

LATINO/A BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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LATINO/A BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

PROBLEMATICS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES

Edited by

Francisco Lozada Jr. and Fernando F. Segovia

SBL Press

SBL Press
Atlanta

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Latino/a biblical hermeneutics : problematics, objectives, strategies / edited by Francisco Lozada, Jr. and Fernando F. Segovia.

p. cm. — (Society of Biblical Literature. Semeia studies ; number 68)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-58983-654-9 (paper binding : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-58983-655-6 (electronic format) — ISBN 978-1-58983-927-4 (hardcover binding : alk. paper)

1. Bible—Hermeneutics. 2. Bible—Criticism, interpretation, etc.—Latin America.

I. Lozada, Francisco, 1965– II. Segovia, Fernando F. III. Title: Latino biblical hermeneutics. IV. Title: Latina biblical hermeneutics.

BS476.L36 2014

220.6089'68—dc23

2014039646

Printed on acid-free, recycled paper conforming to
ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (R1997) and ISO 9706:1994
standards for paper permanence.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume has been made possible due to the assistance and support of a good number of people, to whom we are deeply indebted and most thankful. First and foremost, to all those who took part in the project, for their gracious acceptance of our invitation and fine contributions. Second, to Mr. Luis Menéndez Antuña, who, as a doctoral student in New Testament and Early Christianity within the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt University, served as editorial assistant for the project, for his keen editing of the manuscript. Third, to the Editorial Board of Semeia Studies, for their kind acceptance of the volume for publication in the series, and to its Editor, Gerald L. West, for his excellent work in shepherding the volume toward publication. Finally, to the entire publications staff of SBL Press, for its impeccable assistance throughout the process of publication.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
BDB	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, <i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic</i> . 1907. Repr., Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 2001.
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JHLT	<i>Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
TNIV	Today's New International Version
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WW	<i>Word and World</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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INTRODUCTION:
APPROACHING LATINO/A BIBLICAL CRITICISM:
A TRAJECTORY OF VISIONS AND MISSIONS

Fernando F. Segovia

This project on the identity and role of the Latino/a biblical critic constitutes an exercise in racial-ethnic criticism in general and minority biblical criticism in particular. To express it otherwise: just as minority biblical criticism represents a variation of racial-ethnic criticism, so does an analysis of the critical task as envisioned by minority critics represent a variation of minority biblical criticism. To explain what this variation signifies and entails, it is imperative to conceptualize and formulate its placement within both critical frameworks. Toward this end, I draw on previous reflections, offered as part of a study of the poetics of minority biblical criticism, on the interdisciplinary character of these endeavors (Segovia 2009). These reflections will allow me to capture and convey the nature, objective, and approach of the project.

Racial-ethnic biblical criticism brings together two fields of study, biblical studies and racial-ethnic studies, with important academic-scholarly features in common: both possess long-standing and well-established traditions of scholarship; both embrace an expansive sense of scope, with manifold areas of interest brought under the lens of analysis; and both reveal a complex, shifting, and conflicted trajectory of critical discussions on any area of analysis. Biblical studies involves the problematic of scriptural interpretation: the study of biblical texts and contexts in terms of production and reception, understood broadly in both respects. Racial-ethnic studies has to do with the problematic of race and ethnicity: the study of the representations of Other and Self—in primarily somatic or cultural terms, respectively—that emerge as a result of processes of migration and encounter between population groups. A bringing together of these

fields requires, therefore, pointed focalization of the concrete problematic to be addressed—exposition of its design (*what*), its rationale (*why*), and its mode (*how*)—as well as active engagement with the literature in both fields regarding such focalization.

Minority biblical criticism brings together specific components from each field of study: from racial-ethnic studies, it foregrounds the set of formations and relations involving minority groups within a state; from biblical studies, it highlights the principles and practices of interpretation at work among critics from such minority groups. This it does for the sake of analyzing such principles and practices in relation to the practices and principles operative among critics from the dominant group. Such analysis can proceed in any number of directions. From the point of view of biblical studies, it can highlight any dimension of the field: the texts and contexts of antiquity; the interpretations of such texts and contexts, and their contexts; the interpreters behind such interpretations, and their contexts. This it can do in terms of any tradition of reading, not just the academic-scholarly. From the point of view of minority studies, it can foreground any individual group, any combination of groups, or the set of such groups as a whole. In so doing, it can pursue any aspect of the process of minoritization and its ramifications. An exercise in minority biblical criticism demands, consequently, a closely targeted and properly informed focalization of the concrete interdisciplinary problematic to be examined.

As a variation of minority criticism, the present project seeks to analyze the vision of the critical task espoused by Latino/a critics. With respect to design, the project places the following components from each field in dialogue: from biblical studies, the mission of the critic as critic, and hence a focus on interpreters and their approach to the craft of interpretation—a dimension of criticism that is hardly ever discussed, much less theorized; from minority studies, an individual minoritized group within the United States—the Latino/a American formation, and thus the Latino/a circle of critics. In terms of rationale, the project seeks to ascertain how such critics approach their vocation as critics in the light of their identity as members of the Latino/a experience and reality—howsoever they define the social-cultural situation of the group and their own affiliation within it. With respect to mode of correlation, the project proceeds by asking a variety of critics—representing a broad spectrum of the Latino/a American formation, along various axes of identity—to address the problematic in whatever way they deem appropriate: What does it mean to be a Latino/a critic?

A further reflection is in order. Behind any exercise in minority criticism in general and minority biblical criticism in particular lies, I have argued, a desire for self-assertion and self-introjection, in the light of the practices of marginalization and erasure that govern their reality and experience in society and culture. In effect, the axis of relations between dominant and minority formations within a state constitutes a variation among many of unequal or differential relations of power, exercised through a dialectical process of minoritization. Thus when I use the term *minority* I mean *minoritized*, and from now on I shall use the latter term. Any such exercise, therefore, partakes in such a desire, as I put it at the time (Segovia 2009, 285), “to break through the gaze-patrol of dominant culture and society,” interrupting thereby the dialectics of minoritization by transgressing established ways of thinking and doing set up and maintained by such a process.

The present project does this in at least two regards. I have noted above that theorization of the critical task has been mostly ignored in the scholarly-academic tradition of reading. Further, contextualization of the critic in social and cultural terms has been largely bypassed in the field as well. A foregrounding of critical mission from the minoritized perspective of Latino/a criticism constitutes, therefore, a serious interruption in dominant biblical discourse by way of problematizing a critical component that remains invariably taken for granted. A further dimension of this move renders it more serious still. The force of the argument leads, logically and inexorably, to a similar problematization within the dominant tradition itself.

Lastly, a word about the presentation of the project is also in order. In this work we have adopted a threefold division. The first part, represented by this introductory study, traces the path of Latino/a biblical criticism up to this point by way of recent definitions of the approach. The second part consists of the various studies addressing the problematic of critical identity and role for Latino/a criticism. These have been arranged in alphabetical order. There are two reasons for such a choice: first, given the freedom of approach allowed the contributors, without any set of categories or areas of any sort; second, in light of the complex character of the proposals advanced, which do not fall easily into any distinctive pattern of organization. The third part involves two concluding studies. The first begins by examining in detail the dynamics and mechanics of each study and then goes on to a critical comparison of such findings, all in the light of the critical trajectory of definitions regarding Latino/a criticism outlined in the first part. The second study brings the volume

to an end by pointing forward, imagining the contours for the next phase of Latino/a criticism in its ongoing trajectory.

TRACING THE TRAJECTORY OF LATINO/A BIBLICAL CRITICISM

This project is not without a trajectory, and this trajectory is very much worth tracing. In recent years a number of major proposals—five in all—have appeared from the ranks of Latino/a critics and scholars toward a vision and a program for Latino/a biblical interpretation. Such a development is a sign of growth in numbers within the movement, as more and more Latino/as join the circle of biblical criticism. It is also a sign of growth in sophistication, as more and more attempts at self-reflection take place. In what follows I should like to examine such proposals by way of setting the stage for the project. In so doing, I activate rhetorical dynamics outlined in the study on the poetics, the formal features of emplacement and argumentation, deployed by minoritized biblical criticism. In other words, this study is also an exercise in minoritized criticism.

What I do here adopts the strategy of interruptive stocktaking, which I have described as “the self-conscious problematization of the established grounds and practices of criticism itself by way of rethinking and revisioning” (Segovia 2009, 286). This involves a turning of criticism upon itself, toward development of alternative visions of the critical task. This it does by looking at questions of identity (background and motivation) and questions of critical role (procedure and objective). Thus I want to examine, in sustained and systematic fashion, how this recent trajectory has envisioned the path ahead for Latino/a biblical interpretation. In so doing, moreover, I adopt the tactic of “taking a personal turn,” looking at how these scholars approach the critical task “not only as members of minority groups but also as distinct members within such groups” in terms of individual location as well as agenda. I examine, therefore, various aspects of each proposal—context of publication, personal background, critical stance, and resultant vision. In thus turning Latino/a criticism upon itself, my aim is to chart a trajectory of social-cultural as well as academic-scholarly assertion and introjection. Toward this end, I proceed in chronological fashion.

