

9

U.S. Latina/o Theology

Challenges, Possibilities, and Future Prospects

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CONTEXTUAL AND CULTURAL THEOLOGIES like U.S. Latina/o theology show that, as far as the task of theology is concerned, things are no longer business as usual. Influenced greatly by Latin American liberation theology (LALT), Latina/o theologians created what Orlando Espín has called their own “rebellious” hermeneutics. In doing so, they have sought to expose the ideological apparatus behind the marginalization of Latinas/os in the U.S., to name themselves, and to reclaim their own historical trajectory as a people.

Appropriately understood, U.S. Latina/o theology is a theological reflection on the praxis of the Latina/o people.¹ In positively engaging the social sciences, U.S. Latina/o theologians found that this approach has been useful in uncovering the ideological and racialized notions of cultural superiority from dominant Anglo theological approaches, and has helped in the theological framing of their struggle against conditions of social exclusion and poverty of Latinas/os in the U.S. As distinct from LALT, the writings of U.S. Latina/o scholars do not contain elaborations of anything like economic dependency theory or the explicit incorporation of Marxist

1. Roberto S. Goizueta, “Hispanic,” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, ed. Virginia Fabella and R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000) 212.

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

analysis.² However, woven together with their theological articulations, one finds issues related to economics, race, class, gender, ethnicity, and culture. It is in this way that the social sciences are useful for Latina/o theologians, as they pertain to the sphere of the human.

There are debates as to how the social sciences are engaged by both LALT and U.S. Latina/o theologies. Both agree that the use and engagement of the social sciences are constitutive aspects of the theological task.³ The intersection of these issues and debates, and the profound implications for theology and Christian life, characterize some of the interests and the life-long commitment to justice of Lee Cormie.

What follows is a brief summary of what I think are the main characteristics of Latina/o theology. I divide this paper in three sections. First, I explore some of the contributions that Latina/o theologians offer to the general discipline of theology. Here I focus on the particular way that they construct a unique theological method as a response to the social concerns of racism and marginalization of various kinds, the unique Latina/o hermeneutics, and the way they understand popular religious expressions. Second, I outline some of the challenges that Latina/o theology faces with

2. Although U.S. Latina/o theologians do not use Marxist analysis as explicitly as LALT, the fundamental questions, assumptions and concerns of a Marxist class analysis are found in their writings. It must be pointed out, however, that, for LALT theologians, engaging Marxist social analysis has to be understood within the use of the social sciences, as a means at understanding people's social reality. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Theology and the Social Sciences," in *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991) 62–66. Similarly, in the writings of U.S. Latino theologians, one finds a wide range of scholars in the social sciences such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Walter Mignolo, David Abalos, Anthony Stevens-Arroyo, Chela Sandoval, Jorge Klor de Alva, Rafael Pérez Torres, Rudy Torres, and Ana María Díaz-Stevenz. These various scholars are drawn upon as a means to understand the U.S. Latina/o social reality.

3. Peter C. Phan, "Method in Liberation Theologies," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000) 45. I disagree with Clodovis Boff, for example, and his description of the use of the social sciences by LALT. While he rightly affirms that social-scientific data cannot replace "proper" theological reflection, he insists that the correct relation between the social sciences and theology is that "what for the sciences of the social is product, finding, or constructing, will be taken up in the theological field as raw material, as something to be (re)worked by procedures proper to theologizing, in such wise as to issue in a *specifically* theological product, and one so characterized" (Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*, trans. Robert R. Barr [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987] 31). In my view, Boff fails to acknowledge the fluid relation between the social sciences and theology. As I see it, theological knowledge cannot be placed in a state of "suspension," so that one can then proceed to engage the social sciences "objectively," only to later return and consider the data in theological terms. This, in my view, is a myth that needs to be deconstructed.

the present ethnocultural reconfiguration of Latina/o communities and the search for new language that more appropriately reflects this reality. Third, I try to imagine some of the aspects that Latina/o theologians will need to engage in order to broaden their theological horizons. I will argue that these three aspects find their coherence in the adoption and appropriation of the biological condition and cultural category of *mestizaje*.

ADOPTION OF MESTIZAJE IN THEOLOGY: THEOLOGICAL CATEGORY, HERMENEUTICAL KEY, AND POPULAR RELIGION

There is some debate as to when U.S. Latina/o theology first emerged.⁴ But it was not until the 1978 dissertation work of Virgilio Elizondo, *Mestizaje: The Dialectic of Cultural Birth and the Gospel*,⁵ and its subsequent book-form publication in 1983,⁶ that Latina/o theology began to be formalized as a theological discourse emerging from Latina/o communities.⁷ Elizondo's

4. According to Orlando Espín, both Justo González and Virgilio Elizondo played a significant role in the early development and initial impetus of U.S. Latina/o theology. See Orlando O. Espín, "The State of U.S. Latino/a Theology: An Understanding," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 3 (2000) 21. See also Justo L. González, *The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969); Virgilio Elizondo, "Educación Religiosa para el México-Americano," *Catequesis Latinoamericana* 4/14 (1972) 83–86. Also, Juan González insists that the grievances of Latinos/as worsened after Mexican-American soldiers returned from WWII, some received Congressional Medals of Honor, but their communities continued to be neglected and discriminated, except that this time they were unwilling to accept it. See his *Harvest of the Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (New York: Penguin, 2000) 104. Similarly, Klor de Alva writes that "the black struggle for civil rights, the urban insurrections, the peace movements against the tragic Vietnam War, the widespread appeal of the anticapitalism espoused by the Neo-Marxists and the New Left, the ascent of feminist radicalism, and the anti-materialist challenge" made the moment ripe for Latino/a political protest; see J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "Aztlán, Borinquen and Hispanic Nationalism in the United States," in *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, ed. Rodolfo A. Anaya and Francisco A. Lomeli (Albuquerque: Academia/El Norte Publications, 1989) 150.

