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The Visual Hermeneutics of Hispanic/ Latino Popular Religion and the Recovery of the Image in Christian Praxis¹

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Like most people who internalized the modernist aesthetic norms of Western academic culture, I learned to dismiss the power of the popular religious image.² Part of my aversion to popular image was the mark of my success in having achieved a certain aesthetic-appreciative standard that distinguished me from people who turned themselves over to the realism of statues and other images of faith. Accordingly I developed aesthetic competencies which divide popular image from art. The ability to divide high from low art designated my good judgment in cultural affairs, separating me from lower visual tastes. I knew the difference between a Matisse and a "saccharine" holy card.³

Nevertheless, as of late my aesthetic acumen has suffered a certain defeat. The criteria of modernist art criticism have worn thin. My judgments against popular images have proven faulty. In fact, the activity at a Marian shrine outside the priory where I live has forced me to reconsider the aesthetic ideology that dismisses popular image as "kitsch."⁴ I have come to revere that aesthetic vitality of Mary's effigy in relationship to the formation of religious culture. I realize that the aesthetics of faith mediated by that relationship has serious implications for all Christian people.

¹This paper was originally presented at the 2000 North American Academy of Liturgy, "Liturgy and Hermeneutics" Section, January 2-5, 2000, Tampa, Florida.

²David Freedberg, *The Power Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 22-6.

³Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993) 151-70.

⁴"Kitsch" is a German word that was commonly used by the new aesthetic criticism of the twentieth century to refer to middle-brow tastes for domestic images.

For the last few years, I have been an "observant participant"⁵ of the comings and goings at a shrine to the Virgin Mary at St. Dominic Parish located in a predominately Latino neighborhood in the west part of Miami, Florida. Even though the parish houses a beautiful dominical assembly space that remains a vibrant locus for Church life, I have become convinced that the shrine mediates a form of ecclesial life alternative to that gathering space for eucharistic worship. In particular, the activity at the shrine is instructive of an aesthetics of faith that is alive in the ecclesial experience of Hispanic/Latino people in the United States. Furthermore, I am certain that it represents a genre of religious life that has been neglected, lost, or dismissed in contemporary North Atlantic Christian experience. I suggest that this experience of Church life is valuable especially for those interested in how and why the image has been subverted by contemporary religious culture. Therefore, in this essay I attempt to describe the ritual activity at the Marian shrine and show how that activity mediates a particular visual praxis of the faith. It ultimately challenges the Christian academy to recover a theology of the image that will be evermore important for the postmodern world.

The Shrine

Day and night people visit and pray before a single three-dimensional image most commonly referred to as "Nuestra Señora." Many of the active parishoners know her by her precise designation as Nuestra Señora del Rosario and understand her relationship to the Dominican popular devotion heralding the glorious, sorrowful, and joyful mysteries of the Virgin Mary. There are many people who know her, however, by a more generic Marian appellation. Whether woven to a precise narrative of the rosary or to some other Marian identity, this image engenders a constant orchestration of people who seek refuge, sanctuary, and make intercession at her outdoor environment.

As one turns off a busy and congested street to enter St. Dominic's, an image towers over the farthest edge of the parking lot. Whether day or night a slender female figure is discernable from a distance. At night dramatic lighting around the image makes her display even more

⁵Since 1995 I have implemented a method of engaging participants at the shrine in conversation about its meaning. This approach has involved hundreds of informal interviews with persons who pray at the shrine. This information was incorporated into my presentation of the space at the 1999 meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy. See Mark E. Wedig, "Two Ecclesiologies of the Worship Environment at St. Dominic Church, Miami, FL," unpublished presentation, North American Academy of Liturgy, January 2-5, 1999, Vancouver, B.C.

sensational. Enshrined by a line of trees and by a waterway in the back of her effigy, she visually defies the chaotic surroundings by a certain spatial composure or dignity. A constant stream of people either walks or drives to the space which she inhabits in order to visit her likeness and presence. As a whole the shrine itself functions as a crossroads of social activity in a highly congested but flourishing area of West Miami. The busy street, nearby shopping centers, a hospital adjacent to the parish grounds brings a host of Caribbean and Latin American peoples to assemble at this environment.