Luis Rivera Rodríguez (2007)—Reading from and for the Diaspora

With the proliferation of method and theory in biblical criticism since the 1970s, the discipline of biblical studies has expanded beyond its tradi-

tional historical moorings and approach, drawing on a growing number of disciplines, established as well as emerging, for its work and becoming increasingly thereby a field of study.¹ In this process of transformation, biblical studies was by no means alone, but followed rather the path of the disciplinary spectrum as a whole, including historiography itself. While always interdisciplinary in character, discursive interaction became ever more diverse and sophisticated. Such development has generated any number of projects that have sought to bring biblical criticism in dialogue with other fields of study.

One such interaction has involved, within the umbrella field of Christian studies, the conjunction of ethical studies and biblical studies, for which the volume *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*, by Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen, may be seen as a point of origins in the modern period (1976). In the mid-1990s, within the context of the joint annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, a sustained effort in this regard was launched by way of a program unit on character ethics and biblical interpretation. The project brought together critics and ethicists to examine the role of Scripture in the process of moral formation and identity—the realm of character ethics—within Christian communities. In so doing, the project took into account both the world of production and the world of reception of the biblical texts—the communities that forged the texts and the communities that are forged by the texts. The project has generated a series of volumes, including *Character Ethics and the Old Testament*, the venue for this first model for Latino/a biblical criticism, advanced by Luis Rivera Rodriguez.²

Its editors, M. Daniel Carroll R. and Jacqueline Lapsley, set a two-fold context for the volume, religious-theological as well as social-cultural (2007). On the one hand, they point to the major transformation at work in Christianity, away from Western Christendom and toward global Christianity—a process seen as marked by disorientation among Christian communities regarding identity and formation. On the other hand,

1. The results were to be expected: its object turned less unified and more expansive; its method, less set and more varied; its body of work, less coherent and more multidirectional; and its objective, less consensual and more problematized.

2. The first was *Character and Scripture*, edited by William P. Brown (2002). This was followed by *Character Ethics and the New Testament*, edited by Robert L. Brawley (2007); and *Character Ethics and the Old Testament*, edited by M. Daniel Carroll R. and Jacqueline Lapsley (2007).

they cite the multiple, severe, and interrelated crises affecting the world—a scenario viewed as marked by multidimensional violence (engendered by wars, terrorism, and drugs) and economic devastation (the ramifications of economic globalization). Such a context, they argue, presents many pressing challenges for Christian communities: (1) the global crises demand a response on their part; (2) this demand highlights the problematic of any response, given the diversity of communities and processes of moral formation and identity; (3) this problematic has given rise to a renewed focus on Scripture as a key moral resource for all communities. The volume thus sets out to advance, in the academic-scholarly realm, this appeal to Scripture in the midst of such a complex and urgent scenario.

The volume is thus profoundly theological and resolutely social in orientation. All contributors are said to subscribe to the notion that Scripture “has shaped and continues to shape those committed to God’s justice and the desire that all might thrive” (xviii)—a high regard for scriptural authority and normativity, with a focus on justice for all. Further, such commitment is said to involve, above all, “those who lie outside the walls of the more privileged sectors of society” (xviii)—an explicit solidarity with the marginalized, within its embrace of justice for all. Its design is twofold. A first part, involving critics, deals with formation and identity in the texts—it is expansive and canonically comprehensive. The second part, involving theologians, reflects on formation and identity in present-day contexts by way of the texts—it is circumscribed and globally selective. Four such frameworks are represented, all having to do with nonprivileged communities: two from North America (United States: diasporic Latino/a Americans throughout; migrant workers and prisoners in the Northwest), one from Africa (South Africa), and one from Latin America (Guatemala). It is in this section that one finds Rivera Rodriguez’s piece, “Toward a Diaspora Hermeneutics.”

His choice for this task is on point—materially as well as discursively. Materially, Rivera Rodriguez is a member of the Latin American and Caribbean diaspora in the United States. He presents himself within it as a native of Puerto Rico, in itself a unique case: formally, a commonwealth in association with the United States, a self-governing unincorporated territory, since 1952; however, this status is largely perceived as colonial by its inhabitants. Consequently, he describes himself as a citizen by birth but an immigrant by choice. First, he came to the United States for doctoral studies at Harvard University (1979–1986); later on, he opted for long-term residency as a member of the theological academy (1995–). As such, he

represents “a first-order diasporan”: someone who has gone through the “experience of translocality”—the process of “exiting, traveling, entering, and settling in countries other than their own native lands” (2007, 170). Discursively, Rivera Rodriguez is at work on a hermeneutical model of the diaspora. He identifies his aim, as a Latino theologian, as the development of a theological hermeneutics that is grounded in the context and informed by the interests of Latino/a diasporans—primarily of the first order, his own experience.³

The model is unpacked in four steps. The first three deal with diasporic experience in general. Rivera Rodriguez begins with a definition of diaspora formations: the process of migration leads to the development of diaspora groups and communities. The latter, the focus of attention, are distinguished by way of identity and behavior. Communities are more settled: “stable and organized conglomerates of immigrant families and groups, and their descendants, who have established a long-term residency in a host country.” They are also more complex: they “carry out their social action and cultural existence through their own networks and within the power networks of three fundamental social fields: the diaspora community itself, the host land, and the homeland” (171–72). Then he analyzes the character of such communities by way of a grid of components derived from the social sciences. Thereupon, in the light of such analysis, he outlines a set of reading strategies for such communities. The final step turns to religious-theological diasporic experience in particular. Here, with diasporic communities in mind, specifically Christian, he unfolds a framework for the theological interpretation of religious texts and traditions.

From a religious-theological point of view, Rivera Rodriguez lies at the center of this reading tradition of the biblical texts. As noted, not only does he describe himself as a Latino theologian interested in a theological hermeneutics of and for the diaspora, but the proposal also forms part of a Christian biblical-ethical project designed to further the renewed turn to Scripture in the midst of Christian diversity and global crises. Further, the model is advanced as a dialogical contribution to an ongoing project on the part of Latino/a scholars and ministers who take diaspora as a fundamental “point of reference” (169) in the theological interpretation of religious and biblical traditions, as they seek “to live out their faith and

3. The model, it is intimated, may well find resonance among second-order Latino/a diasporans, but this is not pursued.

politics as members of diasporic communities and congregations” in the country (183). As such, it is presented as an option, a way of providing further stimulus to the project.

In this envisioned theological reading of “sacred texts and traditions” (179) by Christian Latino/a religious communities of the diaspora, three interrelated dimensions are outlined. The first involves the religious character of the diaspora as represented in the texts or experienced by readers: How is diaspora “interpreted in connection to the divine” (179)? The second concerns the diasporic character of the religious life as represented in the texts or experienced by readers: How are the divine realm and the religious life “represented and interpreted through the symbolics of diaspora” (180)? The third involves the appropriation of the religious texts and traditions in the light of new diasporic situations: What new insights or orientations are brought to bear on “the divine, the human, and the religious life” (180)? Two principles clearly underlie such a reading: on the one hand, the biblical texts are seen as bearing witness to the experience of migration and diaspora; on the other hand, the interpretation of such experience by real readers who have themselves undergone such an experience is foregrounded. The model is thus religious-theological to the core. Although the authority and normativity of Scripture are not addressed as such, it is clear that both constitute key components of theological diasporic interpretation.

From a theoretical-methodological angle, the model emerges as thoroughly interdisciplinary and as yielding a distinctive way of reading. Rivera Rodriguez calls for critical dialogue with fields of studies having to do with the phenomenon of diasporas. Only then, he argues, can diasporic communities—and hence religious diasporic communities and congregations—be properly analyzed and addressed in full, as “social formations and locations in their variety, complexity, conflicts, identities, politics, and dynamics” (170). In his own case, four major elements are appropriated from social analysis of diasporas: constitutive dynamics, political strategies, identity constructions, and socioreligious functions. On the basis of such analytical dissection, he sets forth three reading strategies, described as carried out “simultaneously” (177), for the interpretation of biblical texts by religious communities.

The first, reading through diaspora, focuses on the inscription of diaspora in texts and readers. Three angles are noted: (1) the process of emigration (translocality); (2) the process of immigration and its effects on community (communality), identity (ethnogenesis), and relation to host

country (marginality); and (3) the strategies deployed for action in the in-between situation of diaspora (transnationality). The second strategy, reading from diaspora, centers on the diaspora as a human condition. Its focus is on how texts and readers assess the meaning and consequences of life in the diaspora. Such a focus attends to the visions of self and community, ethnic and generational identities, and power struggles and conflict in communities. The final strategy, reading for diaspora, addresses diaspora as a vocation. It examines ideal visions and corresponding praxis proposed for the diaspora. In all three cases, it should be noted, the goal is explanatory as well as evaluative: laying out and passing judgment on all aspects of diaspora—inscriptions, conditions, visions—in texts and readers, both other readers and oneself.

From a social-cultural point of view, the model constitutes an exercise in “theopolitical hermeneutics” (183). For Rivera Rodriguez, its foundation lies in “identification with the struggles of immigrant communities” in the country, and its objective is to move toward “a pastoral and theological response of advocacy toward immigrants” (185 n. 4). What such advocacy entails is pointedly outlined: the aim is to “inspire and mobilize members of diaspora communities and congregations in their struggles for the survival, safety, recognition, freedom, and flourishing in this country” (183). All three reading strategies have such advocacy in mind, as their joint descriptive and critical dimensions make clear.

