Roman Catholic locution to a new context, as the church to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev 2:1–3:22) are compared by

63In Cuerpo de Cristo, 78–105.
50 percent or more Latino population and 46 percent of all poor Latinos, between 1980 and which 40 percent or more of the voting age population is Hispanic. A Reading of the Apocalypse in light of the historical and political context of the time, some observers have noted, is not a theological exercise but a means of organizing and mobilizing the community to fight for its rights.


Ruiz to officially sanctioned eavesdropping on other people’s mail. They give the Christian communities addressed by the Apocalypse a realistic picture of “their entanglement in Babylon’s unclean commerce and their hope for an end to the mourning and pain (Rev. 21:4) in the new creation.”

Likewise, the cultic context of these words of lamentation and shouts of genuine liturgical joy resonate with experiences of many Hispanic Americans. The reading of the Apocalypse from the U.S. Hispanic American perspective redefines worship as a form of prayer that is neither just public nor private. As Hispanic Americans read and participate in the mosaic of images contained in the text, their words of praise become new expressions of the ritual imagery of text. In other words, they read the world “intra-textually,” viz., they read the world in terms of the literary and ritual structure of the cosmos on the brink of a sudden apocalyptic disclosure.

The specific words addressed to the earliest Christian communities undergoing persecution in the Roman Empire become their own. The urban mosaic of the Apocalypse is a cosmic theophany, but one which gives voice to both the suffering and joy that attends urban Hispanic life in the United States.

In October 1997 I attended a Mass and procession dedicated to El Señor de los Milagros at Nuestra Señora Reina de las Américas parish in Washington, D.C. The following report illustrates the eschatology of urban Hispanic Catholicism with far greater eloquence than a formal theological treatise is capable. It also is meant to exemplify the fusion of participation and observation that is necessary to narrate theophetic texts, including the texts that consist of rituals and communal actions.

The Lord of the Miracles is a Peruvian feast commemorating the image of the crucified Christ painted by a liberated African slave, an image that survived an earthquake in 1655. Even with subsequent earthquakes, the wall on which the image stands was never leveled. Highly structured lay groups, cofradías and hermandades, grew out around the sanctuary, and the devotion is today in Peru a celebration of immense proportions.

The gymnasium in Washington, D.C., that day was relatively full as it drizzled outside. The upper part of the stands were in overflow capacity, but some chairs in the lower part were being held for the elderly. The purple-caped guards of the confraternity cordoned off the
central area and monitored the seating arrangements vigilantly. At a
certain point after the Mass was well underway, the guards gave the
signal for the empty seats in front to be filled. Throughout the cere-
mony many people remained walled up along all three sides of the
building. Like an outdoor ceremony in Lima, no one expected to get
front row seats. These were clearly reserved for the elders of the
group. All age groups were represented. The arrangement was hier-
narchical but with a clear mandate that the least mobile (the elderly,
women with small children, the disabled) be shown mercy. The plea
for the Lord’s mercy resurfaced in the homily and throughout the rest
of the day. When the lenten-like ceremony transpires in Lima every
autumn, the skies overhead are often grey and downcast, and each of
the penitents is advised to fix his or her gaze on the paschal mystery
of Christ.69

At the front of the auditorium in Washington was a huge Peruvian
flag, under which was displayed a large, florally embellished icon of
the Lord of the Miracles. The auditorium was a grade school gym dur-
ing the week, but on this occasion it was hard to notice the basketball
nets. The room was completely transformed. Everyone’s attention was
directed to the Lord of the miracles on the altar. Dashes of purple capes
through the crowd, even on a newborn child, added color to the sur-
roundings. The feast is also known as Festividades en Honor a Nuestro
Cristo Morado, and purple capes were based upon the habits of the
Nazarene sisters who are in charge of the sanctuary of the Lord of the
miracles in Peru.