Faithful pilgrims enact a number of rituals ordered to Mary's image. She is the recipient of many gifts. Flowers of every kind, candles, and other votive offerings pay homage to the Virgin. On rarer occasions, and often to the embarrassment and amusement of parishoners, more extraordinary gifts are often given by those who practice the Afro-Cuban religion of Santería. A live or slaughtered animal may appear before the image. Furthermore, touching Our Lady is often the pilgrim's last exchange with her before leaving. This gesture often consummates an individual's ritual pattern of contact with her. Various parish events are directed to the shrine. Particularly on October 7, the feast of the Holy Rosary, the Marian sodality processes there with great festive fanfare. Other public prayer meetings will spontaneously seek sanctuary in Mary's environment. It is common that the image is incorporated into religious education classes for children.

The shrine embodies tremendous authority in its surrounding community. The fuller authorization of it has been established over the nearly thirty years of its vitality in the lives of the people from the parish environs. Much of that life has been played out quietly or anonymously in the personal anecdotes of parishoner's lives and in the tales of many others who pass through the locality on their way to and from the hospital adjacent to the parish. Nevertheless, a more dramatic record of divine favor, benevolence, and clemency can be retrieved from those who visit the shrine. Some of the best known ones center around graces granted for children and other family members of people exiled from their homeland. These narratives incorporate the strife, survival, and success of a people in a new culture.

Hispanic/Latino Theology in the United States and the Recovery of a Theological Aesthetics

There is a growing reflection on why the aesthetics of faith mediated by a shrine, like the one I describe above, is gaining greater attention by the theological academy. Foundational to the Hispanic/Latino theological project in the United States has been the recovery of the

overlooked and forgotten part of the Catholic tradition identified as the *locus theologicus* of popular religiosity.⁶ The deeply intuitive religious symbols and rituals of grass-roots movements of the Latin American Church provide a hermeneutics of the Christian faith. The popular "texts" which substantiate Hispanic/Latino spirituality especially provide an alternative understanding of what is fundamentally constitutive of the Christian liturgy and the Church. For Latin American Christianity, memories about both suffering and liberation of Jesus Christ, Mary, the saints, and the people themselves are embodied and integrated by a particular aesthetic response.

For Hispanic/Latino Christians a *sensus fidelium* only can be recovered by appreciating intuitive resources. The ecclesial tradition is grounded in mediated beauty.⁷ Orlando Espín points out that the uniqueness of "new world" evangelization lies in the efforts of laity who "evinced the medieval predilection for the visual, the oral and the dramatic."⁸ Therefore, the recovery of Hispanic/Latino experience necessitates alternative epistemologies of the sacred. It is suggested that ecclesial participation and self-perception developed uniquely through optic and other sensate dramas. The aesthetic foundations of colonial Latin American Christianity challenges the customary Western intellectual understanding of the Church tradition as word-text. The praxis of the Latin American Church supplants the traditional understanding of text altogether.

The Visual Locus of Popular Religion

In this essay I want to focus especially on that part of religious aesthetic response which is engendered by visual properties. I wish to probe the unique way that the image mediates the Christian tradition in Hispanic/Latino experience. For instance, Catholic friar missionaries employed the visual resources of European late medieval popular Catholicism to win over the Amerindian to Christianity. Jaime Lara

⁶ Orlando Espín and Sixto García, "Lilies of the Field: A Hispanic Theology of Providence and Human Responsibility," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theology Society of America* 44 (1989) 73-9; Roberto Goizueta, "United States Hispanic Theology and the Challenges of Pluralism," *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, ed. Allan Figueroa Deck (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995) 12-19.

⁷ Alejandro García-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful: A Theological Aesthetics* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999) 39-61; Roberto Goizueta, *Camínemos Con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995) 101-31.