A further point is in order here: while Rivera Rodriguez has the Latino/a diaspora foremost in mind, a more expansive agenda is identified as well. His interest extends to other minoritized first-order diasporas, such as the Asian Americans. Consequently, his work is very much in league with that of Asian American critics and theologians who are engaged in the development of a theological diaspora hermeneutics. Indeed, he faults both Anglo-European and African American scholars for failing to pay, for the most part, due attention to the work of their Latino/a and Asian American colleagues in this regard. This is a theopolitical project writ large, therefore.

In this vision of Latino/a criticism, the critic emerges, first of all, as at once restricted and expanded. The proposal comes from and concerns critics who are first-order diasporans and who have first-order diasporic communities and congregations in sight. In addition, the relevance of the model for critics and communities that are removed from a first-order diasporic experience of diaspora is not considered. At the same time, such critics can and should make common cause with first-order diasporan

critics who hail from and address other first-order minority communities and congregations. The critic also emerges as at once united with and separate from their diasporic communities and congregations. This becomes readily apparent in the description of their role. First, it is to foreground the experience of diaspora in its totality and hence in its full diversity—in texts, in readers of texts, and in one's own reading of the texts. Second, it is to pass judgment on all such representations of the diaspora. Third, it is to focus on visions of life in diaspora that have the concerns and interests in mind of the diaspora. In all such endeavors, critics, set apart by learning and sophistication, work for the sake of the people in the Christian communities, so that they too learn to deploy a theological hermeneutics of the diaspora and move toward a better understanding of their situation and a better resolution for the future. In sum, their critical expertise and mission are to be placed at the service of the community, for the sake of conscientization and mobilization, with a better life in mind—one of justice for all, especially the nonprivileged.

Efrain Agosto (2010)—Reading through Latino/a Eyes

With the transition of biblical studies from a discipline to a field of studies and with the rise in interdisciplinary work, a new genre makes its appearance in the scholarly literature—introductions to critical approaches. The aim of this type of volume is to provide an overview of methodological strategies and corresponding theoretical frameworks at work in the field. Such overviews address, with variations, a fairly standard set of topics: (1) the mechanics, its methodological procedures (*how*), and the dynamics, its theoretical foundations (*why*), of the approach; (2) its relation to other approaches in biblical criticism; the developing tradition of interpretation generated by the approach in biblical criticism; (3) its relation to other fields of studies in the academy, its interdisciplinary configurations; and (4) analysis of units or sections of a text by way of illustration. It is in one such introduction, *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, edited by Joel Green, that the second model to be considered, by Efrain Agosto (2010), is to be found.⁴ This is the first time, to the best

4. This was the second edition of this volume, published fifteen years after the first (Green 1995). Interestingly enough, there were no studies on Latino/a American and African American criticism in the first volume.

of my knowledge, that Latino/a biblical criticism is included in this type of publication.

The volume itself, which consists of sixteen studies altogether, is quite expansive in scope, yet decidedly unbalanced in representation, especially in the light of its date of publication. The emphasis lies clearly on historical and literary approaches, which together account for eleven essays in all; remarkably, there is a total absence of sociocultural approaches. Of the five essays that move beyond such parameters, two deal with the religious-theological tradition of reading, while the other three take up ideological readings. The piece by Agosto, "Latino/a Hermeneutics" (2010), is one of two on racial-ethnic criticism, alongside African American criticism; the other is devoted to feminist criticism. Given the overall choice of entries for the volume, especially the limited apportionment of essays assigned to the ideological paradigm, the inclusion of Latino/a biblical criticism is most surprising, though most welcome.

At the time of writing, Agosto was professor of New Testament at Hartford Seminary and a senior figure in the movement, active in it from the start. Materially, he is both of Puerto Rican descent, the product of the U.S. imperial-colonial framework in the Caribbean (1898), and born in the United States, a product of the massive Puerto Rican migration to the mainland devised and promoted by the federal government through Operation Bootstrap (1948). He is thus a Latino by birth, a child of territorial expansion by the United States, and a Nuyorican in particular, a child of the Puerto Rican diaspora that settled in the large cities of the Northeast, with New York as the classic example, and created the barrios in the process. Discursively, Agosto brought to doctoral studies, which focused on the Pauline corpus and the early Christian communities behind the letters, the travails and concerns of the barrios: the problematic of social-cultural as well as religious-ecclesial marginalization and the development of alternative modes of leadership within the Christian communities of the barrios. He was thus an ideal choice for the assignment: a Latino scholar deeply embedded in Latino/a life, with profound conscientization regarding such reality and experience, and an extensive, sustained, and sophisticated trajectory in biblical criticism in general and Latino/a criticism in particular.

The piece follows a highly focused development: an overall introduction to the proposed vision of Latino/a hermeneutics; a critical analysis of two models in this vein advanced by Latino scholars, Justo González and myself; and application of the model to two units from 1 Cor 11.

In dialogue with such earlier proposals for Latino/a biblical criticism, Agosto lays out the foundations for intercultural criticism, or a reading “through Latino eyes.” The project foregrounds and problematizes the element of the reader, as real reader, in the process of interpretation. As a result, reading—its contexts, its ways, and its findings—becomes a major part of the object of inquiry, alongside the texts and contexts of antiquity. All readers are to be highlighted and analyzed—hence Latino/a readers as well.

The approach opposes, therefore, a passive, restrictive notion of the reader: a neutral, professional agent who examines the texts—historical documents from very different social and cultural circumstances—through a variety of critical methods, which are taken to assure proper deciphering and recovery of textual meaning as well as contextual framework. Instead, the approach favors an active, expansive concept of the reader: a creative, popular or professional, agent who analyzes the texts—social and cultural documents from a quite different historical period—through an array of contemporary social-cultural filters, which, regardless of method, are seen as leaving their imprint on any process of unveiling and retrieving, whether in the reconstruction of textual meaning or the recreation of contextual framework. For Agosto, therefore, the role of Latino/as in reading the Bible, along with the social-cultural circumstances for such reading, emerges as of paramount importance in criticism.

In terms of religious-theological position, Agosto stands solidly within such a tradition of reading. While not addressing the question directly, it is clear that he affirms the authority of Scripture for Latino/a readers, but with a major twist. Thus, while he adopts a broad view of the social-cultural circumstances of the Latino/a community, it is the religious-theological dimension that he highlights above all. In his reading of 1 Corinthians, for example, all the insights from the Latino/a community brought to bear on the text are taken from this perspective. It is the Latino/a Christian communities that he has foremost in mind. At the same time, his position regarding such authority—and here is the twist—is a critical one, which situates the project decidedly toward the minimizing pole of the interpretive spectrum. Scriptural authority has to be weighed in the light of community needs and concerns, a process that sometimes will lead to affirmation and at other times to rejection of the text. Scripture, therefore, emerges as authoritative not because it represents the Word of God, valid for all times and places, but rather because it provides fundamental and guiding parameters for Christian

life, parameters that are ultimately subject to critical evaluation in terms of their liberative or limiting character for the readers in question.

As far as theoretical-methodological position is concerned, Agosto does advance a way of reading for intercultural criticism and does relate such a way to discussions regarding meaning-construction in literary studies, though in general rather than detailed fashion in both regards. First of all, reading “through Latino eyes” uses the context of Latino/a readers as point of entry into the text, insofar as all readers are said to approach the texts from their respective contexts and to find in the text what such contexts are looking for. This is evident in the reading of 1 Cor 11, as insights from the Latino/a community are brought to bear on communal issues identified among the Corinthian community. Such insights are said to shed a different light on the text. Second, such a way of reading, with its emphasis on the agency of Latino/a readers, is described as a construction of the text in interpretation in the light of the readers’ location and ideology.

This position constitutes a variation of reader-response criticism, toward the reader-dominant side of the spectrum. For Agosto, the reader does not so much activate different dimensions of the text but constructs a new “text” in the process of engagement. It is not clear, however, how much significance is allotted to the text in the process. This is not an unimportant question, for the more active the role of construction, the more fragile the notion of scriptural authority becomes. Agosto himself is keenly aware of the ramifications of his position. Intercultural criticism, he argues, is not well received among those who insist on historicizing reconstruction and recreation as “not only possible but necessary” (352). In the end, however, for him, as a Latino scholar, the introduction of the real reader in interpretation trumps any such reaction.

In terms of social-cultural position, Agosto stands in full agreement with the assessment of the Latino/a community offered by previous proposals. On the one hand, the negative dimensions may be summarized as across the board marginalization, racial-ethnic othering, and national-political bifurcation and ambiguity. On the other hand, the positive dimensions may be outlined as emphasis on communal-familial solidarity and the presence of radical diversity. It is such features that serve as both points of entry into the biblical texts and norms of judgment in the evaluation of such texts as liberative or limiting. This can be readily seen in the reading of 1 Cor 11. Some insights yield affirmation of Paul. For example, Agosto points to a feel for the “fluid complexity” of traditions in the

community's search for "identity" in "new and changing settings" on the part of "the relatively young immigrant population represented by many Latino groups" (366). In addition, he cites a ready connection with the "mistreatment" involving different formations of power within the community in light of the "otherness" of the Latino immigrant experience" (369). Other insights result in critique. Thus Agosto refers to the determination to overcome the gender limitations imposed on women in church and society alike by Latinas, who have "suffered the brunt" of patriarchal interpretation and "the cultural burden of *machismo*" (367). Similarly, he mentions the distrust for any call to "community unity in 'spiritual matters'" among Latino/as, who know all too well what it means not only to receive "the 'leftovers' of economic prosperity in U.S. society" but also to do so as "generous apportionments" (370). "Latino/a experience today," Agosto concludes, "illuminates both the liberating and limiting aspects of these Pauline texts in 1 Corinthians" (370).