5. Virgilio Elizondo, *Mestizaje: The Dialectic of Cultural Birth and the Gospel* (San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1978).

6. Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

7 For a fuller development of the use of *mestizaje* in Latina/o theology, see Néstor Medina, *Mestizaje: (Re)Mapping Race, Culture, and Faith in Latina/o Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009).

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

proposal for *mestizaje* was groundbreaking; even today his work continues to be a source of great inspiration for subsequent generations of Latina/o scholars.

As originally articulated by Elizondo, the condition of *mestizaje* means both the violent intermixture of indigenous and Spanish religious and cultural elements as a result of the Spanish conquest, and the added violent intermixture with the Anglo dominant culture of the U.S. after the Guadalupe-Hidalgo treaty of 1848.⁸ Following Elizondo's original intuition of a double *mestizaje*, during the 1980s and into the 1990s, U.S. Latina/o theologians expanded the notion of *mestizaje* to include theological reflections on gender,⁹ Christology,¹⁰ pneumatology,¹¹ theological method,¹² hermeneutics,¹³ and other areas. The image and language of *mestizaje*-intermixture quickly became the standardized frame for understanding Latina/o reality.¹⁴ And today, no analysis of Latina/o theology can avoid engaging the various ways in which Latina/o theologians deployed the category of *mestizaje* in theology.

8. This is the way that Elizondo articulated his theological vision of *mestizaje*. For a more detailed development of Elizondo's theological method, see Néstor Medina, "Mestizaje: A Theological Reading of Culture and Faith: Reflections on Virgilio Elizondo's Theological Method," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino/a Theology* (forthcoming).

9. María Pilar Aquino, "Directions and Foundations of Hispanic/Latino Theology: Towards a Mestiza Theology of Liberation," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 1/1 (1993) 5–21.

10. Luis Pedraja, *Jesus is My Uncle: Christology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999).

11. Oscar García Johnson, "The Mestizo/a Community of Mañana: A Latino/a Theology of the Spirit," PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2005.

12. Roberto S. Goizueta, "U.S. Hispanic Mestizaje and Theological Method," in *Migrants and Refugees*, ed. Dietmar Mieth and Lisa Sowle Cahill (New York: Orbis, 1993) 22–30.

13. Justo L. González, *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

14. Although it can be argued that the character of U.S. Latina/o theology is Catholic as most Latina/o theologians are Catholics, this is not exactly true as Catholic and Protestants have been in conversation since the inception of Latina/o theology. Although not always successful, Latina/o theologians have gone to great lengths in order to work ecumenically. This has been one of the central characteristics of the Hispanic Theological Initiative. Another recent example of this "ecumenical" ethos is the meeting of Latina/o theologians that took place during June 3–6, 2007, in Los Angeles, under the auspices of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS). They dealt with the general theme "Constructing a Latino/a Ecumenical Theology," and Protestant and Catholic scholars were invited to participate.

From the perspective of the first *mestizaje*, Latina/o theologians draw on the colonial rejection of mixed children because they were thought to be stained biologically with the blood of their “inferior” indigenous ancestors, and were seen as morally suspect for being the result of the “illicit” sexual relations between Spaniard men and indigenous women. From the perspective of the second *mestizaje*, they draw on the invasion-occupation of Mexico by the U.S., and the subsequent systematic attempts at erasing Latina/o culture, history, and ethnic identity, and their present conditions of social marginalization in the U.S.

U.S. Latina/o theologians used the multivalent character of *mestizaje* in five key ways: (1) to reclaim their mixed cultural heritage; (2) to identify their present condition of social exclusion and ethnocultural discrimination, and attitude of resistance against the dominant Anglo assimilationist monoculture of the country; (3) to describe the Latina/o experience of cultural in-betweenness in the complex process of identity formation as a people; (4) to name the characteristically mixed and complex religious world of Latinas/os, expressed in their religious symbols by weaving together indigenous, African, and Spanish-European elements; and (5) to find the divine legitimation for the existence of the Latina/o peoples. These areas are intertwined in the theological writings of U.S. Latina/o theologians.

Theological Category

U.S. Latina/o theologians redeemed the label of *mestizaje*. While during the sixteenth century *mestizaje* was used by the Spaniards in derogatory ways pointing to the “contaminated” existence, illegitimate status, and cultural and social “degeneracy” of *mestizo/a*-mixed children, Latina/o theologians turned it into a powerful subversive act of naming themselves and their struggles of resistance. Borrowing from the work of José Vasconcelos’ *La raza cósmica*,¹⁵ U.S. Latina/o theologians affirmed that the *mestizo* Latina/o people are a new race, a new breed that represent the future of humanity.¹⁶

15. José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica: Misión de la raza iberoamericana* (México DF: Litografía Ediciones Olimpia, S.A., 1983).

16. Admittedly these were assertions that Elizondo made concerning his own Mexican American community. But it was not before long that *mestizaje* was appropriated and further developed by other Latina/o theologians who do not identify themselves as Mexican Americans. See Virgilio Elizondo, *The Future is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2000).

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

Mestizaje was recast as the birth of a new people.¹⁷ The condition of *mestizaje* makes concrete for Latinas/os the providential divine intent of creating something new out of the intermixture of disparate ethnic and cultural groups; it means reconciliation and inclusion.

The theological incorporation of *mestizaje* for Latinas/os opened new spaces for affirming their unique identity as a people. A key aspect here has been the rereading of history and reclamation of their historical agency. This was an attempt to uncover the “bad news” upon which the present has been constructed.¹⁸ In other words, the history of *mestizaje* has remained absent from dominant versions of history and needs to be unearthed because it tells the story of the Latina/o people.