The outdoor procession began shortly after the Mass. Because of the
rain, the twenty- to thirty-foot high float was covered by an enormous
plastic sheet. In the center was the image of the Lord of the Miracles
(the Virgin was on the back side). Floral arrangements covered the
whole float. There were no wheels. The members of the hermandad ro-
tated in teams, usually all male or all female. Each team began and
ended its rotation with the clanging of a bell (much like the opening of
a round in a prize fight). One did not notice efficiency or bureaucracy,
but there was a subtle organizational mechanism behind the whole
affair. The purple caped members of the hermandad each had official
badges listing their rank within the confraternal structure. At one
point a woman asked a man who appeared to be a higher ranking
member of the hermandad whether he wanted to drape a plastic
garbage bag over his cape to keep dry. The man not only declined but

69Santilli, El Señor de los Milagros, 2: “Durante el mes de Octubre, el pueblo
limeño especialmente, revive las riquezas de la cuarentena y todo culmina en un sin-
cero encuentro con Cristo: nuestra Pascua.”
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dall under way, the guards gave the
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expressed his pride at the sacrifice he was undergoing; “Es de fe. Es de
fe,” were his only words. The shifts proceeded regularly without any
mishaps or glitches even as the downpour became torrential, and
spirits began to lag in the cold. The stores along the way selling coffee
and sandwiches did a thriving business. One man went through the
crowd selling paper icons for one dollar. Others sold Peruvian delicacies
from their trucks. Along a stretch on California Avenue, several
hundred people gathered in the rain at every step. No priests were
seen accompanying the procession. The structure and organization of
the whole event was in the hands of a purely lay hierarchy. Even those
without capes had the image of the Lord of the Miracles pinned to
their coats. Members of the honor guard had several icons on them.
Like the martyrs described by St. John of Damascus, we were living
icons of a very visible God. We became legible forms of the urban land-
scape." The paschal mystery of the Word had been painted into our
very gait. Several other large banners of the Lord of the Miracles were
being carried in the crowd. At the very head of the procession were
two flag bearers standing side by side. One carried the American Flag;
the other, the Peruvian.

The procession moved very slowly, proceeding maybe one hun-
dred yards in a fifteen minute period before stopping. Behind the float
was a small band—trombone, drum, saxophone, and a few other in-
struments. When the procession was underway, they played the same
dirge-like tune the whole way. A spiritual counterpart to the driving
rain, the music and accompanying lyrics soaked the participants in the
paschal theme. Immediately in front of the float were a few women
surrounded by the smoke from the incense burners they were carry-
ing. In spite of the downpour, they managed to keep the incense going.
In front of them and further ahead in the crowd were a group of abueli-
tis reciting the rosary. This continued during the whole procession.
When the procession was underway, a core group, mainly composed
of women, sang the hymn of the Lord of the Miracles over and over
again. Eventually the rhythm and the words of the three verses became
an integral part of the experience. Mesmerized, they remained with me
for a long time after I left:

Señor de los Milagros, a Ti venimos en procesión tus fieles devotos a im-
plorar tu bendición. (Lord of the Miracles, we come to you in procession,
faithful adorers, in order to beseech your blessing.)

"On the imageability and legibility of urban environments, see Kevin Lynch,
The Image of the City (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960) 9-13, and Michel de Certau,
The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984)."
Peter Casarella

Faro que sigues a nuestras almas la fe, esperanza, la caridad; tu amor divino nos ilumine nos hagas de tu bondad. (Beacon of faith, hope, and charity to our souls, let your divine love shine upon us and grace us with your kindness.)

Con paso firme de buen cristiano hagamos grande nuestro Perú; y unidos todos como una fuerza te suplimos nos des tu luz. (With the steady pace [or float] of a good Christian, let us make our Peru great, and we stand before you united as a single force [asking that] you give us your light.)

The most dramatic scene was the crossing of Connecticut Avenue, a major artery in the city. The slow, funereal rhythm and loud trombone blasts of the band contrasted with the monotonous whir of traffic speeding down Connecticut Avenue. As the procession approached, two police cars blocked the traffic heading to the center of the nation's capitol. The drivers and taxicab passengers who were stopped looked annoyed. This was the intersection of the fast pace of modern individuals with pre-modern, communal liturgy. None of the participants in the procession looked up as we passed a Civil War memorial dedicated to General George McClellan of the Union Army. Even though McClellan sitting on his horse towered over the much smaller float, all gazes remained fixed on the living icon of the Lord. General McClellan also blocked a direct view of the side entrance of the Washington Hilton. This part of Connecticut Avenue has many hotels, but the Washington Hilton is particularly interesting and was only a stone’s throw from the rain-drenched, hymnody Peruvians. No one would have cared if you had mentioned that this was precisely the spot where President Reagan had been struck by the bullet of would-be assassin John Hinckley. The procession took the participants out of U.S. history and inserted them in a different dimension of time. Their story was a “little story” in contrast to the big story of the U.S. Civil War or the attempted assassination of President Reagan.67