Within this vision of Latino/a criticism, the role of the critic, not pursued as such, emerges as at once no different from and different from that of Latino/a readers in general. In engaging the biblical texts, the critic produces, as in the case of any other Latino/a reader, a construction of that text. Insofar as Latino/a readers, including the critic, work from a context that exhibits a number of distinctive social-cultural features, which mark the community as community, the critic brings more or less the same points of entry into the text. Further, the critic does this for the same purpose as other readers: to assess the liberative or limiting potential of the text. Yet, in such engagement, the critic stands apart as well. First, as an individual reader, the critic produces a construct of his/her own, as does any other Latino/a reader, especially given the stress on the diversity of the community. Second, as a professional reader, the critic also possesses superior expertise in comparison to Latino/a readers at large in analyzing the text as a historical document and assessing its character as authoritative for the community. These two aspects of the Latino/a critic, homogeneity and difference, remain ultimately unresolved within the vision. To put it differently, in a democratizing view of reading the Bible and evaluating its authority, what difference does the professional critic make?

Justo González (2010)—Reading with the Latino/a Community

A variation of the new genre of introductions to critical approaches, described above in the discussion of Agosto's model, begins to surface as

well in the scholarly literature—introductions to particular writings by way of readings from a variety of critical approaches. The objective is to provide a sense of interpretive diversity when different critical lenses, different methodological strategies and underlying theoretical frameworks, are brought to bear on the same text.

The overview of the various approaches follows, again with variations, the pattern of topics set by the general introductions: (1) a description of the approach, both in terms of mechanics or procedures and dynamics or foundations; (2) comparative references to other approaches, especially those represented in the volume; (3) an account of the interpretive trajectory of the approach as applied to the writing in question; (4) attention to the interdisciplinary dimensions of the approach, its discursive sources and critical conversations; and (5) analysis of texts from the writing under examination. The importance given to the various topics undergoes change in the process, as one would expect: (1) the delineation of the approach as such is not as expansive; (2) the focus of inquiry becomes more pointed throughout, given the delimitation of the object of research; and (3) the analysis of texts becomes more extensive.

The third model to be analyzed, from the pen of Justo González, appears in one such collection of critical approaches on a Gospel, *Methods for Luke*, also edited by Joel Green (2010c). This too is the first time, to the best of my knowledge, that Latino/a biblical criticism is included in this type of collection.

The volume, which forms part of a series, *Methods in Biblical Interpretation*, includes four studies in all: one on historical criticism, one on literary criticism (narrative), and two devoted to ideological readings: feminist criticism and racial-ethnic criticism. The essay by González, “A Latino Perspective” (2010), constitutes the sole entry in this last category. The collection is thus fairly narrow in scope as well as in representation, as a comparison with its companion volume on Matthew in the series readily shows.⁵ Most striking in this regard, again, is the absence of any contribution from a sociocultural perspective. Green’s introduction (2010a) is to the point here. First, he explains that by *method* he means not technique or procedure but rather “the sensibilities and commitments by which

5. The volume (Powell 2009) includes six essays: two on historical criticism; one each on literary and sociocultural approaches, and two on ideological approaches. There is, however, no overview of racial-ethnic studies in general and thus no essay on Latino/a criticism.

we engage texts" (5)⁶—that is, the mode and aim of criticism. Second, he argues that, given the "veritable smorgasbord of interpretive methods" available today, the essays chosen are, "in their own ways," "representative of major currents in the field" (6)—that is, major sensibilities and commitments.

In the case of González, Green points to the use of biography—both individual and communal—as context for and point of entry into the reading of the text. This strategy he identifies as an explicit marker of contemporary criticism: the stance that what a reader finds in a text is very much dependent on context (where that reader stands) and purpose (what that reader is seeking). Such interpretive practices and interests, he adds, parallel those adopted by other interpretive communities, by which he means, given the examples adduced, ethnic-racial or global-continental formations—African American, African, Asian American (8). Any one of these could have served, therefore, as an example for this critical category and approach. Given the limited selection of entries, above all the restricted number of contributions allotted to the ideological paradigm and the representative nature of such contributions, the choice of Latino/a biblical criticism proves again entirely unexpected, although also most welcome.

The invitation extended to González for this task is at once understandable and peculiar. It can be readily comprehended, certainly, insofar as he had already addressed the question of biblical interpretation among Latino/as in one of the early works of the Latino/a religious-theological movement and discourse, *Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes* (1996). It is odd, nonetheless, insofar as he is not a biblical critic by training but rather a church historian, and hence not altogether at home in the discursive discussions within the field since the 1970s. The choice is thus both incisive and intriguing. Two other comments are in order. González—an independent scholar for most of his life, except for a couple of early appointments at the Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico and Emory University—is a sharp and prolific scholar, with a distinguished

6. Such sensibilities and commitments involve such issues as the following: the central assumptions about meaning; the aims behind such an approach to interpretation; and the protocols of interpretation to be followed. The position is summarized as follows: "I am referring both to one's willingness and ability to show how this reading was achieved, and to the openness of interpreters to have their approach to interpretation and the results of their reading queried in relation to their coherence with the text being read" (6).

list of publications to his name, including a number of writings on biblical interpretation. Further, he has also been an activist on behalf of the Latino/a community in religious-ecclesial and academic-theological circles, with broad knowledge of the community. These various aspects of his life and work come across in this vision of Latino/a biblical criticism.

Indeed, such aspects are in evidence from the start, as he explains why he finds the protocol for development of the study problematic. This protocol calls for a threefold structure: explication of the method, discussion regarding application to the Gospel of Luke in general, and illustrative application by way of a text. Such a structure, he points out, embodies two assumptions: first, the priority of method over reading in interpretation, corresponding to a similar priority of the theoretical over the practical in theological education; second, the absence of the biographical dimension in interpretation, personal-psychological as well as social-cultural. Both assumptions, he explains, are at odds with the actual practices of Latino/a religious-ecclesial communities. To begin with, Latino/as start by doing interpretation and ministry on their own, and then move on to formal theological education and critical study of method and theory. In addition, Latino/as on interpretation on their own by drawing upon their biographical reality and experience. This critique of the protocol González deftly uses to turn the first phase on method upside down. What he does, in effect, is to theorize such actual practices as a method for interpretation, thus observing while subverting the protocol.

With respect to religious-theological stance, the model stands squarely within this tradition of reading, displaying a high, though nuanced, view of the authority of Scripture. This is evident in his theorization of the biographical dimension. This component González unpacks in terms of three factors identified as key in his own trajectory as a reader of the biblical texts: generation, denomination, and gender. All three are clearly personal-psychological in nature, but they are also deeply rooted in the social-cultural realm.

The generational element emerges as primary. González, a Cuban American, draws on national origins and immigrant status. First, as a Protestant born and raised in a dominant and preconiliar Catholic context, Scripture served a twofold role: a guide for the life of the church (worship, belief, practice) and a weapon for debate with non-Protestants. Subsequently, as an immigrant, ethnic-cultural minority in the United States, Scripture took on another role: a weapon against marginalization by the dominant society and culture. As a result, reading Scripture is described,

first, as a most serious exercise, “not just an academic or hermeneutical exercise” (116); and, second, as a charter in the struggle against marginalization, as something “contrary to the word of God” (117). At the same time, from all three factors a measure of distantiation comes to the fore. The generational factor leads to an acknowledgment that many Latino/as native to the United States, who have experienced the use of Scripture against them, are more open to seeing biblical passages as problematic and looking elsewhere for authority.

The denominational factor brings to mind the view of Scripture among Catholic Latino/as as one of several sources for theology, who thus find themselves more comfortable in critiquing difficult passages. The generic factor leads to an admission of bias in Scripture against women, a move that brings about consternation regarding its authority, but also rejoicing through the discovery of countervailing texts (such as Luke-Acts). All such reservations, which circumscribe his strong sense of scriptural authority, come across as decidedly reluctant but utterly genuine. In the end, the model may be described as one of guarded hermeneutical affirmation—Scripture, absolutely, but not blindly so.

With regard to theoretical-methodological position, González outlines a way of reading in his theorization of the practical dimension. This approach to Scripture has two components: the experiential and the communitarian. The experiential angle involves a process encompassing a number of phases (118–25). Such development is described as “spiral,” insofar as each phase in the process represents an expansion of the previous one(s). The communitarian angle presents this process as community-based throughout. The two components are thus closely interrelated.

The process has six steps: (1) “naive reading”: interpreting Scripture along the lines interpreted by others; (2) initial “suspicion”: awareness that a text may have different interpretations; (3) crucial insight: not only the production of a different reading of the text, but also a sense that such a reading comes about as a result of one’s identity and context; (4) expansion of insight: a realization that other texts may yield a similar reading, giving rise to a “conscious quest” for a new method; (5) formalization of insight: reflection on such a way of reading as a way of reading; and (6) ongoing development: refinement of such a way of reading in the light of “amplifications and corrections” derived from actual application of the method. This process takes place within a context of community gatherings and readings, carried out in the light of its experiences and in the face of its struggles (125–26). Within this communal process, some members receive and assume the

task of “bringing the community into the task of interpretation” by way of formal approaches and critical tools, but only to return to the community and continue the process of interpretation *en conjunto*.

