From the Pulpit to the Academy—
Latinx Scriptural Hermeneutics*

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There is no single definition that can explain the totality of what Latinx hermeneutics means. In its broadest sense, the term usually refers to a variety of critical approaches undertaken by members of the Latinx community who consciously utilize their latinidad as a hermeneutical lens to read and reinterpret the Bible, usually with the intent of subverting totalitarian readings, advancing liberating and inclusive interpretations, and bringing about social and political transformation. As such, Latinx hermeneutics is better characterized as a focus of analysis than as a methodology. The variety of approaches and reading strategies used and advanced by Latinx hermeneutics mirrors the multiculturalism of the Latinx community. Therefore, to fully appreciate the fluidity of methodologies, reading strategies, and hermeneutical perspectives used in Latinx scriptural hermeneutics, one must understand the history of the Latinx community and the origin of its names.

“Hispanic” and “Latino” are the two main ethnonyms that have been in use since the 1980s to who can trace their historical and cultural roots to either Spain or the twenty Spanish-speaking countries from Latin America, including Puerto Rico. Although the two terms have been used interchangeably by the media, and there is extensive documentation arguing in favor of both, there is still no consensus within the Hispanic/Latino population about which ethnonym better describes the community. The ongoing debate stresses the artificiality of both terms, their limitation to convey the complexity of the community and, to an extent, the sense that both are exonyms, externally imposed labels by the government or another segment of the population for the sake of politically identifying an amorphous ethnic group that seems to defy categorization. In fact, the first time the name Hispanic was officially used was during the 1980 census, when the U.S. government established it to refer to people in the United States whose cultural or historical roots can be traced to Spain and the Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. The new name was not well received by the liberal population. For many it was an offensive reminder of the colonial past of Latin America under the imperial power of Spain, originally named Hispania. Soon after it emerged, a new term began to circulate as an act of self-naming: Latino, a political alternative to the name Hispanic. By the 2000 census the name Latino was added to the ethnic category list: Spanish/Hispanic/Latino. Some differentiated the names by using Latino to refer to those born or raised and educated in the United States, as opposed to Hispanic to refer to those born or raised and educated in Latin America or Spain. Latinos, by and large, have experienced what it
means to be a member of a socially and politically minoritized group, while Hispanics might have had a different experience of minoritization, growing up as part of the majority status in their countries of origin. Latino has referred to those inhabitants in the United States who exclusively trace their cultural and historical roots to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America; it is a self-adopted name that intentionally cuts the colonial-imperial ties with Spain. Hispanic as a term continues to be used, and it is the choice of the conservative population on the East Coast. Of course, these categories are fluid and permeable, a fact that becomes evident when we review the life of real, flesh-and-blood Hispanics, Latinos, Latinas/os, Latin@s, Latinx. It is important to mention that most Latin?, when asked to self-identify themselves, usually tend to use their country of origin: Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, Ecuadorian American, and so on.

At this point, both terms, Hispanic and Latino continued to be scrutinized regarding their social, cultural, and political implications. Particularly, in the past ten years, the Latino signifier has been politically adopted as the prefer term for the community due to its malleability. We have been transitioning, from the patriarchal imposition of “Latino,” allegedly an all-encompassing term, to the more inclusive option of “Latino/a,” or the more feminist, alphabetically-corrected version of “Latina/o” to the more daring linguistic transgressions, or aberrations according to others, of the use of “@” and “x” as suffixes that seek to advance intersectional social justice. There is no agreement on which term best serves the complexity, or rather complexities of the community, but seems clear that the metamorphosis of this word responds to the raise of consciousness regarding subject positions and the evolution of our way of understanding such positions in our search of
a more intentionally gender-transgender-inclusive term. Maybe, these variety of inclusive signifiers could be taken as complementary, coexistent with each other, and not as replacements.