Their procession was an unmodern prayer, a strategy of resistance for overcoming the spiritual aridity of modern U.S. culture. It was a way of inserting the pilgrim community into an urban landscape without being assimilated. It was not anti-establishment, for they upheld their drenched American flag as proudly as the Peruvian one. They were trying to sow small seeds of a new communal structure that was wholly spiritual right in the midst of modern urban individualism. The living, ordered, praising expression of confraternal love is an eschatological plea to allow the New Jerusalem to take a visible form in the very midst of an urban metropolitan center of the First World. Surrounded by embassies from around the world on every block, the itin-

67García-Rivera, St. Martín de Porres, 1–39.
as la fe, esperanza, la caridad; tu amor y tu bondad. (Beacon of faith, hope, and in love shine upon us and grace us with

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rant “good Christians” directed their prayers to “¡Señor de Milagros!
¡Rabí de Galilea!” The rabbi of Galilee was listening to the dignified

of the wayfarers and providing them with words of comfort

from his enthroned Cross. In spite of the weather, the heavenly Jeru-

salem seemed not too far away.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like first to affirm that I am not the first

tologist to point to the centrality of nonverbal representation for

S, Hispanic Catholic theology. In fact, the very idea of developing a

eological aesthetics from the vantage point of the painted word came
to me while reading Virgilio Elizondo’s Guadalupe: Mother of the New

ation, a book which bears its own theology of beauty in the cosmos.

This book Elizondo augments the theology of mestiże in his

ious works by emphasizing the new Shekinah or dwelling in our midst

of the Word disclosed in the icon of Guadalupe to Juan Diego. Guadalupe

is not so much an apparition as an encuentro of truth, in which the

imacy of the paternal heaven and the maternal earth bursts forth in

ower and song for the children of the new America. Several others

have already dealt with the importance of orality to Hispanic/Latino

dology and in doing so have noted the proximity of the oral, the

ural, and the visual. In particular, I was struck by Ana María

eda’s presentation of the rich tradition of oral and visual humanism

that goes back to the transmission of Nahua codices in which

esoamericans committed to memory a variety of forms of discourse

-ranging from cosmic myths to sacred hymns—through painted

codes. She also made the brilliant connection between the Meso-

american preservation of the pictures of the book and “the current

4 Virgilio Elizondo, Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis

5 Books, 1997) 135: “Like the biblical word that was written on paper made by

uman hands in a specific place, God’s word was painted on the native cloth of In-

digenous America. Like the biblical word, it would be there for all generations to

read” for our salvation. What the written word has been for generations of biblical

levers, the painted word has been for generations of believers in the New World.

In Our Lady of Guadalupe at Tepeyac, God pitched a tent and came to dwell

among us.” Italics added.

6 Ibid., 43.

7 In addition to the works of Goizueta and Ruiz noted above, see Ana María

eda, “The Oral Tradition of a People: Forjada de rostro y corazón,” Hispanic/Latino

ology, 104–16; Jeanette Rodriguez, “Sangre llama a sangre: Cultural Mem-

ory as a Source of Theological Insight,” Hispanic/Latino Theology, 117–33; and Walter

. Hollenweger, “Flowers and Songs: A Mexican Contribution to Theological


forging of the rostro y corazón of the Hispanic personality.” Urban wall murals are a new form of iconic stewardship for the palabra antigua preserved with such care by the “wise ones” (lamatínones) of sixteenth-century Mesoamerica.