Here the dilemma intrinsic to *mestizaje* becomes visible among U.S. Latina/o theologians. The adoption of the condition of *mestizaje* shows the in-between existence that Latinas/os experience. This is not a version of a double-consciousness as articulated by W. E. B. Du Bois.¹⁹ Latina/o consciousness can be defined more like a triple consciousness. They are conscious that they share much in common with, but many times are rejected by, Latin Americans. They are also conscious that they were born in the U.S. but are denied social participation by the dominant Anglo-European culture. Most importantly, they are conscious of their own ambiguous existence. They are both Latin Americans and North Americans, but they are also something else. In this way, U.S. Latina/o theologians have reinterpreted the condition of *mestizaje* and avoided essentialist air-tight identity labels by claiming a triple cultural ancestry.

This ambiguous existence is the cause of great pain, but is also the source of great creativity. The deployment and appropriation of the cultural category of *mestizaje* by U.S. Latina/o theologians provides the theologically based legitimization of their existence. They turned *mestizaje* into a discursive category to reflect theologically about the reality and faith

17. Elizondo, *Mestizaje*, 137.

18. María Pilar Aquino makes clear that the function is that of unearthing, unburying the bloody, violent history of marginalization, oppression, and social exclusion experienced by Latinas/os which has been intentionally covered-up by the dominant culture. So the Latina/o historical re-claiming is also a dis-covering. See her “The Collective ‘Dis-Covering’ of Our Own Power: Latina American Feminist Theology,” in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 240–60.

19. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover, 1994; originally published in 1903).

experience of the Latina/o people. *Mestizaje*, as Elizondo claimed, is a *locus* of theological reflection.²⁰

Contrary to the dominant U.S. Anglo-European culture of exclusion and segregation, the proposal of *mestizaje*-intermixture subverts notions that privilege biological or ethnocultural “purity” against miscegenation-intermixture as the corruption of what is “pure.” For U.S. Latina/o theologians, the appropriation of *mestizaje*/mixing among cultural groups announces the divine act of creating an alternative new world of inclusion of other cultural groups by way of intermixture. Here they subvert the rules and categories of exclusion, and reinterpret intermixture-*mestizaje* as the discursive and social space where different voices, peoples, and cultures come together in the struggle for justice and inclusion. Stated differently, *mestizaje* is the lens through which one can see the divine at work among the Latina/o *mestizo/a* communities in the context of the U.S.

Hermeneutical Key

According to U.S. Latina/o theologians, the category of *mestizaje* provides a new optic for reading and understanding reality. Roberto Goizueta argues that by using *mestizaje* U.S. Latina/o theology has inaugurated a philosophical-theological shift away from modernity and postmodernity.²¹ It goes beyond dominant modern binary oppositional categories; the condition of *mestizaje* provides a double lens with which to interpret reality. Latinas/os are not just either Latin Americans or “Americans”; they are both. Similarly, the U.S. Latina/o theological proposal of *mestizaje* is not a postmodern expression of the relative character of peoples, cultures, and traditions. By deploying *mestizaje* Latina/o theologians retrieve the possibility of mutual enrichment by way of intermixture. They do not uphold the postmodern notion of a multiplicity of realities. Rather, for them *mestizaje* is the expression of the dynamic interactive process by which different cultural horizons collaborate in interpreting reality.²² According to them, in

20. See Virgilio Elizondo, “Mestizaje as a Locus of Theological Reflection,” in *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutierrez*, ed. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989) 358–74.

21. Roberto S. Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999) ch. 6.

22. Orlando O. Espín, *Grace and Humanness: Theological Reflections because of Culture* (New York: Orbis, 2007) 17.

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

mestizaje there is no hierarchy of cultural groups and no one cultural group is perceived to comprehensively understand or interpret reality. From the perspective of theology, no one cultural group has a monopoly of the divine self-disclosure. A fuller understanding of reality and God is only possible when cultural groups interact and mix with each other.

In proposing the alternative multiplicity of cultural horizons, U.S. Latina/o theologians have opened the door for possibilities of reading the Bible in creative new ways. This challenges the colonial approach that assumes one correct interpretation of the Bible story. For U.S. Latina/o theologians, reading the Bible is a dynamic exercise that cannot be reduced to the fusion of the biblical horizon with the horizon of the reader, as Gadamer would claim.²³

This necessary re-reading of the Bible texts becomes a site of struggle. For U.S. Latina/o theologians, there is an operative hermeneutics of suspicion, as articulated by Segundo, and a resituating of culture as a key interpretive “tool.” In light of this, besides being a religious document, the Bible is also conceived as a cultural product and, therefore, culturally bound. The Bible reflects the cultural milieu of the people of Israel in the Old Testament, and the sociocultural world of the historical Jesus in the New Testament. It reveals the sociopolitical and cultural dynamics of the time. Similarly, the readers are also culturally bound. They read the Bible through their cultural lenses, and their culture and social location inform the kinds of questions they ask and the answers they find in the Bible.²⁴ Here interpretation is necessary as the Bible is not perceived as containing literal mandates that ought to be followed unquestionably.

When reading the Bible from the perspective of *mestizaje*, U.S. Latina/o theologians claim that it says much about the condition of cultural intermixture/*mestizaje*, and those who are culturally mixed/*mestizo/as*. In the Bible mixed people were rejected during the times of the Old Testament. During the construction of the second temple, the people that eventually came to be known as the Samaritans were prevented from becoming part

23. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Text and Interpretation,” in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer–Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (New York: SUNY, 1989) 41.