**History**

For this essay, we have adopted the newest signifier Latinx, to speak of the Latina/o community because it breaks away from the binary logic of empire and opens the spectrum of an all-encompassing signifier, including people from a great variety of cultural backgrounds, nationalities, belief systems, religious practices, political affiliations, economic statuses, physical constitutions, complexions, educational systems, genders, sexual preferences and other identity markers. There are no common visible identity markers that could help to differentiate or associate all Latinx as belonging to the community. Equally, the experiences of discrimination and marginalization often seen as a common ground within the Latinx community are experiences that not all Latinx have lived. In fact, there are those who have never embraced their *latinidad* just to avoid rejection. Another important experience that makes it impossible to simplify the reality of the Latinx community in the United States is the experience of immigration. There are many ways, documented and undocumented, to enter the United States and many reasons for coming, and all of them have significant influence in the way Latinx relate to this country. Some have come to the country as political refugees, others for professional advancement, economic survival, to save their lives from persecution due to their religious beliefs or sexual preferences, to seek medical treatment, to reunite with family, or to seek an advanced education. Others never traveled: the border simply moved
and they became part of the U.S. population. There are countless other reasons and stories of immigration, many of them painful and violent, others joyful and full of hope. All of them have become crucial memories for the Latinx community.

Another major force that has contributed in shaping the perceptions and representations of the Latinx community is the political history between the United States and Latin America. A brief account of some of the main episodes of this political history can illuminate the emotional and ideological scars that have been imprinted in the cultural memory of the Latinx community. The first critical event of the U.S.-Latin American political history happened in 1848 when, guided by the ideology of a Manifest Destiny, the United States invaded Mexico and, through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, annexed half of the Mexican territory and its inhabitants. This violent act has forever marked the identity of the Mexican Americans, Chicanx, and Latinx of Mexican descent. It has also affected U.S.-Mexico political relations and their uncreative immigration policies that fail to acknowledge the deep interdependency of these two nations and how they need to work together for mutual economic and political survival. Too many lives have been lost at the borderlands; too much money has been wasted to guard and protect a border that could so easily be turned and should be turned into a source of life and abundance, not death and scarcity.

Fifty years later, in 1898, following the Spanish-U.S. War and the Treaty of Paris, the United States gained temporary control of Cuba and annexed Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Through this expansionist move, Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens in 1917, but they have been granted limited power as citizens since they
cannot vote in presidential elections. This unique partial and ambiguous relationship that began with the annexation of the island has deeply marked the tentative and ever-changing relationships of the United States and Puerto Ricans. A few years later, in 1902, Cuba gained independence, but through the Platt Amendment signed in 1903, the United States acquired a perpetual lease of Guantánamo Bay to establish an American naval base. Years later, in 1961, the Bay of Pigs Invasion would also forever leave its mark in the Cuban-U.S. affairs, fracturing the relations of the Latinx Cuban community and their relatives who remained living in the island.

Between 1912 and 1973, four of the most brutal and oppressive tyrannies emerged after the U.S. invasions of the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Chile. This brief chronological review of the political history of the United States and Latin America shows some of the historical scars and wounds that have marked their relationships and consequently have influenced the ways in which the Latinx population is perceived and treated in the United States. Haunted by memories of political upheaval, invasions, dispossession, exploitation, and oppression, minoritized Latinx groups have struggled to make sense of their identity, their foreign context, and their hopes of a better world.

Models of Latinx Hermeneutics

As postmodern interpretive lenses, Latinx hermeneutics encompass a variety of critical approaches undertaken by members of the Latinx community. Latinx academics consciously engage in a continuous theorization of the self, critically defining their social and ideological location as members of the minoritized group in the United
States who elect to use their self-defined *latinidad* as hermeneutical lenses to reread the Bible and reinvent society. With such politicized identity, forged in the heat of violent imperial wars, invasions, oppressive regimes, and exclusionary labels, it is no surprise that Latinx interpretations of the Bible seek to confront totalitarian and imperializing readings, advance liberating and inclusive interpretations, and promote social and political transformation. The following hermeneutical models and reading strategies exemplify some of the diverse ways in which Latinx scholars have been interpreting the Bible in the US academy since the late 1970s.

*A Hermeneutics of Mestizaje*

*The Galilean Journey—Virgilio Elizondo*

Bravely evoking the violent act of the Spanish-Indian mestizaje that gave birth to the raza mestiza of Latin America, Virgilio Elizondo chooses the concept of mestizaje (from mestizo, meaning mixed) as an interpretive key to reread the Gospels and the mixed identity of the Mexican-American community. Elizondo’s theology of mestizaje comprises a pastoral theology grounded in the Mexican-American experience of the borderlands between the United States and Mexico, a site of rupture and violence.