González further delineates this way of reading by way of comparison. On the one side, it is not to be confused with fundamentalism. The naive reading of Latino/a communities lacks the agonistic edge of the fundamental reading. It does tend toward a literal reading of the text, but not by way of reaction to an enemy, liberalism. As such, it is said to constitute a source for “some of our best, most creative, and most radical readings” (119). On the other side, such a reading should be seen as close to the interpretive proposals from Latin America associated with the movement of liberation. In general terms, it is in accord with the notion of a hermeneutical circle, with its emphasis on praxis, on the reality and experience of actual practices, as leading to reflection. More particularly, it is similar to the process of seeing-judging-acting when applied to Scripture as a whole: analysis of the text in context; analysis of the text from the perspective of the community, in context; and action in context, in the light of the previous analysis, at which point the process begins again, in spiraling fashion.

For the Latino/a way of reading, therefore, fundamentalism stands as an alien intrusion, while liberation represents a kindred spirit. The key difference is the regard for context and praxis, with method growing out of context. At no time, it should be noted, does González undertake a theoretical grounding for the method outside the religious-ecclesial realm. From an academic-scholarly perspective, the method represents, to my mind, an exercise in reader-response criticism, very much within the text-dominant pole of the spectrum. Meaning lies in the text, but it is accessed differently by different readers. Thus extratextual readers, such as Latino/as, call forth, as a result of their related social-cultural and personal-psychological contexts, certain distinctive aspects of the text. It is not clear how the difference in readings produced by the different contexts would be addressed.

With respect to social-cultural stance, the model foregrounds the elements of marginalization in and justice for the community, as the theorization of both the biographical and the practical dimension shows. From a personal-psychological perspective, González reveals how he himself moved, in reading the biblical texts, from one optic of marginalization to another—from ethnic-racial, to economic, to gender, and so on. From an experiential-communitarian perspective, he points out how the focus on praxis involves not only emphasis on doing but also a grounding for such doing “on a commitment to love and justice” (123). Then, in the middle

section on application of the method to the Gospel of Luke, González lays out in greater detail the context of the Latino/a community and its ramifications for interpretation. In effect, given their multidimensional experience of marginalization (economic, cultural, racial), “Hispanic readers of Scripture,” he states, “are prompt to see economic, social, and racial-ethnic issues—often all mixed into one” (127). With regard to Luke, then, he points out how attractive the Gospel proves for Latino/as, given “its subversiveness, questioning the existing order and announcing a better one” (127). For González, such subversiveness, what Lukan scholarship has referred to traditionally as the great reversal, becomes a central theme in the whole of Luke-Acts and the focus of his own reading, for which he has recourse throughout to insights from the Latino/a community.

The task of Latino/a critics is at once straightforward and ambiguous. It is straightforward insofar as the critic is embedded in the community. As a member of the community, who shares in the fate of the community, the critic works for the community. Emerging out of and living within the community, the critic brings the community’s perspective of marginalization and justice to the reading of Scripture—a perspective forged in the history and context of the community, marked by marginalization and a search for justice. The critic does this with a view of Scripture as authoritative and in conversation with the methods and tools of criticism. Following such critical engagement with Scripture, the critic returns to the community for practical action in the light of marginalization.

At the same time, the task is ambiguous, insofar as a variety of critics, and communities, is posited. There are critics for whom Scripture is not the sole source of authority—Catholic Latino/as as well as Latino/as born in the United States. There are also critics for whom Scripture is not as authoritative, or even downright problematic—Latino/as native to the United States, for whom Scripture has been deployed as a tool of oppression, or Latinas, for whom Scripture bears a decidedly patriarchal strain. Such differences, however, are not theorized into the overall vision of Latino/a hermeneutics, so that, in the end, the Latino/a community is represented as one, as is the reading of Scripture associated with it.

Jean-Pierre Ruiz (2011)—Reading in, with, and for the Latino/a Community

A fourth model for Latino/a biblical criticism has been put forth by Jean-Pierre Ruiz. The proposal, in contradistinction to the others, forms part of

a full-fledged volume on the relationship between the biblical texts and the Latino/a communities. The work, however, is not a monograph as such—unified, progressive, and teleological from beginning to end. It is, rather, a focused collection of studies—independent in their own right, yet integrated as a whole, by way of an overarching agenda. Thus the collection sets forth a model for interpretation (chs. 1–3) and offers demonstrations of its application (chs. 4–9). The model is taken up in the first part on matters of method and theory (“Reading Strategies”). The application is developed in a second part devoted to analysis of various texts (“Looking to the Texts”), mostly biblical (four from the Hebrew Scriptures and one from the Christian Scriptures) but also one instance of historical interpretation.

The title, *Readings from the Edges: The Bible and People on the Move*, captures the endeavor well. The subtitle looks to the community side of the relationship, conveying a central vision of the Latino/a experience—a “people on the move.” The title proper picks up the textual side, introducing a fundamental strategy for approaching the Bible from the perspective of a “people on the move”—a reading “from the edges.” As a whole, therefore, the title conveys both a negative sense of difference and marginality and a positive sense of distinctiveness and insight.

For the pursuit of this project, Jean-Pierre Ruiz is eminently qualified. To begin with, as a “Nuyorican” (7)—an individual of Puerto Rican descent born in the city of New York, a member of the diaspora as a result of emigration to the United States—he forms part of the Latino/a community. He bears the legacy of a “people on the move” and possesses his own story within it. Further, as an “academic” (7)—associate professor of biblical studies and senior research fellow of the Vincentian Center for Teaching and Learning Theology at St. John’s University of New York—he is a critic by training and profession. He has extensive and sophisticated knowledge of the field as conceptualized and practiced today. Finally, as a Latino critic, he places the Latino/a community at the center of his work. This he does on both social-cultural grounds, pointing to the shared stories with the Latino/a community, and academic-scholarly ones, citing a view of scholarship as calling for “engagement with and not flight from experience” (2). The result is a closely linked vision of community and texts from an inside voice with profound investment in both regards.

The designation “people on the move” functions as the defining marker of the Latino/a experience, in light of the massive migration of Latin Americans to the United States. Its signification is expansive: the way of being of Latino/a communities in general; the character of Latino/a

religious communities in particular; and, most concretely, the lives, concerns, and interests of Latino/a religious-theological scholars. In unpacking this vision, Ruiz argues, one must attend to both the “big picture” and the “little stories,” with the former element actually entailing two levels of analysis (1). First, one must view the Latino/a migration as one of many such phenomena unleashed by the dynamics of mechanics of globalization—the many-sided and multidirectional processes of emigration, travel, and immigration at work throughout all continents of the globe. Second, and more important, one must examine it, as with all other variations, in terms of its particular context and local features. Third, and more important still, in such analysis one must pay attention to the countless “little stories” of the people caught up in such a process, so that those “at the edges of society” suffer no further marginalization, as their voices and faces disappear and are represented by others.

The designation “reading from the edges” signals a move beyond traditional strategies for bringing the Bible to bear on Latino/a migration: appealing to texts that deal directly, in one way or another, with migration; approaching the Bible as the unitary and unambiguous Word of God and hence as normative foundation for Christian thought and action on all matters related to migration. The strategy proposed, Ruiz explains, takes up a different path. First, it looks at texts “that are rarely marshaled in service of arguments on behalf of people on the move or of public policy reform regarding immigrants and refugees” (6)—the “little stories.” Second, it examines texts by way of critical dialogue, with emphasis on diversity of meaning and with justice and dignity as driving principles—a reading “around the edges” (6).

In analyzing the Latino/a experience of a “people on the move,” therefore, the critic must keep in mind the comparative dimension of migration as global, the particular dimension of the Latino/a migration as local, and the personal dimension of Latino/as at the margins. Further, in analyzing biblical texts “from the edges,” the critic must look at texts of all sorts, eschewing in so doing any adherence to a view of the Bible as presenting “a single voice” (7) and subscribing instead to a vision of “complex negotiation” throughout (8). Both sides of the relationship communities-texts are thus closely related. The emphasis on the “little stories” of the community, produced by the “edges of society,” corresponds to the emphasis on the “little stories” of the Bible, to be approached by reading “around the edges.” The focus throughout is thus on restoration from marginalization and foregrounding of diversity.

From a religious-theological angle, Ruiz's proposal shows deep roots in this tradition of reading. First, he identifies himself as a member of the circle of "Latino/a theologians and biblical scholars," and, indeed, it is with them that he engages in critical conversation throughout. This circle reveals a very prominent Catholic dimension, but it is ecumenical in reach as well. Such engagement he situates within the tradition of a *teología de conjunto* (doing constructive theology in common), for which it is not the individual thinker but the community of scholars that matters. It is a tradition marked, as he puts it, by "the shared energy of intense discussions and of the sort of in-depth analysis that is only possible in an atmosphere of deep trust and shared commitment" (ix). Second, he characterizes the work of critical and theological scholarship in general, and that of the Latino/a circle in particular, in terms of "ecclesial vocation" (8, 23). Such work is placed thereby at the intersection of church and academy, indeed, "at the heart of the church for the sake of its mission to witness to the goodness and the justice of God in the world" (x). Lastly, in keeping with his self-identification, he views such work as perforce interdisciplinary, although *intra muros*, with a model of the various theological disciplines as working together on issues and projects having to do with the Latino/a community. Further, such collaboration means leaving behind a traditional view of criticism as providing raw data, toward "constructive self-critical discourse" across disciplinary boundaries—in effect, ideological analysis of the different disciplinary discourses, assumptions and findings alike, by all on all sides.