⁸ Orlando Espín, "Tradition and Popular Religion: An Understanding of the *Sensus Fidelium*," *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, ed. Allan Figueroa Deck (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992) 69.

shows that the mendicants filled the ritual vacuum of Aztec life "with the sensorial pomp and splendor" of the late medieval European liturgy. "This was nowhere more evident than in the use of the visual arts, and in the constant processions, musical spectacles and liturgical theatrics they created for the neophytes."⁹ The friars established a purposeful dynamic equivalence between visual root-metaphors of medieval eucharistic devotion and the solar worship of the Amerindian peoples.¹⁰ The monstrance and other uniquely ocular liturgical practices were purposely configured to the solar-ocular religious practices of the Aztecs and Mayas of Mexico and the Incas of Peru.

These visual aesthetic foundations of the Christian faith in Latin America helped to generate a culture driven uniquely by ocular response. Image-texts organized the social and religious fabric of a people. The Christian message was disseminated through optical dramas whereby the images of European popular Christianity were aligned to the ocular theater of Amerindian religion. As a result, a visual realism fostered the message of Christianity. The mystery of faith was appropriated in the objective power of socially constructed rituals with less emphasis on a Christianity formed by the subjective concerns of individuals. A culture found itself literally in the environs of the holy shrine. The power and grandeur of the divine was given radical embodiment in the spectacle of effigy.¹¹

Understanding these visual aesthetic foundations is necessary for valuing the contemporary Hispanic/Latino experience of the Christian faith. A uniquely visual participation in popular religious symbols links Latin peoples of America to the way the narrative of salvation in Jesus, Mary, and the saints is told. Image and cultural memory are interwoven. Access to the faith remains expressly ocular. This highly sensate involvement with images which embody the mystery and message of Christianity bespeaks a fundamental language of faith in need of greater appropriation as "text." This predilection for a uniquely ocular synthesis of Christian praxis challenges the theologian to understand how visual aesthetic resources mean what they express. In other words there is a need to explain how images inform meaning and to show how that response has often been repressed in the post-Renaissance cultural memory of Christianity. Such iconoclasm reveals the fear of what images demand in terms of social meaning.

⁹ Jaime Lara, "Precious Green Jade Water: A Sixteenth-Century Adult Catechumene in the New World," *Worship* 71 (1997) 428.

¹⁰ Jaime Lara, "The Sacramental Sun: Solar Eucharistic Worship in Colonial Latin America," *El Cuerpo de Cristo: The Hispanic Presence in the U.S. Catholic Church*, ed. Peter Casarella and Raúl Gómez (New York: Crossroad, 1998) 261-91.

¹¹ Lara, "Precious Green Jade Water," 425-6.

The Recovery of Visual Response

Visual worlds are by their nature "dangerous" because of their realism. Images demand direct connotation from the tangible, corporeal, physical object. They mean what they are. Ocular encounter requires an immediate association with sheer materiality as the locus of meaning. This realism subverts formal, qualitative, or abstract postulation.¹² Images oblige us to know the representation directly. In that sense, an image of the Virgin Mary is the Virgin Mary herself, not an abstraction of her. A picture of a loved one is the loved one herself or himself, not simply a notion of a personage from another place and time. Accurate portrayal strives for verisimilitude, attempting to reproduce total reality.¹³ The radical materiality of visual response undermines many of the formal and abstract codes of Western epistemological formulation. With visual meaning there is a direct correlation between likeness and presence. Accordingly, in order to understand how the image holds meaning it is necessary that we set aside certain categories of so-called superstition or idolatry that prevent this radical material meaning from being appropriated.¹⁴

Furthermore, visual or ocular encounter is deeply ambiguous. We are attracted and repelled by images because they necessitate that we become lost in the thick of meanings. Visual responses demand that we enter into ambiguous epistemological territory. In terms of subjective or individual location of meaning, images purposely confuse us. Their epistemic value challenges the authority of subjective responses over the power of groups caught up in the appropriation of symbols. The subject is often pushed out into a reservoir of symbolic codes where there appears to be no way to define or decode what the image means.

Historically speaking, the ocular resources of culture are by their nature popular.¹⁵ Even though modern Western academic culture has interpreted images in terms of the domain of the artist's subjectivity and the viewer's reception of that subjectivity, images are meant for public scrutiny.¹⁶ What has been cultivated as private and subjective

¹² Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 463-5.