As a Latino theologian writing at the end of the 1970s, when the ethnic labels “Hispanic” and “Latino” had not yet joined the political conversations, Elizondo identifies himself as a Mexican American, born from Mexican parents in San Antonio, Texas. He acknowledges how his experience of mixture, being bilingual and bicultural in the context of the American Southwest, has historically and culturally conditioned the way he reads the
Bible, particularly the Gospels. As a Roman Catholic priest, deeply committed to his Mexican-American community, a community struggling for survival amid discrimination from a society that perceives them as inferior because of their mestizaje, Elizondo wonders what to do about the future of his community. Then, propelled by the firm conviction that the identity and mission of the Mexican-American people can be ennobled and strengthened through the identity and mission of Jesus of Nazareth, he develops his theology of mestizaje: an identity map and a call to action for his community to become agents of historical change by embracing Jesus’s life as a model for social transformation.

Deliberately reading as a Mexican American, Elizondo re-theorizes the concept of mestizaje, a term usually associated with violence, suffering, and marginalization, into an empowering concept that speaks of new possibilities, prophetic power, new creation, and a source of unity. Working from a hermeneutics of mestizaje, Elizondo develops his reading strategy and theological model of Galilean Journey to not only reinterpret the Bible through the life of Jesus but also to reinterpret the life of the Mexican American community in light of the identity and mission of Jesus, the Galilean mestizo. In this process, Elizondo calls for a serious cultural rereading of the Gospels from a historical perspective to discover how Jesus of Nazareth functioned in relation to his history and culture. Only by discovering how he functioned then, as a borderland reject in a mestiza Galilee, will we discover how he might function today, as a mestizo Mexican-American living in the junction between Anglo-America and Latin America. By keeping in mind the present-day faith community during the reading process, the reader can find areas of convergence and divergence between the life
of Jesus and the life of the local church, allowing Jesus to come alive in the faith community.

From his hermeneutics of mestizaje, Elizondo distinguishes three guiding principles in the life of Jesus that constitute the Galilean journey: (1) his Galilean identity, (2) the confrontation in Jerusalem as he goes there to die, and (3) the victory of the resurrection. From Jesus’ identity, Elizondo derives the Galilean principle: “what human beings reject, God chooses as his very own.”

Galilee, a region that experienced many invasions, was geographically located at a crossroads for international travel routes. The Galileans were continually exposed to diverse cultures and world trade; it was a cosmopolitan region. Because of its complex mixture and hybridity, Galilee became a symbol of rejection. When Mexican-American Christians reread their identity considering the cultural identity of Jesus the Galilean, the meaning of their cultural identity becomes clear. Their mestizaje becomes their Galilean identity and challenge. In Elizondo’s second principle, “God chooses an oppressed people, not to bring them comfort in their oppression, but to enable them to confront, transcend, and transform whatever in the oppressor society diminishes and destroys the fundamental dignity of human nature.”

Jesus’ liberating ministry did not stop in Galilee; he had to go to Jerusalem to culminate his mission. It is there that he faces and challenges the oppressive structures of his time. The call his Galileans followers received is the same call that his followers receive today to go with him and challenge the Jerusalems of today. In these days Mexican-Americans are called by this principle to challenge oppressive systems and liberate those who are enslaved by oppressive structures, such as racism and liberal capitalism, to build a better society.

Elizondo’s third principle, that of the resurrection, suggests
that “only love can triumph over evil, and no human power can prevail against the power of unlimited love. Out of suffering and death, God will bring health and life.” When Jesus concluded his ministry by confronting Jerusalem, he was willing to go all the way, even to the cross. If liberation is to become a reality, Mexican-Americans have no other choice than to confront the Jerusalems of today. Elizondo affirms that by accepting and following Jesus, the mestizo Galilean, the Mexican-American mestizos living in the borderlands between Anglo-America and Latin America will be able to bring unity between the people of the Americas. Only by breaking away from negative stereotypes will they be able to unite and work for the common good. The principles of Galilean Journey offer to help in the transformation process of society by giving a new reading strategy of the Bible and a model to rejuvenate the reality of the Mexican-American community.