24. It is for this reason that Espín suggests that culture must be considered as a “necessary condition for revelation.” See Orlando O. Espín, “Traditioning: Culture, Daily Life and Popular Religion, and Their Impact on Christian Tradition,” in *Futuring Our Past: Explorations in the Theology of Tradition*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Gary Macy (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006) 4.

of the people of Israel because they were mixed. However, despite being rejected, mixed people play a crucial role in the biblical story of salvation. This is illustrated by the important figures listed in Jesus' genealogy such as Rahab and Ruth. In fact, argues Justo González, mixed people are predominant in the biblical text. The apostle Paul would not have been able to go in his missionary journeys were he not a cultural *mestizo*.²⁵

As would be expected, the most important figure of the New Testament, Jesus himself, is interpreted as culturally mixed-*mestizo*. Elizondo argues that Galilee was a place of significance in the New Testament both as the place Jesus grew up, and a place where merchants from different cultural backgrounds intersected and intermixed.²⁶ Jesus grew up in a context of great cultural diversity and, therefore, was culturally mixed. This is of great significance for Elizondo because God brought salvation through this particular Galilean *mestizo*.²⁷ This is the experience shared by Latinas/os as these *mestizos/as* epitomize the divine inauguration of a new world where diversity reigns supreme.²⁸ By interpreting the biblical Jesus as the divine *mestizo*, Elizondo elevates *mestizo*-Latinas/os to a messianic status embodying the promised reign of God for all peoples and all nations on the basis of intermixture.²⁹

Popular Religion

By claiming the condition of biological and cultural *mestizaje*, U.S. Latina/o theologians have reclaimed the popular religious expressions of Latinas/os as epistemological sources. For them, the daily faith experiences and expressions of the people are the result of the condition of intermixture-*mestizaje*. This methodological shift by U.S. Latina/o theologians places the people at the center of the production of theological knowledge. In other words, the *fiestas patronales*, *la quinceañera*, *las profesiones*, express concretely the people's own theological process. And the adoption of the category of *mestizaje* provides the framework for understanding these

25. González, *Santa Biblia*, 84.

26. Elizondo, *Galilean Journey*, 49–50.

27. *Ibid.*, 50–53.

28. Virgilio Elizondo, "The New Humanity of the Americas," in *Beyond Borders: The Writings of Virgilio Elizondo and Friends*, ed. Timothy Matovina (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000) 276.

29. Elizondo, *Galilean Journey*, 53–64.

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

devotions, rituals, traditions, customs, and symbols. They display elements from their indigenous, African and Spanish ancestors.³⁰

For Latina/o theologians, this version of *mestizaje* is particularly embodied in the apparition and subsequent development of the veneration of the Lady of Guadalupe. It is not difficult to see the numerous elements from Spanish Christian and indigenous religious traditions interlaced with the symbol of the Lady of Guadalupe.³¹ As Goizueta puts it, the “divine is here revealed—of all things!—a mestizo Virgin, a woman of mixed blood, La Morenita . . . She is the Beauty of the mestizo, of the poor, a beauty rejected by the conquerors.”³²

Therefore, the condition of intermixture is pervasive in the popular religious expressions of faith of the Latina/o people. To speak of *mestizaje* as the defining characteristic of the Latina/o religious experience means that Latina/o theologians take seriously the theological value of popular religious expressions. For them, they are the truest expressions of Latina/o religious experience, and the well from which to draw theological knowledge.³³ U.S. Latina/o theologians challenge colonial notions that demonize different expressions and practices of faith as corruptions of one “true” Christian expression. Instead, they affirm that the Latina/o people’s quotidian expressions of faith: rituals, feasts, traditions, and practices are legitimate ways of living the Christian faith.³⁴ At heart, one finds the categorical unmasking and denouncing of the absurdity behind ideas of “pure” or unmixed expressions of Christianity in the Latina/o appropriation of *mestizo/a* religious expressions. In other words, there is no one “true” “unmixed” expression of Christianity; and claims to “purity” are conceived as the residual ideological legacy of the colonial racialized destructive forces,

30. This is also true of the liturgy of many of the churches as they show a wide array of Latina/o cultural elements in the music, language, and art. For Chávez Saucedá, this kind of liturgy is quite literally the *work of the people* and, as such, it is a Latina/o “cultural product.” See Teresa Chávez Saucedá, “Sacred Space/Public Identity,” in *Handbook of Latina/o Theologies*, ed. Miguel De La Torre and Edwin Aponte (St. Louis: Chalice, 2006) 251.

31. For a detailed analysis and interpretation of the Lady of Guadalupe as a *mestizo* symbol, see Virgilio Elizondo, *Guadalupe, Mother of the New Creation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997).

32. Roberto S. Goizueta, “U.S. Hispanic Popular Catholicism as Theopoetics,” in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 282–83.

33. *Ibid.*, 267–71.

34. Orlando O. Espín, “*Pasión y respeto*: Elizondo’s Contribution to the Study of Popular Catholicism,” in *Beyond Borders*, 103.

which fail to acknowledge the degree to which all expressions of Christianity have incorporated elements from other religious and cultural traditions.

CHALLENGES: IDENTITY DEFINITION, MULTICULTURALISM, AND RELIGIOUS PLURALITY

It needs to be made clear that Latinas/os in the U.S. continue to share the common experience of racialized discrimination, social marginalization, and resistance against dominant Anglo-cultural assimilationist pressures.³⁵ This is exacerbated by the stereotypical characterization of Latinas/os as perennial immigrants, foreigners in their own country. Despite the fact that most Latinas/os have been born in the U.S., the recent rhetoric of anti-terrorism and national security is effectively used as a mechanism of exclusion, and the sociopolitical and cultural landscape of the U.S. is perceived by Latinas/os as inhospitable and unwelcoming.³⁶

Since the conditions that gave rise to Latina/o theology have changed, Latina/o theologians need to rethink what it means to speak about the reality and faith expressions of the Latina/o communities. This is a two-fold problematic: first, the need to create new language for speaking about the richness, diversity, and fluid character of identities among Latinas/os; second, the need to ground theological reflections in the ethnocultural and historical specificity of each of the groups that constitute the Latinas/os. On

35. According to Virgilio Elizondo, things have not changed much in more than 30 years. In 1971 he wrote that Latinas/os live with lack of work insurance, exploitation, appalling living conditions, no adequate housing, high rent rate, no vacation time, no union protection, poor or non-existent medical care, and poor education. The people are malnourished and sometimes only work seasonally. And university GRE and IQ tests are ethnically skewed. For him, all these amount to depriving Latinos/as from having equal opportunities because the structures are Anglo-centric. See his *Christianity and Culture: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology and Ministry for the Bicultural Community* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1975) 133. A more recent example of systemic discrimination against Latinas/os is found in the Anti-Ethnic Studies Bill, passed by the Arizona State Legislature in 2010, by which Mexican-American studies were effectively prohibited by law.