¹³ Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 206.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 439-32.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 76-81.

¹⁶ Stanley Rosen, "Writing and Painting: The Soul as Hermeneut," *The Language of Art History* ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 35-50; W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 7-46.

meaning by North Atlantic academic and museum culture, often has been undermined by popular perceptions. It is possible to tell the history of art according to a defiance of certain elitist academic codes of abstraction, demonstrating that the correlates between images and experience test out over time as socially authoritative.¹⁷ Visual meanings are linked to social examination. Especially religious ocular authority is best determined by the way an image assembles a people. Even though the history of the modern image can be narrated through the interpretative standards of high art culture, another subversive narrative involves popular images and meanings.¹⁸ Especially in the history of Western civilization, visual texts often defy the authority of meaning appropriated by more academic abstractions upon them.

Identifying Iconoclastic Epistemologies

In order to reclaim the *locus theologicus* of popular religion as a visual phenomenon it is necessary to demonstrate how modern Western culture repressed and down-played its visual-intuitive religious memory. In other words, recovering the popular ocular religiosity of Hispanic/Latino experience and other lost and forgotten visual metaphors rests on reclaiming the epistemic merit of visual response; a value undermined by modern iconoclastic culture. Reclaiming the authority of the image in popular religion necessitates challenging what Roberto Goizueta names as "the hegemony of liberal, modern, ego oriented epistemologies" that has dominated European and North American theologies.¹⁹

I suggest that it is possible to build on Goizueta's epistemological claims by examining the iconoclasm of contemporary North Atlantic modernist culture. Along with post-Renaissance and modern bourgeois culture, an elite Church culture eventually succumbed to its embarrassment over popular visual response. Recent writings of both art historians and theologians identify these iconoclasm which tamed, domesticated, and even annihilated the image in the academic cultures of theology and art. The emergence of a cultural intelligentsia especially in the urban centers of post-medieval Europe engendered a distrust and destruction of visually sensitive epistemologies. Both theologians and a new artistic elite became the keepers of aesthetic

¹⁷Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 242-56; Mitchell, *Iconology*, 47-52.

¹⁸Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 81.

¹⁹Roberto S. Goizueta, "Rediscovering Praxis: The Significance of U.S. Hispanic Experience for Theological Method," *We Are a People! Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology*, ed. Roberto S. Goizueta (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 67.

standards. The word-fixations of a religious elite eventually prevailed over the visual resources of culture.²⁰

Especially in North Atlantic culture, the dominance of religious and artistic subjectivity tamed and even destroyed popular visual response. Theologians and artists offered interpretations which lessened the ambiguities of popular ocular religion. An ideology of word-centered control over religion and society prevailed. The word-fixations of a religious and aesthetic virtuoso eventually quelled the power and authority of visual resources appropriated by the populace. Significant visual events of meaning were repressed and/or extricated from Western cultural memory. The deep ambiguity of religion itself was avoided. The supposed superstitions and magical explanations of Western religious culture were being eradicated.

An ideological agenda emerged within North Atlantic academic culture to rid societies of visual ambiguity. This iconoclastic campaign paralleled the authoritative assent of human subjectivity and the rise of scientific methods. The hegemony of interpretation was apportioned to the concepts and language of a high culture over the visual resources of a popular culture. Language representation was separated off from the signified and embodied codes of culture. The mind/body dualism of Cartesian thought helped to create a greater scientific understanding of language itself.

The emergence of an academic high culture for image and religion resulted in the emergence of the era of art and theology.²¹ Besides the natural sciences, the markings of the modern world were artistic and theological. Aesthetic criteria for the appropriateness of the image were identified with mastery of human subjectivity over popular interpretations. Art followed the mind of the artist whereby Christianity followed the mind of the theologian. This epistemological shift highlighted the authority of the artist's perception and theologian's words and the hegemony of their formal qualifications about the divine.²²

Hispanic/Latino Visual Praxis of Self and Community

I claim that this misappropriation of visual response in Western North Atlantic academic culture relates directly to the discrediting of particular Christian praxis. This especially relates to the Hispanic/

²⁰Mark E. Wedig, "The Defeat of Visual Aesthetic Arianism," *Source and Summit: Commemorating Josef A. Jungmann S.J.*, ed. Joanne Pierce and Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999) 214-15.