Based on a hermeneutics of faith and liberation, Elizondo’s theological and interpretive model is an invitation to the Mexican American community to use the life of Jesus as a powerful source for understanding their marginalized identity and claim it with pride. Their mestizaje is their Galilean identity. Ultimately, what Elizondo offers to his community through his hermeneutical model is a way of living, of fully embracing their identity as Mexican-Americans, as contemporary marginalized Galileans who are called to embrace their mission of confronting the oppressive systems of society and bring about a better world.
Hermeneutics of la lucha

Mujerista Biblical Interpretation—
Ada María Isasi-Díaz

Grounded in a liberation hermeneutics of la lucha (struggle), mujerista biblical interpretation is the reading strategy of mujerista theology, a grassroots theology initially developed under the rubric “Hispanic women’s liberation theology” in the mid-1980s by Ada María Isasi-Díaz, a pioneer of Hispanic/Latina/o theologies. Isasi-Díaz immigrated to the United States as a political refugee from Cuba in 1960 at the beginning of a decade that would have a profound effect in her theological work, particularly the last three years of which she spent working as a missionary among the poor and oppressed in Peru. From her missionary experience she learned to respect and admire the religious understandings and practices of the poor and oppressed whose lives were a constant struggle (lucha) to survive the everyday (lo cotidiano) hardships. These experiences, as well as her work with Gustavo Gutiérrez, founder of liberation theology, became the foundation of her mujerista theology.

As an activist theologian, committed to the struggle for justice and peace, Isasi-Díaz elaborated her mujerista theology as a platform to give voice to Latina grassroots women and their everyday struggles for survival, to challenge oppressive religious teachings and practices, and to empower Latina women to become agents of radical change to transform society and eliminate oppression. Doing theology from her Catholic perspective and aware and respectful of the popular Christianity of her base community, Isasi-Díaz developed mujerista biblical interpretation as a reading strategy that embraces and responds to the reality of Latina grassroots women. As
such, *mujerista* biblical interpretation operates, like *mujerista* theology, on the foundation of three central elements from the reality of Latina grassroots women. First, *mujerista* theology is based on Hispanic Christianity, a Christianity influenced and shaped by diverse religious understandings and practices. It is a *mestiza* and *mulata* Christianity that mixes religious practices and content from the Catholicism of the *conquistadores*, African and Amerindian religions, and Protestant and evangelical traditions. Because the role of the Bible is very different in each of these religious practices, for some of them inexistent and for others an authoritative text usually read from a patriarchal perspective, it is an urgent matter for *mujerista* theology to articulate a *mujerista* biblical interpretation to help Latina women to appropriate the Bible in a liberative way.

Second, the sources of *mujerista* theology are the experiences of Latina women and their struggle for survival, not the Bible. Equally, the starting point for interpreting the Bible from a *mujerista* perspective is the experience of Latina women. From her Catholic perspective and her experience, Isasi-Díaz explains how Latina women do not read the Bible in their daily life, and when they need help, they find it in praying to God and the saints, not in the Bible. And third, *mujerista* theology operates under the critical lens of liberation, a liberation that is about physical and cultural survival. Reading the Bible from this perspective means that the Bible can be accepted as divine revelation and as authoritative for life only if it contributes to the liberation of Latina women.