36. This has prompted many to rethink racialized popular notions of a ubiquitous black-white binary, but more like a black-white-foreigner social-cultural ethos that succeeds in making Latinas/os feel as foreigners in their own country. See Elizabeth Martínez, "Beyond Black/White: The Racisms of Our Time," in *The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (New York: New York University Press, 1998) 471; J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "Cipherspace: Latino Identity Past and Present," in *Race, Identity, and Citizenship: A Reader*, ed. Rodolfo D. Torres, Louis F. Mirón, and Jonathan Xavier Inda (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 169–80.

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

both counts, it is becoming increasingly necessary to negotiate the terms and limits of “Latina/o” identity, making it difficult to speak of Latinas/os using generalizing categories such as *mestizaje*. While the category of *mestizaje* has been very useful, it needs to be rethought, reconfigured, and qualified. I name four reasons why I think the label of *mestizaje* is becoming increasingly problematic for Latina/o theology.

First, with the present global patterns of migration, conflicts and interactions of masses of peoples are inevitable. These interactions show that what is happening is not the synthesizing of cultural groups in the direction of one global *mestizaje*.³⁷ Rather, we see a multiplication of syntheses and fusions and the creation of multiple new identities irreducible by rigid categories.

Second, because of the present reconfiguration of geopolitical actors and the proliferation of identities numerous groups the world over have resorted to use *mestizaje* to define their own identity, experiences, and struggles against sociopolitical and economic marginalization.³⁸ So *mestizaje* is not one thing, or one experience of intermixture shared by all peoples. *Mestizaje* must be seen in the plural sense, and qualified in light of the historical contexts from which they emerge.³⁹

Third, U.S. Latina/o theologians borrowed the term from Latin America’s long standing tradition of *mestizaje* discourses, but did not critically engage the racialized colonial configuration of the term. They failed to identify how in Latin America *mestizaje* functions as a whitening, exclusionary, and social structuring mechanism of the population, where indigenous peoples and African descendants are left outside of the debates and discourses of ethnocultural and national identity.⁴⁰ This is problematized

37. Virgilio Elizondo, “Transformation of Borders: Mestizaje and the Future of Humanity,” in *Beyond Borders*, 176–86; Jacques Audinet, *The Human Face of Globalization: From Multicultural to Mestizaje*, trans. Francess Dal Chele (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*.

38. See Élisabeth Delaygue, *Mestizo: Roman* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1986); Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Riverton, NJ: Foris, 1986); Claudine Bavoux, *Islam et métissage: des musulmans créolophones à Madagascar: les indiens sunnites sourti des Tamatave* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1990).

39. See Medina, *Mestizaje*, chapter 5.

40. Until now, U.S. Latino theologians have given little attention to volatile relationship that existed between *mestizos* and the indigenous peoples of the Americas. It is worth mentioning that in many places and at various moments in the history of Latin America *mestizos/as* were rejected by the indigenous peoples. This was the case because *mestizos/as* were a reminder, and at times continued the history of violation, rape and despoliation

by the number of diverse groups reclaiming the category of *mestizaje* as a suitable label to speak of their experiences of migration and struggle for social participation.⁴¹ In Latin America, *Mestizaje* has become profoundly ambiguous and slippery sometimes used to subvert national and cultural assimilationist agendas, and in others as a sociological, ethnocultural, and ideological mechanism of cultural assimilation and conformity.⁴² So it is necessary that U.S. Latina/o theologians engage the social context from where they borrowed and were inspired in using the label of *mestizaje*, and where, even in the present, *mestizaje* means the absence and historical erasure of indigenous and African descendants.

the indigenous suffered under Spanish rule. In fact, many *mestizo/a* males were repudiated because they had adopted their Spanish father's behavior by going into the *Reducciones* (reserves-like communities where the indigenous people were placed and were indoctrinated into Catholicism and Spanish culture) and raping indigenous women. So for many indigenous people, like Guaman Poma, the *mestizos* were a reminder and the continuity of the Spanish rapacious sexual behavior. See Phelipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *La obra de Phelipe Guamán Poma de Ayala*, ed. Arthur Posnansky (La Paz, Bolivia: Editorial del Instituto "Tihuanacu" de Antropología, Etnografía y Prehistoria, 1944) 563.

41. See Marisol de la Cadena, "Reconstructing Race: Racism, Culture and *Mestizaje* in Latin America," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 34/6 (2001) 16–25; Ricardo Feierstein, "Todas las culturas, la cultura," in *Contraexilio y Mestizaje: Ser judío en latino-america*, Colección Ensayos (Buenos Aires: Editorial Milá, 1996) 109–59; de Lailhacar, *The Mestizo as Crucible: Andean Indian and African Poets of Mixed Origin as Possibility of Comparative Poetics* (New York: Lang, 1996).