²¹Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 34.

²²Mark E. Wedig, "The Defeat of Visual Aesthetic Arianism," 217-23.

Latino construction of self and community and has implications for other visually mediated cultures of faith. Hispanic/Latino theologians have shown that the retrieval of their voice in the theological academy necessitates the appreciation of epistemological differences from North Atlantic theologies. I assert that part of that appreciation involves valuing the image as insight. Therefore, the recovery of an alternative understanding of Christian self and community as uniquely visual in the experience of Latinos and Latinas helps the theologian to appreciate the essential role the image plays in Christian reflection.

Roberto Goizueta claims that an individualistic anthropology must view the kissing and touching at the shrines of popular religion as pantheistic or idolatrous because the particular has no relationship to the universal.²³ In the modern post-Enlightenment world, the self is constituted in terms of autonomy, whereby the individual must be liberated from the limits and constraints of community or institution. The relationship between the individual and family or Church is viewed as intrinsically dichotomous.²⁴ Human identity and authenticity are determined by abstracting from social authority and especially from any powerful symbols that signify social bond.

For Hispanic/Latino peoples, the only appropriate response is to kiss and touch the image. The statue or other visual embodiment of faith is part of the collective self which constitutes the individual person. The popular religious image extends far beyond the limits of space and time outlined by modern scientific consciousness because communities extend far beyond those same limits. Therefore, whereas the modern individuated person learned to view their self in distinction from the visual, tangible, concrete expressions of community, the Latin person in America learned to view their self because of the proximity of these communal presences.²⁵

The community that is especially established by the aesthetic performance of popular religion is fundamentally different from the self-realized intentional community of a parish. The ecclesial community of the shrine can be characterized by what often has been labeled pejoratively as "cultural Catholicism." Community is not so much the voluntary association of individuals as it is that fundamental symbolic web of identity and meaning called culture. The *ecclesia* of popular religion is *preexistent* (therefore involuntary) and *constitutive* of both self and culture.²⁶ I contend that the uniquely visual and dramatic character of

popular religion facilitates that constitutive experience and understanding of Church.

I encountered this preexistent ecclesiological understanding when I first began to minister in South Florida in the mid 1980s. I would consistently encounter young Latino men and women who would insist on themselves being Catholics even though they had never been fully initiated or baptized. Some would even call themselves Catholic if they worshipped at one of the small evangelical Christian congregations. In other words, they had an intentional ecclesial affiliation outside a Catholic parish, but still understood themselves as Catholic. That communal self-understanding smacked at my interpretation of Church as a voluntary association of individuals. Antithetic to my epistemology of community was the experience of these young people whose Christian identity had been shaped by popular symbols of a preexistent and involuntary *ecclesia*, such as the case with the shrine at St. Dominic's.

The popular visual texts of Christianity embody the spatial rhetoric of the preexistent *ecclesia* that is governed especially by the shrine or other environments that engender the drama of visual participation. The worshipper finds himself or herself in the literal presence of the one embodied. The effigy presides over the family, neighborhood, and over a culture, and therefore over the ubiquitous Church it gathers. The shrine gives access to Church that is integrally related to family and culture. Like the monstrance in the Corpus Christi procession, visual representations assemble the intrinsic *ecclesia*, amassing people in highways and byways. The Church is established by the ambiguous boundaries of the public shrine.

Related to the presidential function of the shrine are epistemological issues of likeness and presence addressed above. The image is constituted not by an analogous and abstract presence but by unique and concrete presence. The radical sacramentality of visual and tactile properties organizes a community of believers in the here and now. The particularity of this aesthetic encounter manifests an *empathetic fusion* of being and doing.²⁷ God is revealed in the appreciative actions of seeing and touching the image. This aesthetic praxis affirms the fundamental sacramentality of human action. The human and the divine community share the same space.