Out of the three foundational elements of *mujerista* theology, Isasi-Díaz defines three guiding elements in *mujerista* biblical interpretation: (1) the criterion for using the Bible is need. Latina grassroots women use the Bible
when they need it, for what they need it, and in the manner in which they need it; (2) the central lens in _mujerista_ biblical interpretation has to be the struggle for liberation, a hermeneutics of _la lucha_; and (3) Hispanic women’s interpretation of the Bible is central for identifying and struggling for their _proyecto histórico_, their preferred future. The implementation of the _proyecto histórico_ shapes _mujerista_ biblical interpretation in four concrete ways. First, biblical exegesis is praxis. It is a communal task where all participants have a voice and is a way to claim their right to think. Second, Latina grassroots women live their faith within a functional religious pluralism, a “grassroots ecumenism,” which Isasi-Díaz takes as an invitation to read the Bible beyond traditional doctrinal purity and in solidarity with Latina women, bringing to the text whatever tool is necessary from their diverse religious practices to understand the text in a liberative way. Third, the Bible should be read in ways that confront and defy elitism, demanding the elimination of its hierarchical understandings, structures, and ecclesiastical privileges. Fourth, _mujerista_ biblical interpretation should reject the split between the personal and the political, respect the self-determination for the person, analyze and redefine power for a just society, respect the right of all groups to struggle and achieve liberation, and achieve the common good.

As a woman in the Catholic Church and a former Ursulina novice, Isasi-Díaz’s main concern with the Bible is the exclusionary way in which it has been read and used to control women and prevent them from appropriating the text from their own viewpoints. Operating from a hermeneutics of suspicion, Isasi-Díaz seeks to subvert the patriarchal power of the Bible by questioning its authority and accepting it only as a liberating and authoritative text in as far as it enables and advances the liberation and survival
of Latina women. By empowering Latina women to use their experience as the entry point into the Bible and by opening a forum where Latina women can read the Bible in any way they need to survive, Isasi-Díaz challenges the elitist views and hierarchical readings of those in power to authorize the correct interpretation of the Bible. By subverting all the authorized ways of reading the Bible, Isasi-Díaz de-patriarchalizes the biblical text and calls into question the solidarity of the church with the women who must find their own liberative ways of reading the Bible in order to survive and struggle for a better world. Mujerista theology affirms that without liberation there cannot be justice and peace. Liberation is a communal endeavor, and no one can find liberation in isolation or at the expense of others. Mujerista biblical interpretation, therefore, is a communal endeavor that seeks the liberation of all.

**Hermeneutics of Exile**

“Reading “in Spanish” and “Through Hispanic Eyes”—Justo L. González

Justo L. González, a Cuban American Methodist minister and historian who immigrated to the United States at the end of the 1950s, presents two reading strategies. The first model, reading “in Spanish,” is the reading strategy of mañana theology, a Christian theology from a Hispanic perspective elaborated by González in the late 1980s. Mañana theology works from the perspective of a people “in exile,” who, in their sufferings and struggles, hope for a better mañana as illumined by the reign of God. Using his experience of exile as a hermeneutical lens and a point of entry into the biblical text, González proposes reading the Bible “in Spanish” as a political reading. This means reading the Bible from the perspective of those who live in
exile, the Hispanic people living as aliens in a strange land, marginalized and discriminated against. For González, reading “in Spanish” means reading in the vernacular, the language of the exiles and not the language of those in power; thus, the Bible becomes the book of the people, not the book of the powerful. To read the Bible from the reality of marginalization rather than from the perspective of the powerful turns the Bible into a political text. Reading in the vernacular requires some guidelines, which González calls a “grammar” for reading “in Spanish.” First, one reading “in Spanish” must address issues of power and powerlessness when reading the Bible. The questions of who has the power and who does not and whose side God takes cannot be avoided. Second, given the fact that only a small portion of the Bible was written to be read in private, the Bible should be read remembering that God is addressing the whole community. Readers reading “in Spanish” must be careful not to privatize the faith. Third, reading “in Spanish” means to pay attention to what the children, the simple, and the poor say. The whole community is invited to interpret the Bible, and everyone’s voice counts. Fourth, just as the community reads and interprets the Bible, the Bible reads and interprets the community and its situation. The community reads the Bible to have a better understanding of herself through the word of God.