42. In the history of Latin America there are repeated instances in which the discourse of *mestizaje* has been appropriated as emblematic of the grievances the subaltern groups may have against the dominant group. For example, in the sixteenth century Garcilaso de la Vega was the first person who appropriated the label of *mestizo* to define himself, which eventually led him to reclaim his indigenous heritage. And at the beginning of the nineteenth century Simon Bolívar also adopted the language of *mestizaje* in order to promote the struggle of independence from the Empire of Spain. For him, however, *mestizaje* was both the celebration of the *criollos'* double citizenship, Spanish and American (from the Americas), and the construction of a new body politic that pretended to construct the new Latin American societies independent from Spanish imperial intervention. Just recently, the indigenous people of the Cuzco market place have reclaimed *mestizaje* as a legitimate label to affirm their indigenous identity and culture, while at the same time rejecting the dominant *mestizo* culture that intends their assimilation. See Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*, ed. Ángel Rosenblat (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, S.A., 1945) 2:ix–xxxi; Simón Bolívar, "Discurso pronunciado por el Libertador ante el Congreso de Angostura el 15 de febrero de 1819, día de su instalación," in *Simón Bolívar: Siete documentos esenciales*, ed. J. L. Salcedo Bastardo (Caracas: Edición de la Presidencia de la República, 1973) 65–98; Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919–1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

The complex reality of identity proliferation, construction, and definition among Latinas/os is a fourth and final reason. In attempting to find a sense of unity, U.S. Latina/o theologians painted a homogeneous picture of Latinas/os as *mestizos/as*. But defining Latinas/os as characteristically *mestizos/as* leaves out the other groups that reject the notion of *mestizaje* as a self-identifying category. Latinas/os and/or Hispanics are not a homogeneous ethnocultural collective.⁴³ On one hand, there are the three historical strands: Mexican Americans,⁴⁴ Puerto Ricans,⁴⁵ and Cuban Americans,⁴⁶

43. Chávez-Sauceda points out very clearly that the diversity of the Latina/o communities goes beyond cultural differences. According to her, there are issues of language, generation, country of procedence, for many year of immigration into the U.S. education, gender, etc, all of which play an important factor in the diversity of the Latina/o communities. See Chávez Saucedo, "Sacred Space/Public Identity," 252–54. For a more recent discussion of the growing diversity of Latinas/os in the United States, see Edwin David Aponte, *¡Santo!: Varieties of Latina/o Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012).

44. For Mexican Americans the story of discrimination goes as far back as the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty of 1848, when the entire States of California, Nevada, and Utah, and large portions of today's States of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Wyoming were ceded to the United States as a result of the latter's invasion of Mexico. The remaining parts of New Mexico and Arizona were later ceded under the 1853 Gadsden Purchase. Overnight the Mexican inhabitants of those regions became U.S. citizens but were not incorporated into the dominant Anglo social and cultural mainstream of the U.S. Justified by the Great Depression, in the 1930s over half a million Mexican Americans were forcibly thrown out from the U.S. and in the 1954 during Operation Wetback Countless many more were sent to Mexico under the excuse that they were seasonal workers who had overstayed their permits. For a more detailed description of the kinds of discrimination that Mexican Americans have endured in the regions of the Southwest of the U.S., see Juan González, *Harvest of the Empire*, ch. 5.

45. Among Puerto Ricans, the myth of Borinquen, the indigenous Taíno name for the island, was created as many relocated to continental U.S. Borinquen is the name which the indigenous Taíno gave the island and it means *La tierra del altivo Señor* (The land for the almighty Lord). The Taínos are generally considered to be part of the Taíno-Arawak group who traveled from the Orinoco-Amazon region of South America to Venezuela to the Caribbean Islands (2500 years ago). Starting around early 1940s, the massive migration of Puerto Ricans into continental U.S. was made possible by the Jones Act of 1917, by which Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens. See Klor de Alva, "Aztlán, Borinquen and Hispanic Nationalism in the United States," 153–56. Many of those who relocated during the 1930s and 1940s carried the dream of returning to the land of their ancestors, the Taínos. Despite they were decimated into extinction by the Spaniards soon after their arrival to the Caribbean islands in 1493, for Puerto Ricans the spirit and culture of the Taíno's survives in the Puerto Rican cultural ethos. As Puerto Ricans arrived to continental U.S., and despite of being U.S. citizens, they were treated as foreigners and for years have remained invisible in U.S. society. See Juan González, *Harvest of the Empire*, ch. 4.

46. The first wave of Cuban refugees arrived to the U.S. as a result of the Cuban Revolution (1959), most of whom left because they were supporters of the dictator Fulgencio

with marked chronological, social, historical, and cultural differences, that for decades have constituted Latinas/os in the U.S.⁴⁷ And on the other hand, we have the multiple and diverse waves of immigrants (including millions of undocumented people) that have made the U.S. their home. Whatever we identify with the label “Latinas/os” refers to multiple ethnocultural groups that do not share the same experiences of migration, social exclusion, cultural marginalization, and religious affiliation in the same way; this is not to mention the tensions and differences that exist among themselves.⁴⁸

The acknowledgement of the present proliferation of identities among Latinas/os highlights the reality of an intra Latina/o religious plurality. In my view this third challenge is one of the most important facing Latina/o theologians, as they are being forced to rethink the limits of theological reflection in relation to the plural non-Christian religious traditions that inform Latina/o religious and cultural practices. In other words, these theologians will have to go beyond “ecumenical” debates toward intra-Latina/o interreligious conversations.⁴⁹

Batista. As Juan González puts it, the refugees from the 1960s and 1970s were largely from the upper and middle classes and brought with them considerable technical skills. They also received massive financial support by the federal government and quickly became the “country’s most prosperous Hispanic immigrants.” Considering themselves to be white, the first Cubans quickly assimilated into the dominant Anglo culture. Subsequent migrations of Cubans into the U.S. during the 1980s, the *marielitos* and 1994 *balseros* shattered the popular notion that Cubans were white. Mostly poorer and dark skinned these new waves of Cubans experienced discrimination and rejection by both White-Anglos and from among the members of their own community. According to González, because of their struggles in arriving to the U.S. and their experience of rejection and discrimination, the latest Cuban immigrants share much in common with other Latina/o immigrants. See Juan González, *Harvest of the Empire*, 109.

47. For a detailed analysis of the marked differences between Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans, see Juan González, *Harvest of the Empire*.

48. The history of each of these groups in the U.S. is so different that, according to Fernando Segovia, “it would be foolish to pretend that the most recent experience of Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, or Salvadorans fleeing for their lives in the midst of civil war is similar to that of the great migration of Puerto Rican families to the cities of the Northeast in the 1940s and 1950s, or that the massive exile of Cubans in the 1960s and 70s is similar to the situation of Mexican Americans born in the borderlands of the Southwest, of Puerto Ricans living on the islands” (“Two Places and no Place on Which to Stand: Mixture and Otherness in Hispanic American Theology,” in *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective*, ed. Arturo Bañuelas [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995], 34). Another important element that is finally receiving its due attention is the discrimination against members of the Latina/o LGBT communities. See Espín, *Grace and Humanness*, ch. 2.