Despite such explicit and thorough foundations within a broad religious-theological framework, and the importance assigned to the biblical texts and their interpretation therein, the view of the Bible that underlies the proposal is considerably diminished. It is not that the Bible ceases to be authoritative and normative, for it so remains. The problematic is, rather, that what the Bible has to say cannot be determined in and of itself: its meaning is neither self-evident nor stable. As such, it cannot be invoked and deployed without a sense of ambiguity or a duty to pass judgment. Such a weakening turn of biblical authority and normativity is a direct result of the critical position adopted.

In terms of theoretical-methodological point of view, the proposal is quite forthcoming. Its central tenets have already been noted: diversity of meaning and need for critical dialogue. These are duly unpacked. Ruiz dispenses with any notion of criticism as critical search: exclusive orientation toward the texts, belief in unitary and unambiguous meaning in the Bible

as the Word of God, a stance of unquestioned acceptance of such meaning. Instead, he opts for a view of criticism as critical encounter: concerned with both texts and readers; a vision of meaning in the Bible as not only diverse in and of itself but also multidimensional, given the agency attributed to readers as well as the role attributed to context in such agency; a stance of critical evaluation regarding texts and readers alike, taking into consideration context and perspective throughout.

The strategy of reading “from the edges” emerges, therefore, as a process of “complex negotiation” with texts and readers, “mapping relationships between texts and their contexts, between readers and their contexts, and between texts and readers across contexts” (8). Ruiz characterizes it as a reading *with* others or aloud, *en voz alta* (50–53). It regards no one interpretation as ultimate, attends to all interpretations with a mixture of respect and discernment, and remains always open to revision. It clearly lies toward the reader-dominant pole of reader response, given its strong emphasis on construction, contextualization, and ideology.

From a social-cultural angle, Ruiz’s position is decidedly activist. Its central principle has already been pointed out as well: the invocation of justice and dignity as guiding principles. This foundation is well developed. To begin with, its origins are traced to the early influence of liberation theology upon him, which has led to the conviction that “theology can make a difference when it is deeply engaged in the lived daily reality of ordinary people, including those on the margins of society” (ix). In addition, its mode is shaped and mandated by the reality of the Latino/a community as a “people on the move,” especially the experiences of its countless “little voices.” For this situation he makes the words of Arturo Bañuelas, a fellow member of the Latino/a circle of critics and theologians, his own.⁷ On the one hand, the reasons for being “on the move” are unsparingly outlined: extreme poverty, unemployment, political and military corruption, government instability—for all of which the United States is said to bear much responsibility. On the other hand, the consequence of being “on the move” is named outright: an attack on the *Latinidad* of all Latino/as. Finally, its élan is described as openly political, driven by the conviction that theological discourse must appropriate, in the public sphere, “the concerns of our

7. Bañuelas is a pastor-activist in El Paso, Texas, and a constructive theologian with whom Ruiz crossed paths in Rome during the course of doctoral studies at the Gregorian University. This encounter of two Latinos “on the move” he offers as the moment of conception for the volume—“a ¡Sí, se puede! moment” (1).

brothers and sisters on the move" (4). It is such solidarity with the community that drives the critical process of "complex negotiations" involving texts and readers and forms the core of the religious-theological optic.

In all this the legacy of liberation theology is evident; at the same time, a critique is offered. First, while the principle of the preferential option for the poor and the strategy of reading the Bible with the people are lauded, liberation, Ruiz argues, has tended to reify both the poor, as a dichotomous Other, and the biblical texts, as the sole and unambiguous sources of liberation. Reading "from the edges" seeks to move beyond both perceived limitations. With respect to the former, the flattening of the poor, the strategy emphasizes the "lived daily experience" of the "little voices"—"always situated, always specific, always concrete" (33). With respect to the latter, the exclusivity and flattening of the Scriptures, the strategy makes a twofold move. To get beyond biblicism, it argues for popular religion as a source—the religion of the poor, especially, as "the 'canon' of the Word-made-flesh" (33). To move past homogenization, it argues for leaving behind the initial models of correlation and correspondence, whereby present and past are simplistically related to one another—the former, by ignoring the problematic of production ("the complexity of its generative matrix"); the latter, by bypassing the problematic of reception ("imposing *one* reading ... as normative).

Within this vision of Latino/a criticism, the role of the critic is directly entertained. The critic is called upon to be a public intellectual. There are actually two dimensions to this role. One is to move beyond an overriding or exclusive concentration on the world of the texts, the world of antiquity, and the study of this world in formalist and apolitical fashion—what Ruiz calls an "academic esotericism that fetishizes texts and reduces biblical scholars to irrelevance as 'tribal theologians'" (52). The aim is an approach to the texts as imbricated, in complex and conflicted fashion, in society and culture, both in terms of production and reception. The other is to shun the sort of engagement that focuses on self-promotion and self-enrichment—what Ruiz characterizes as "star quality ... engaging in high profile (and high-profit) popularization" (35). The goal is to embody an engagement that is marked by political awareness and responsibility and guided by an interventionist agenda of justice for all in society and culture, transhistorically and cross-culturally. For the Latino/a critic, this call demands a sense of grounding in, conversation with, and commitment to the Latino/a community. Such grounding demands, in turn, taking on and addressing the problematic of the community as a "people on the move,"

in local and global fashion, with attention to all voices, especially those of the people. Such addressing entails, in turn, a religious-theological and intertheological reading of the Bible that foregrounds the diversity of the texts, the multidimensional character of interpretation, and the ideological critique of texts and interpretations alike.

M. Daniel Carroll R[odas] (2013)—Reading in and from the Hispanic Diaspora

The most recent model for Latino/a biblical criticism is offered by M. Daniel Carroll R., who is Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary in Littleton, Colorado, and adjunct professor at El Seminario Teológico Centroamericano (SETECA) in Ciudad de Guatemala (Guatemala City), the capital of Guatemala. The model was formulated within the framework of a project on global hermeneutics sponsored by the Institute of Biblical Research. The institute is a learned organization, formally launched in 1973, for evangelical Christian scholars in biblical studies (OT studies and NT studies) and related fields of study. It holds an annual meeting, scheduled immediately prior to the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, with a program organized around a central theme. In 2011 the topic chosen was “Global Readings,” with a focus on the advent and spread of biblical criticism on a worldwide scale. The proceedings were subsequently published in *Global Voices: Reading the Bible in the Majority World*, edited by Craig Keener and Carroll R. (2013a).

In the introduction, the editors lay out the objective, rationale, and background for the project (2013b). The aim was to bring biblical scholarship from outside the West—Africa, Asia, and Latin America—to the attention of scholars in and of the West. The reason for so doing was to raise the awareness of Western scholars regarding the existence of such production and perspectives, given their continued focus on their own ecclesial and critical concerns, to the neglect of “the needs of the global church” (1). The context was explained in terms of two developments. First, the editors point to the sharp expansion of Christianity outside the West over the course of the twentieth century: non-Western Christians in general now account for close to 65 percent of the global church; evangelicals in particular outside the West now outnumber their counterparts in the West by four to five times. Second, the editors refer to the importance of the insights brought to bear by such scholarship on the biblical texts: unfolding dimensions of meaning bypassed, downplayed, or spiritualized

by traditional scholarship. In the end, the editors set forth a vision for the future: bringing together scholars from throughout the world, from both the West and the “Majority World,” to engage in “fruitful work and constructive conversations” in reading the Bible (3).

Toward this end, invitations were issued to scholars from across these continents, and from a variety of Christian traditions, to serve as presenters and respondents—ten in all, five in each category. Among the presenters was Carroll R., who also served as the keynote speaker for the gathering. As such, his study, “Reading the Bible through Other Lenses: New Vistas from a Hispanic Diaspora Perspective” (2013), has a twofold dimension. On the one hand, as keynote speaker, he addresses the issue of and need for “multiethnic readings” of the Bible in the light of contemporary global realities. On the other hand, as continental representative, he brings the voice of Latin America to the project. With regard to global realities, Carroll R. moves beyond the question of growth outside the West, duly emphasized nonetheless, to introduce the problematic of such growth inside the West, the result of massive migration from the Global South to the Global North and the consequent establishment of diaspora communities throughout the world. It is this development, he specifies, that constitutes the focus of his essay (7).⁸ With regard to Latin America, it is the optic of its diasporic trajectory to and presence in the United States that he brings to the fore, and hence the voice of Hispanic or Latino/a Americans.

This is a task for which Carroll R. is eminently suited, given his own diasporic experience, his explicit self-designation as “half-Guatemalan” (2), and his recourse to and integration of such experience and self-identification in his scholarship. This political-ethnic context he lays out in an earlier volume on immigration and the church (Carroll R. 2008) and is worth summarizing here.