In the mid-1990s, González developed a second reading model, “reading the Bible through Hispanic eyes.” In this model, although the reading strategy is called “through Hispanic eyes,” González uses interchangeably the terms “Hispanics” and “Latinos.” In his first strategy, however, he uses the term “Hispanic” exclusively. The change in language speaks of the changes that were happening in the Hispanic/Latino community; with the
diversification of the community new challenges emerge. While González uses his experience of exile as his hermeneutical lens in the first strategy, in the second he widens his hermeneutical lens by exploring five different entry points into the text to acknowledge the experiences of other Latino groups who enrich the complexity of the community. He addresses the Latino realities of marginality, poverty, *mestizaje* and *mulatez*, exiles and aliens, and solidarity. González affirms that regardless of their backgrounds, most Latinos identify their experience in society with the image of marginality. The great majority of Latinos in the United States have experienced poverty. When it comes to the question of race/ethnicity, the experience of being mixed and hybrid, *mestiza/o* and *mulata/o*, is a reality clearly written in the skin of most Latino. For many Latinos the experience of finding themselves in a land not of their own, as aliens and exiles, is a reality of longing and separation. Amid all these realities of exclusion, oppression, discrimination, and alienation, there is, however, one reality that binds all together: the reality of solidarity, of standing together and being a family to all those excluded.

As a Latino scholar and Methodist minister, González remains deeply committed to the theological education of the academic and Christian Latinx communities. Thus, he finds himself living in a constant tension between a hermeneutics of faith and a hermeneutics of suspicion. On one hand, from the academic perspective of the Bible, González approaches the text from a postmodern perspective, acknowledging the historical and cultural gaps between him and the text, and the need to read the text aware of its otherness. On the other hand, a hermeneutics of faith is well in place as he speaks of the proven authority of the Bible in the life of the church, an
authority under which the community allows the Bible to interpret it in a new radical way.

**Hermeneutics of the Diaspora**

*Intercultural criticism—Fernando F. Segovia*

Reading from his experience of diaspora, as one who was forced to leave his country for political reasons and permanently live in a foreign land, Fernando F. Segovia engages the biblical text from a hermeneutics of the diaspora with its corresponding methodological approach of intercultural criticism. (In this work he uses the signifier “Latino/a.”) At the beginning of 1960s, Segovia immigrated to the United States from Cuba, leaving behind all that was familiar to start life in a new reality, one he describes as the world of the colonizer. Coming from the world of the colonized into the world of the colonizer, he began to experience his new reality as a child of colonialism and neocolonialism, living within the traditional relationships marked by oppositional binaries such as center/margins, civilization/primitivism. This experience of being “thrown” (arrojado) into a new world, a different culture with a different language, created the inescapable reality of biculturalism. And it is from this reality of diaspora—of being in two worlds yet not belonging to either one completely—that the experience of an alienating otherness emerges. However, this otherness, which can be at first expressed in terms of exclusion and discrimination when imposed by the colonizer, is an otherness that can be strategically used as a point of departure for a re-appropriation of the term, positively presented when used as a self-expression of self-determination. When Latinos/as claim their otherness and turn it into their own identity, the very source of their
alienation becomes the source of a new identity, one creatively used for the purpose of liberation. From a position of not having a place to call home, having been “thrown” into a strange world and being displaced and disposed from the familiar, the experience of creatively claiming the self-expressed otherness gives Latinos/as an advantage of knowing two worlds and being able to move between them, by negotiating their identity accordingly. Aware of the reality that both worlds are constructions, Latinos/as can learn what makes each world function and use it to their advantage to effectively navigate both worlds. This new way of constructing otherness should be used with caution. For this otherness to be used as a liberationist perspective, it should not become idealized or exclusionist. The process of constructing Latinos/as otherness, therefore, should be one of self-appropriation, of self-definition and direction, with an active refusal to be bound by external definitions. This process of self-othering is also committed to the affirmation of the self-otherness of others and is engaged in respectful critical exchange with others and their self-affirmed otherness.