49. Latina/o Theologians are beginning to engage the plurality of religious traditions

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

At stake is the theoretical need for the development of new language with which Latinas/os can identity the gaps, fissures, and absences in the U.S. Latina/o dominant discourses of identity and faith experiences using the category of *mestizaje*. This complicated self-critical process is necessary in order to engage the indigenous and African “Latinas/os” as theological dialogue partners. By “dialogue” I mean conversations that require that we learn to value the religious and ethnocultural universes of the indigenous peoples and African Latinas/os, but not as attachments to a larger *mestizo/a* identity. This is a cultural shift of enormous proportions, and requires that we take risks in the process of engaging Other “Latina/o” ethnocultural traditions, discounting any attempts to hide the tensions among Latinas/os and the irreducible differences that make Latinas/os in the U.S. multicolored, multi-cultural, and plurivocal communities. It is only in making room for Other fellow Latinas/os that we will move in the direction of retrieving their memories from a “forgotten pass,” and reclaim their unique contributions to Latina/o societies and identities.

FUTURE PROSPECTS: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

As I think about the future of U.S. Latina/o theology, several things come to mind: First, despite its obvious limitations, and given our present reconfiguration of peoples, identities, national borders, and ideas, U.S. Latino/a theological discussions on *mestizaje* have much to offer to larger debates on intermixture and construction of “national,” ethnocultural, and religious identities. Latina/o theologians have already gone far in demonstrating the complex and culturally colorful character of the faith experience of Latinas/os in the U.S. and in so doing have demonstrated that to speak of people’s experiences it is necessary to work across disciplinary boundaries.

In engaging other disciplines, U.S. Latina/o theologians resist the fallacy of dominant attempts at keeping religious practices, faith experiences and expressions in the private sphere of life. They appropriately reflect on the praxis of the people, and they engage other disciplines to accomplish its task. In other words, religious life, and peoples’ faith experiences have profound social, political, and economic repercussions.

among Latinas/os in the U.S. For example, Hjamil Martínez has published a study on Muslim Puerto Ricans, and Orlando Espín is finally making public his numerous engagements with the Lukumí Afro-Cuban religion. See Hjamil Martínez, *Latina/o y Musulmán: The Construction of Latina/o Identity Among Latina/o Muslims in the United States* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009); Espín, *Grace and Humanness*, ch. 3.

Religious life and faith expressions are undeniably part of the complex and ambiguous social networks and the construction of meaning for human collectives. For Latina/o theologians, these concerns converge in the context of *lo cotidiano*,⁵⁰ where the false dualisms between the “secular” and the “sacred” become conspicuously evident. Latina/o theologians contradict erroneous dichotomies that render ethnic and cultural identity and expressions of faith as belonging to the private sphere.⁵¹ From this vantage point, it can also be stated that for Latina/o theology interdisciplinarity is also constitutive of the theological task.

Second, in deploying *mestizaje* Latina/o theologians have affirmed the centrality of culture in religious experience and expressions. They have discerned God’s activity among the Latina/o peoples. In other words, for them the people’s religious activities and expressions are a legitimate *locus* of divine self-disclosure. This brings serious challenges to rigid traditional approaches that view revelation as one historical event in the person of Jesus. These theologians affirm the continuing divine disclosure in the people’s everyday practices of faith.⁵² This goes beyond stating that all theological affirmations are contextual. U.S. Latina/o scholars affirm the historical, social, political, and economic contextual limitations of their theological assertions. But the real contribution to theology is the proposal that the very intellectual structures and logic of understanding God are culturally bound. All theological assertions reflect the cultural universe from which

50. As María Pilar Aquino states about women and *lo cotidiano*: daily life is where real transformations take place. Daily life has to do with the totality of life. It produces, reproduces, and multiplies the totality of social relationships. In it anyone can clearly discover the concrete exercise of male power. Asymmetrical relationships occur in repetitive and continuous form in both the public and private arenas, because this is how they acquire daily character. In this sense, life has a fundamental political and religious role in the theological task of women. Its importance is even greater from the standpoint of the Christian faith, since theological reflection seeks to contribute to the creation of new models of social relationships” (Aquino, “The Collective ‘Dis-Cover’ of Our Own Power,” 257).

51. This dichotomy, argues Ada María Isasi-Díaz, has contributed greatly in the oppression of women. See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, “Un poquito de justicia—a Little Bit of Justice: A Mujerista Account of Justice,” in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 338.

52. This is also exemplified in the more recent collection of articles on the diverse portraits of Christ among the Latina/o communities. These portraits reveal the broadening of the understanding of the divine disclosure even in the person of Jesus. See Harold Recinos and Hugo Magallanes, eds., *Jesus in the Hispanic Community: Images of Christ from Theology to Popular Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

they come. Hence their theology is Latina/o theology!⁵³ This is not about placing specific characteristics that distinguish a given theological affirmation as Latina/o from others that are not. Rather, it is the deliberate affirmation that there are no universal theological articulations that transcend all cultural groups, because there is no such thing as a universal culture.