To begin with, he presents his familial-personal background: a child of a mother from Guatemala and a father from the United States, who is born and grows up in the United States but who spends summers in Guatemala, with his maternal relatives, through childhood and adolescence. Then he turns to his initial professional experience: a long tenure as professor of Old Testament at the Seminario Teológico Centroamericano (SETECA) in Ciudad de Guatemala (1982–1996). He sets these years in

8. On this development, Carroll R. cites the ongoing research of Philip Jenkins (2011).

broad social-cultural perspective. This was a time of crisis in Guatemala, and indeed throughout all of Central America, caught as it was in the struggle between East and West through their surrogates in the region. It was therefore a time of devastation, violence, and displacement. Lastly, he describes his subsequent professional career: a professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary from 1996 on, while continuing to spend time and teach in Guatemala on a regular basis.

Carroll R. thus portrays himself as deeply immersed in the diaspora of Latin America. On the one hand, he is a product of it: a “hybrid” individual, bilingual and bicultural, who strides “the majority culture and the Hispanic culture,” with “care for both” yet with “deepest longings for my Guatemalan roots” (2008, 19). On the other hand, he is a witness to it: a firsthand observer, on both sides of the border, of massive migration and the systemic-structural causes behind such a process of emigration and immigration.

At the heart of the model, there lies, to begin with, a vision of the Christian faith as diasporic (16). Such a vision is grounded in the Bible itself. First, it is “forged” in diaspora. Thus Genesis represents Abraham, “the father of our faith,” as a migrant from Ur to Canaan, where he becomes a “perpetual outsider in that landless existence.” Second, it describes, metaphorically, “the life of all Christians.” Thus 1 Peter represents believers as “strangers in a strange land.” Such a vision also captures, materially, the life of Christians in diasporic communities today, marked as it is by similar “vulnerability and dependence” in all realms of existence. Such realities and experiences, Carroll R. argues, open up distinctive dimensions of and insights into the Bible.

In addition, the model also constitutes a thoroughly interdisciplinary exercise. A variety of discursive resources are invoked, which provide solid theorization—literary testimonies, social attitudes, theoretical frameworks. For example, accounts involving radical situations of survival, penned by migrants who have crossed the border, are viewed as shedding light on the deception involving Abram and Sarai in Egypt, where they have migrated as a result of famine (Gen 12:10–20). Similarly, the bilingual and bicultural practices of migrants in the United States, as experienced by many Latino/as in the country, are seen as bringing a revealing perspective on the figure of Joseph in Egypt, a “bilingual, cultural hybrid” within the plan of God for the people of God. Finally, he perceives the coping mechanisms of immigrants in new cultural contexts, as outlined by assimilation theory, as shedding light on various

dimensions of the character of Ruth the Moabite. Thus the dynamics and mechanics of contemporary migration, through the eyes of Latinos and Latinas, can open up such forces in the biblical texts as well. In so doing, Carroll R. declares, “because the text lives, so can we,” for “the text walks with us in our pilgrimage of faith” (26).

In terms of religious-theological stance, it is clear that the model lies very much within this tradition of interpretation. This is evident from Carroll R.’s personal as well as professional context: this is a model grounded and forged in the ambit of evangelical Christianity. First, the host project, as detailed above, emanates from and is directed at the circles of evangelical Christian biblical scholarship. Further, both professional affiliations have been at evangelical institutions: SETECA is associated with the Evangelical Association of Theological Education for Latin America (AETAL), while Denver Seminary is a nondenominational evangelical seminary that subscribes to the Statements of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals. Lastly, a recent outline of attitudes toward the Bible among majority world Christians, both at home and in the diaspora, is cited with approval: a high view of scriptural authority; an embrace of supernatural events, such as miracles and visions; and a close identification with the political and economic realities of the Hebrew Bible.⁹ Such working principles, he argues, “bring different and valid insights into the biblical text that deserve to be heard” (2013, 7). As such, the model itself subscribes to a high view of scriptural authority: a reading of the Bible, as the introduction puts it, with “a common commitment to Scripture’s unique role in communicating God’s message,” while allowing for and insisting on the need for “different lenses” in the discernment of that message (Keener and Carroll R. 2013b, 3).

Such a stance is sharply differentiated from another approach to Scripture with a focus on diaspora, postcolonial biblical criticism. Such criticism, Carroll R. argues, problematizes the biblical texts themselves, foregrounding what are perceived as “inherent ideological shortcomings” in the texts or challenging the “hegemonic status” of the texts for Christian communities (2013, 9–10). Although such an approach is acknowledged as raising “challenging questions,” it is not what he has in mind, given its “problematic” “philosophical underpinnings” (11). What the model seeks to problematize involves, rather, the reading and reception

9. Here again the work of Philip Jenkins (2006) is cited.

of the biblical texts: the contribution that multiethnic readings, including those of the diaspora, make to biblical criticism and the appropriation of the texts in such communities. What one finds, therefore, is a hermeneutics of affirmation, the unquestioned and unquestionable authority of Scripture, modified by way of imperative expansion in terms of the provenance, the faces and voices, of critics approaching Scripture in search of God's message.

With respect to theoretical-methodological position, the model does not elaborate an explicit theoretical grounding. What it does espouse may be described, I would argue, as a variation of reader-response criticism within the text-dominant pole. Concerning the reader, the model highlights the agency of extratextual readers in the process of interpretation, with emphasis on the social-cultural location of such readers. Carroll R. explicitly dismisses, as an evangelical, any claims to a view of criticism as "objective observation"—"detached from and unaffected by social standing, economic status, ethnicity, culture, and gender" (2013, 11). Contextualization of readers is thus of the essence in interpretation. Concerning the text, the model asserts the priority of the text as the repository of meaning, with a view of such meaning as multidimensional, so that various dimensions of it are perceived and activated by different readers in the light of their different social-cultural locations. Contextualization of texts is hence of the essence in interpretation as well. Such contextualization, however, will assume different dimensions by virtue of the different reader contextualizations brought upon it.

From this perspective, it follows that scholars from outside the West will call forth and deploy different readings than their colleagues inside the West. It follows as well, given the novelty of such non-Western readings and the ever-greater number of critics behind them, that Western critics should become aware of such expanding production and varying perspectives. From the religious-theological perspective outlined above, it follows likewise that non-Western scholars are calling forth and deploying new and significant insights into the unique communication of God's message in the Bible. It follows as well that the desideratum should be—beyond greater awareness—a truly global dialogue among Christians involving multiethnic readings of the Bible, toward an ever-richer discernment of the message of God.

In terms of social-cultural stance, the model allows in principle for any number of topics to be pursued by way of multiethnic readings of the Bible, while settling on the phenomenon of migration as a foremost

problematic of our times, especially given its significance for Latin America and its diaspora in the United States. Global migration is presented as the result of the forces of economic globalization, which, whether looked upon as a positive or negative development overall, has brought about the dislocation and relocation of millions of people both within and across nation-states. Such diaspora communities are characterized as “needy” and “marginalized” (9). This has been the experience of millions of Latin Americans as well, who have left their respective homelands and settled throughout the United States. Carroll R. thus focuses on a particular sector, though quite large, of the Latino/a population, those who have arrived in the country—with or without documentation—over the last few decades of spreading globalization, and the particular markers of this population, their situation of poverty and peripherization.

Such migrants, he points out, have already brought about crucial changes in the country, especially in terms of demographics. A great many of them, moreover, are Christian and have already brought about significant developments as well within their respective ecclesial bodies. In both regards, they shall continue to do so in unremitting fashion, raising a host of challenges, widespread and far-reaching, in the process, which neither the country nor the church can afford to ignore. For Carroll R., one such challenge involves biblical interpretation: the attention to the appropriation and reading of the Bible by such communities, in the face of their location in the social-cultural periphery. Thus, he asks, “What is it like to read the OT from a Hispanic diaspora perspective?” (2013, 16). In other words, what insights into God’s message does such a diasporic location uncover and activate in the Bible? Such is precisely what the model is designed to bring forth.

Such, then, is the task envisioned for Latino/a critics. Such a task must be carried out in a spirit of collaboration and dialogue at all levels: with fields of studies across the religious-theological spectrum, with fields of studies across the scholarly-academic world at large, and with churches across the religious-ecclesial spectrum. Such a task also makes demands on traditional critics. It calls for a spirit of “hermeneutical charity” (14) toward the project of multiethnic reading of the Bible made imperative by global Christianity; respect for and patience toward Latino/a interpretations—and, ultimately, all readings of the global majority, at home or in the diaspora—by way of genuine hospitality and active engagement. It is, after all, a “serious academic exercise” that opens up the message of God.

CRITICAL COMPARISON OF THE PROPOSALS: DIMENSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The preceding trajectory of introjection and assertion reveals the increasing presence, activity, and recognition of Latino/a biblical criticism in the field of studies. It brings out the variety of faces and voices among Latino/a critics, a diversity that makes itself felt in every aspect of analysis: from context of publication, through personal background and critical stance, to critical mission. It also brings out the similarities that exist among such voices and faces in the conceptualization and articulation of critical stance and mission, as they look toward the future. By way of conclusion, I should like to summarize, as a critical mapping for the future, the similarities and the diversity that emerge from the ongoing trajectory thus far. I shall do so by comparing the religious-theological, theoretical-methodological, and social-cultural dimensions and implications of the various proposals.