A second element that emerges, equally central, from the experience of diaspora is engagement. A hermeneutics of the diaspora is, at its core, one of otherness and engagement with a manifest destiny of liberation. Out of such otherness and engagement emerges the reading strategy of intercultural criticism, the critical interaction between the various cultures at play in the process of reading texts, which calls for a full contextualization of the participating elements, texts, and readers. Speaking more specifically about the interplay of the participating elements in this reading strategy, Segovia identifies three basic dimensions at work. First, the biblical text, like any other culturally and historically conditioned social group,
should be considered as “other.” Guided by the hermeneutics of otherness and engagement, this means that the text should be treated with respect, like all “others” allowing distance between text and reader, acknowledging and valuing the contextuality and otherness of the text. The goal is to understand the text as a whole, as a world of its own. Second, the reader should also be considered as a historically and culturally conditioned “other.” There is no such thing as a universal or objective reader, but instead a self-conscious reader who should be acknowledged, valued, and analyzed according to one’s context. Third, the interaction between text and reader should be considered not as a neutral encounter between two others but as an unavoidable filtering of the one world by and through the other, knowing that the remoteness of the text as other is ultimately a construction of the past from the present as presented by the reader. Segovia defines this interpretation of the diaspora as one with a manifest destiny of liberation. It begins with contextualization and seeks to acknowledge, respect, and engage the other. Segovia offers his perspective not as the Latino/a hermeneutic but as one more reading strategy with similar dreams of liberation for all.

As the primary voice of Latino biblical criticism in the academy, Segovia has been instrumental in the formation of latinidad within that community of biblical scholars and theologians. Deeply committed to the advancement of minoritized groups, Segovia has consistently engaged academic forums offering critical ways of the theorization of the Latino/a self, that is, latinidad. Segovia began to formulate his hermeneutics of the diaspora with its corresponding reading strategy of intercultural criticism at the beginning of the 1990s. Informed by a hermeneutics of suspicion, this hermeneutics
of diaspora engages the biblical text as a historically and culturally conditioned “other,” one that needs to be critically engaged to decode its message, a message which is never directly addressed to the reader and is always mediated by the present reconstructions of the past from the “otherness” of readers and critics.

The Legacy and Future of Latinx Hermeneutics

Academically speaking, Latinx interpretation could be considered a fairly new interpretive approach that formally emerged at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, if only the written documentations of the approach were to be considered. If we think about the importance of community for Latinx interpretation, though, the legacy of Latinx interpretation has a longer story. This one began with the evangelization of the Americas by the conquistadores and the resistance of the indigenous people to give up their age-old beliefs and worldviews and which ultimately became an integral part of the Christianity of the Americas. The indigenous hermeneutics resisted the conquistador interpretations.

The number of Latinx in the academy engaged in theological and biblical criticism has noticeably increased since the beginning of the twenty-first century. New perspectives continue to emerge and find a solid foundation in the pioneer models from the 1970s to 1990s. Some of the new readings incorporate postcolonial, ideological, feminist and cultural perspectives, among others, aiming at engaging oppression, displacement, scarcity, colonization, forced migration/diaspora, marginalization and minoritization, all of them the sequelae of empire. From three distinct geographies and experience three hermeneutics are developing: from the Cuban diaspora Cristina Garcia-
Alfonso proposes a hermeneutics of resolviendo/resolver (making do), where survival as a way of life emerges in the midst of hardship and scarcity. From her “no place in between,” Costa Rica and the USA, Jackie Hidalgo proposes a hermeneutics of ambivalence and ambiguity, where an identity in flux inhabits hybrid spaces. From the borderlands of Mexico and the USA, Leticia A. Guardiola-Sáenz proposes a hermeneutics of the bridge, where Jesus is the model borderlander who is constantly crossing different borders, creating a new reality, a third space, like the reality of la Frontera, where a new reality of hope emerges. Eventually, as more Latinx continue to theorize their latinidad, more reading models will be emerging in the coming years. What is admirable about the four models highlighted in this article is the distinct commitment on the part of the readers to address the Latinx community with a similar task of advancing liberation, whether at the level of the faith community, the grassroots communities in general, or the academic community. Each scholar, standing from their own pulpits and communities, raises their voice to bring visibility to their segment of the Latinx community and to engage the Bible in very different ways, some more compliant, some more resistant, but all of them with the clear intension of giving voice to all Latinx, in the community and the academia. In the end, when considered within the lens of cultural studies, all hermeneutical models are valid expressions of the ways in which Latinx engage their latinidad to critically read the Bible to advance liberation for all.
Endnotes


2 Ibid., 103.

3 Ibid., 111.

4 Ibid., 115.

*Select Bibliography of Latinx Scriptural Hermeneutics*