U.S. Latina/o theology breaks away from “universal-objective” claims. In affirming their plural ethnic and cultural identities and traditions as the epistemological sources and *loci* of theological reflections, it rejects notions of value-free, objective, neutral theological articulations. Such affirmations debunk the fallacy of theological traditions claiming universal applicability. Again, this is not just a postmodern affirmation absolutely relativising any claims to truth. Rather, the U.S. Latina/o rejection of universal claims relates more to the affirmation that Latinas/os are legitimate producers of theological knowledge. Their knowledge, however, is intricately connected and bound to their history of discrimination and marginalization, and their mixed ethnic and cultural identity and tradition. It is from the vantage point of marginalization that Latina/o people claim to have encountered the divine. But, as Espín has argued, Latinas/os can only experience God in Latina/o ways and it could not be otherwise. “God” as experienced by Latinas/os is necessarily culturally and socially contextualized in ways “possible only to them and expressive of the language, symbols, understandings, and image(s) of the divine shaped by *their* culture, and by *their* social place.”⁵⁴

Third, the critiques of *mestizaje* demand that we re-appropriate the notion of viewing the faith experiences of the people as a necessary condition for theological reflections; this time it means recognizing the multiple

53. Identity has become an issue of serious debate among Latinas/os in the U.S. The limits of theological affirmations are being reconfigured and challenged as Latinas/os move into the public sphere. For some, questions of cultural identity have become an impediment in the degree to which U.S. Latina/o theology shifts its attention toward more public fora. For me, however, cultural identity is not something one is divested from, nor is it something contained or a finished product. Identity is far more fluid and porous. Theological affirmations are part of the public arena precisely because they emerge from culturally located spaces of identity. To claim otherwise would mean to engage in an abstract ahistorical intellectual space which runs the risk of claiming universality. See Benjamin Valentin, *Mapping Public Theology: Beyond Culture, Identity, and Difference* (New York: Trinity, 2002); Harold Recinos, ed., *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

54. Orlando O. Espín, “Popular Catholicism: Alienation or Hope?” in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, 115; Orlando O. Espín, “An Exploration Into the Theology of Grace and Sin,” in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999) 134.

diverse religious experiences of Latinas/os. This is not just a cultural shift but an epistemological one as well. Theologically speaking, the challenge to engage ourselves, especially those outside the dominant discourse of *mestizaje*, results in the broadening of our epistemological horizons. It helps us realize the as yet untapped universes of African Latina/o and indigenous cosmologies and cosmogonies that can shed light on the ways we conceive reality, the world, nature, and the mystery of the divine. In a sense, then, it is necessary that we go back to “drinking from our own wells,” and from that intellectual and theological space rethink our theological articulations.

Fourth, in my critique of *mestizaje* I have emphasized the importance of engaging the indigenous and African traditions and forms of wisdom and knowledge. So in drawing from the wisdom and religious traditions of these communities Latina/o theologians gain a tremendous reservoir of material knowledge for constructing an ecological theology. I venture to say that the lack of recognition of and conversation with indigenous and African forms of wisdom and knowledge is linked to the fact that ecology is one of the least developed areas of Latina/o theology. To my knowledge no U.S. Latina/o theologian has systematically addressed some of the theological implications of the present environmental crisis we are experiencing.

Nevertheless, I believe that Latinas/os are in the unique position to articulate a theology of creation with profound ecological underpinnings for two fundamental reasons: first is the issue of “environmental racism.” Any struggle against racialized forms of discrimination goes hand in hand with issues related to the environment. In the U.S. the majority of environmentally hazardous material ends up stored in areas populated by African Americans, Latinas/os, and Native Americans. Even worse is the fact that the great polluting corporations of the U.S. have taken the world as their dump site. So the struggle against the dominant forces of assimilation and racism in the U.S. are of global proportion, as toxic waste ends up being dumped in countries populated with people of color. In the words of James Cone: “If toxic waste is not safe enough to be dumped in the United States, it is not safe enough to be dumped in Ghana, Liberia, Somalia nor anywhere else in the world.”⁵⁵ Thus U.S. Latina/o theologians should be front and center on issues and struggles concerning the environment. “What good is it to eliminate racism if we are not around to enjoy a racist free environment?”⁵⁶ And second, U.S. Latina/o theologians cannot avoid becoming intimately

55. James Cone, “Whose Earth is It Anyway?” *Cross Currents* 50/1–2 (2000) 41.

56. *Ibid.*, 42.

PART TWO—Contextual and Constructive Proposals

involved in issues related to the environment because of the wisdom and knowledge within the indigenous and African traditions.

Drawing from the wisdom and knowledge of these communities can provide Latina/o theologians with key theological insights as to how to conceive human existence in relation to the world, nature, and the environment. Attitudes of maintaining balance and coexisting with and depending on nature are not aspects outside of our traditions, and so we can only benefit from engaging our fellow indigenous and African Latinas/os. Notions of domination and exploitation must be considered foreign to the Latina/o imaginary, and must therefore be abandoned. All this to say that there is need for U.S. Latina/o theologians to address environmental concerns, and draw from their own reservoir of knowledge to address such concerns.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Consistent with the initial intuitions of LALT, U.S. Latina/o theologians have engaged the social sciences and opened new horizons for understanding the social reality and faith experience of the Latina/o communities. Despite of the profound limitations in the use of the term, by deploying *mestizaje* U.S. Latina/o theologians have affirmed the centrality of culture in religious experience and expressions and discerned God's activity among the Latina/o peoples. It is in this way that they came to affirm the people's religious expressions as a legitimate *locus* of divine self-disclosure.

As they embarked in their own theological journey and in order to give language to the experience of faith of the Latina/o communities in the U.S., Latina/o theologians engaged these communities and found their own sources of theological knowledge. By engaging other disciplines and the social sciences, these theologians created their own theological method in which people's ethnocultural identity is conceived as central to the task of doing theology. This tendency to cross disciplinary boundaries continues to be a major characteristic of Latina/o theology as it engages other intellectual schools and remains relevant for the present social, political and theological climate. In considering ethnic and cultural identity as central to theology, U.S. Latina/o theologians go beyond contextual theologies so as to put into question even the intellectual edifice of the theological traditions they inherited.⁵⁷

57. This self-reflective task is already taking place as Latinas/os look toward the future. See Néstor Medina, "Tongue Twisters and Shibboleths: On Decolonial Gestures in Latina/o Theology," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 18/2 (2013) 3–19.