What I would like to add to this on-going conversation about theological aesthetics and the painted word is the following insight. The iconography of the U.S. Hispanic Catholic presence represents a new angle on the Church’s theology of the Word. The Fathers of the Church and of the Second Vatican Council spoke often of the “condescension” (sunkatabasis) of the divine Word into the form of communication which we find inscribed in the written text. Participation in the Señor de los Milagros procession shows that there is something more at work than just a lowering of the divine Word into the human, painted form. Caminamos con Jesús. We walked with Christ, and he walked with us. On this pilgrimage we were not just hearers but also doers of the Word. And perhaps even the category of accompaniment does not go far enough. Christ was not just there as an accompanist like the drum and bugle corps; he also watched us and everyone around us in the city and even the city itself. To see the Word painted by a freed slave in seventeenth-century Lima being led through the main arteries of contemporary Washington, D.C., is also to be seen by the Word. The icon of Christ is a portal to his real presence in the very midst of the U.S. Hispanic community. Those who gaze at the painted Word can feel the mercy of the Lord’s gaze being directed to precisely their own social, familial, and personal locations. The painted face of Word is also therefore an omnivoyant Word. Everyone is touched by the gaze of the Lord of the Miracles, but without a violation of freedom or a sense of intrusion. Each viewer of the gaze is a child of God who enters into dialogue with the divine countenance and simultaneously with all aspects, even the fabricated, urban ones, of God’s creation.

I conclude nonetheless with a cautionary note. The iconographic approach taken here must not become a new totalization for Latinos. For example, in a recent interview Cuban novelist Cristina García opined: “El verdadero hogar de un escritor en el exilio es la página

72 Ibid., 113.
The Painted Word

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donde escribe, porque no pertenece a ningún lugar y porque, en muchas
partes, es rechazado por la gente.” The written word of Latino au-
ors will continue to play a creative role in the life of the people. The
ext generation of Hispanic/Latino life in the United States will see a
huge influx of new tesserae added to the mosaic. The social life of exile
l felt by some, and the new and difficult integration of what Roberto
uro calls strangers among us, will take many and varied forms in the
coming years. By focusing on the iconographic beauty displayed in
the cosmos, I hope only to have illustrated in a small way some of the
possibilities for a future Hispanic/Latino theological aesthetics.

77 “The true home of a writer in exile is the page on which she writes because
she belongs to no one place and because in many places people banish her.” Cited
12.

78 See, for example, the highly suggestive essays by Ana María Díaz-Stevens:
“In the Image and Likeness of God: Literature as Theological Reflection,” Hispanic/
Latino Theology, 86-103, and Ana Maria Pineda, “The Colloquies and Theological
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79 Roberto Suro, Strangers Among Us: How Latino Immigration Is Changing Amer-
Resumen: El verbo pintado

"El verbo pintado" trata de los presupuestos para una teología iconográfica de la acción. Mejor dicho, trata de la celebración de la fiesta del Señor de los Milagros en Washington, D.C., que refleja la gloria y el sufrimiento de Dios y la realidad mestiza de su Reino justo en el camino por la ciudad de la hermandad.

El ensayo contiene tres reflexiones. El enfoque de la primera parte es la prioridad de la percepción en la experiencia de la belleza inefable de Dios. Se encuentra la belleza divina, por ejemplo, en el seguimiento de Jesucristo imprimido en la vida cristiana de un martir. La segunda parte investiga la poética y dignidad del trabajo. Ni la teoría medieval del diseño ni el desprecio de Marx al trabajo doméstico son adecuados para una teología hispana de la acción. Propongo la figura anciana de Hércules como símbolo de la fuerza desconocida y creatividad inmensa del trabajo realizado por latinas y latinos. La tercera parte analiza la eschatología cristiana implícita en una procesión de La Hermandad del Señor de los Milagros por la capital de los Estados Unidos. Concluyo que el camino visiblemente espiritual del pueblo contribuye a la formación de nuevas estructuras de comunidad y nuevas expresiones de la merced del Señor en la vida cotidiana de los participes.

La teología de la imagen de este ensayo nos conduce a una visión del Señor como rostro divino y creador del cosmos entero. A pesar de su preeminente importancia, "el verbo pintado" es solamente una expresión de la unión de cultura y fe engendrada por el pueblo hispano de los Estados Unidos.