The *sensus fidelium* of popular religious environments mediates the dangerous memories of a people.²⁸ This dangerous remembrance em-

²³ Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 65.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 62-7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Jeanette Rodríguez, "Sangre llama a sangre: Cultural Memory as a Source of Theological Insight," *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenges and Promise*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) 117-33.

powers a people in their suspicions against any univocal appropriation of an institution and its hierarchy. The power of this memorial resides in the ambiguous authorization of the image and the space it inhabits. The popular image is "owned" by the ubiquitous ecclesia whose personal and collective narratives of exodus, of religious estrangement under totalitarian governments, of prophetic witness against such regimes, become enacted at the assembly where the image presides. The hierarchy of the image subverts the pernicious hierarchy of institutions who oppress a people. Ecclesial ownership is determined by all who possess the narrative of a people oppressed but redeemed.²⁹

Conclusion

This essay began by narrating the defeat of aesthetic acumen because of the undeniable power and reverence manifest in a popular image. Following that narration, I attempted to lay bare the deficiencies in the academic teachings about the public and popular authorization of visual phenomena. More generically the defeat of modernist aesthetic acumen relates to the defeat of similar acumen in theology. It exposes a narrow understanding about visual knowledge in general and an even more constricted understanding of Christian praxis. It follows critiques alive in both contemporary aesthetic and theological writings that challenge modernist interpretations of art and theology.

Living in proximity to a popular image I had been trained to ignore all the more provoked in me questions about the culture of my training and its limitations. Something seemingly as extraneous as a statue in a church garden can urge us to reconsider the resources for culture and faith. All in all, the critiques of both the artistic and theological academy for its biases against popular images help to identify how iconoclasm motivates Western North Atlantic interpretations of self and community and how attention to the embrace of an image may liberate us from the constraints of our own enlightenment.

Resumen:

La hermenéutica visual de la religión popular hispano-estadounidense

El artículo empieza con una narración del autor, en donde éste relata, cómo una imagen popular ha derrotado su percepción estética. Los prejuicios adquiridos por el autor a causa de su educación como artista y teólogo son sacados a la superficie por medio de la actividad ritual en un santuario mariano en una parroquia latina en Miami, en donde el autor reside. Este cambio de percepción ha llevado al autor a mostrar cómo la cultura académica en América del Norte suprime la autoridad pública y popular del fenómeno visual. Los significados estéticos y teológicos de la academia moderna han subvertido a las imágenes y su poder para fomentar el lenguaje. La modernidad artística y teológica sufre entonces los límites de sus propios prejuicios epistemológicos.

La reflexión teológica contemporánea de la academia hispana/latina en los Estados Unidos ha servido para revelar el papel fundamental que los "textos" visuales juegan en el significado religioso. La recuperación del *sensus fidelium* de la religiosidad popular está necesitada de alternativas epistemológicas para lo sagrado. La participación eclesial y la auto percepción se desarrollan únicamente por medio de las imágenes sensoriales. La memoria visual de las comunidades hispanas encierra un gran poder.

Los "textos" visuales de la vida cristiana no pueden integrarse a la reflexión teológica sin identificar antes el miedo y la aprehensión que la cultura académica tiene hacia la respuesta visual. El autor expone como algunos historiadores del arte contemporáneo delatan la iconoclasia de la sociedad occidental moderna. Estos escritos exponen una agenda ideológica para librar a la sociedad occidental de la ambigüedad visual. La cultura académica ha establecido una hegemonía de interpretación basado en conceptos y lenguaje, dejando atrás los recursos visuales de la cultura popular.

Finalmente, los logros de los teólogos hispanos retan a la academia teológica a integrar en su reflexión teológica la síntesis ocular de la praxis cristiana. La teología puede ser liberada de sus propias restricciones epistemológicas si ésta reconsidera el poder de la respuesta visual en la cultura y la fe.

²⁹Fernando F. Segovia, "In the World but Not of It: Exile as Locus for a Theology of the Diaspora," *Hispanic/Latino Theology*, 195–217.