A comment is imperative here. There is one absence in this trajectory that is striking, especially at this particular point in time in the field of studies: the faces and voices of Latina scholars. For some time now, the persistent dearth of Latina critics has been noted and regretted within the circle of Latino/a critics as a whole. Such absence is particularly felt at a moment when visions for the future are sought and elaborated. This is a lacuna that must be remedied, but one that will not be at all easy to reverse, given the many factors that militate against it, whether it be in the field of studies as such, in the Latino/a communities themselves, or in the dominant society-culture at large. It is a lacuna that this project has sought, in its own limited way, to address.

Critical Stance and Mission: Religious-Theological Dimension

All proposals are grounded, howsoever expressed, in the religious-ecclēsial tradition of Christianity and subscribe to a religious-theological reading of the Bible. They all have in mind the Latino/a religious communities, which they regard—implicitly or explicitly—as reflections of the Latino/a communities, and they all view the biblical texts as authoritative, as Scripture, for such communities. At the same time, a spectrum of positions on the nature of biblical authority is evident: toward one side, a heightened view of the Bible as the Word of God; toward the other, a lessened view of the Bible as a constitutive yet problematic component of the Christian tradition. All proposals adopt the rhetorical tactic of retrieving the

religious-theological dimension, a variation of the strategy of interpretive contextualization in minority poetics (Segovia 2009, 293–94).

At the strong end, I would place Carroll R. Here Scripture is viewed as the message of God for the world—a message beyond fault or challenge—and hence as the foundation for Christian beliefs and practices. Different individuals or groups in different times and places, however, grasp this message of God, rich beyond measure as it is, in different ways. These different insights into and appropriations of the Word of God are to be sought and treasured. At the soft end, I would situate Agosto and Ruiz. Here Scripture is viewed as subject to critical analysis by its readers, a process that can yield affirmation or rejection. For Agosto it is community concerns and needs that ultimately determine authority; for Ruiz it is the process of evaluation required of critical readers.

I see both González and Rivera Rodriguez as occupying the middle of the spectrum. González leans toward the strong end, with a view of the Bible as the guide for the whole of ecclesial life, but with reservations. These come as a result of his bow to the sensitivities of various formations of Latino/a Christian readers: those who, as the target of attacks based on the Bible, problematize such authority; those who accept Scripture as one among several sources of Christian theology; and those who have highlighted the bias against women present in the texts. Rivera Rodriguez leans toward the milder pole, given its emphasis on readers. The diasporic filter of reading brought to bear on the texts searches for diaspora in the Bible and appropriates such findings in the light of contemporary situations of diaspora, giving diasporic readers leeway in this process of discernment and integration.

Critical Stance and Mission: Theoretical-Methodological Dimension

All proposals offer a way of reading the Bible, but not all outline the mechanics involved in such a way of reading. Not all proposals, moreover, provide an explicit and informed exposition of such a reading in terms of a theory of interpretation, pursuing the relationship between the past and the present, the ancient texts and contexts and the contemporary readers and contexts. Sufficient information is given, however, to allow for a fair description of the different models. Approaching it from the perspective of text-reader interaction and the creation of meaning, a spectrum of opinion readily emerges. Toward one side, the text is viewed as dominant, with readers as receivers, actively engaged in the process; toward the other

side, the reader is seen as dominant, with texts as indeterminate sources, actively constructed by readers. Throughout, the Latino/a religious communities function as point of entry, thus exemplifying the rhetorical tactic of appealing to contextual enlightenment, within the strategy of interpretive contextualization (Segovia 2009, 292–93).

At the objectivist pole, I would locate Carroll R. as well as González. Neither advances a theoretical grounding in academic-scholarly terms. While both outline a way of reading, González does so in greater detail, along biographical rather than formalist lines. The two positions are quite close. While Carroll R. speaks in collective terms, González introduces a strong personal dimension within the collective.

For Carroll R. the Bible functions as the conveyor of God's message to the world, to be received and embraced by readers. Readers attain different glimpses into God's message, given different social-cultural contexts. The result is a view of meaning as virtually inexhaustible, as God speaks to readers across time and culture. What Latino/a readers bring to this message is a situation of diaspora, which they access through a variety of means drawn from their repertoire—testimonies, practices, mechanisms. For González the Bible serves as the guide for the church, to be hearkened to and appropriated by readers. Readers derive different directions from God's guide, given different religious-ecclesial contexts, within which they stand as individuals in community. It is here that González introduces his biographical-developmental method of reading: the emergence, expansion, and formalization of personal insight into the biblical texts, in the light of varying personal-communitarian trajectories and exigencies. The result is also a view of meaning emerges as virtually inexhaustible, since it is a guide for churches across time and culture. What Latino/a readers bring to this guide is their situation of marginalization, which they access as individuals in community.

At the subjectivist pole, I would locate Agosto and Ruiz. Both present a theoretical grounding with reference to academic-scholarly criticism. Both also outline a way of reading. In both regards Ruiz proves more expansive. The two positions are quite close. While Agosto refrains from commenting on the text as text, Ruiz does, stressing the multidimensionality of meaning in texts. Further, while Agosto does not pursue the question of dealing with other readings, Ruiz does.

For Agosto, readers play a key role in interpretation, leaving behind in their readings the filters of their respective social-cultural contexts. This is true of all readers, professional or popular. It is thus true of Latino/a

readers as well. Meaning, therefore, involves construction on the part of readers. Latino/a readers, coming from situations of marginalization, bring such issues as entries into the text. For Ruiz, readers play no less crucial role in interpretation, yielding a multitude of readings that reflect the influence of context and perspective. This applies to all readers, including Latino/a readers, be they professional or popular. There is no meaning outside interpretation. Latino/a readers produce meaning, as individuals, from the overall perspective of a situation of migration. Such diversity of interpretation calls for critical dialogue with other readers and readings at all times.

Lastly, I regard Rivera Rodriguez as standing at the center of the spectrum, closer to the subjectivist end. He does have recourse to an academic-theoretical grounding, although not to a theory of interpretation as such, but rather to the discourse of the diaspora. From the optic of the diaspora, then, he outlines a specific way of reading. Since Latino/a religious communities share a situation of diaspora, he advances a set of corresponding reading strategies of the Bible, to be applied to both texts and readers. Latino/a readers are to examine and evaluate representations of the process of diaspora, assessments of life in the diaspora, and ideal visions of the diaspora. Such reading strategies imply a diversity of opinions and critique, thus bringing him closer to the reader-dominant pole.

Critical Stance and Mission: Social-Cultural Dimension

All proposals—as already noted in the theoretical-methodological summary—tie biblical criticism directly to the Latino/a religious communities, both by way of social-cultural location and ideological-political agenda. In terms of context, first of all, criticism is not viewed as just an individualist affair, nor is it construed as a strictly academic-scholarly one. It is always, in some way, a venture tied to the community—carried out from within the community and in dialogue with the community. Similarly, in terms of agenda, criticism is not seen as simply a formalist or idealist affair. It is always, in some way, conceived as an activist, materialist endeavor—carried out on behalf of the community. The various positions are quite similar in both regards. A spectrum of positions can be drawn nonetheless with regard to the scope of criticism: from the expansive to the circumscribed.

This sense of community embeddedness and commitment constitute a rhetorical strategy of minority criticism that I failed to name and

theorize in my analysis of its poetics. While akin to interpretive contextualization, it goes beyond it. While not unlike interruptive stocktaking, it goes beyond it as well. It might be characterized as materialist commitment: engaging worlds. Such strategy has to do with the mission and vocation of the critic in the various religious-ecclesial, political-national, and geopolitical-systemic realms or worlds of context and activity.

Toward the more encompassing end, I would situate Rivera Rodriguez and Ruiz. Both view the Latino/a communities in the light of global developments; both also espouse a highly engaged position for criticism in society and culture. Rivera Rodriguez sees the Latino/a religious congregations, like the Latino/a diasporic communities, as the result of a massive global migration brought about by the dynamics of violence and economics. They constitute communities of the nonprivileged, who undergo all the struggles of marginalization. Within such circumstances, the role of criticism involves comparative analysis of diaspora and communal advocacy, with justice and well-being as a goal. Ruiz views the Latino/a communities, including the churches, as one example of the multiple processes of migration at work in the world, unleashed by the forces of economic globalization. These are caused by profound social travails and lead to keen marginalization. Against this background, the role of criticism entails multidimensional analysis of migration and the pursuit of justice and dignity for the communities, above all for those at the edge. While calling for critical attention to the global framework, neither charts a path for so doing, although Rivera Rodriguez does advocate joining hands with similar endeavors among other diasporic communities in the country.

Toward the more focused end I would place Agosto and González. Neither stresses the global dimension behind the presence of the Latino/a communities in the country; both do adopt a highly engaged position for criticism in society and culture. Agosto emphasizes the twofold character of the communities: on the one hand, marginalization as others within the country; on the other hand, diversity and solidarity within the community. Given such a situation, the role of criticism is to bring these features of communal life to bear on the texts, in order to determine, with the betterment of the community in mind, what bears adopting and what bears leaving behind. González stresses the experience of the communities: sites of multidimensional marginalization and, as such, venues for the exercise of love and justice. Given such conditions, the role of criticism is to search the texts with marginalization and justice in mind. How such a

task relates to the world in general or to other marginalized communities is not pursued.

At the center, I see Carroll R., with a clear tilt toward the encompassing side. The Latino/a communities, within which are to be found the religious communities, are placed against the background of global migration in general and Latin American migration in particular, set off by the dynamics of economic globalization. Their situation in the country is also viewed as marked by poverty and marginalization. Within such circumstances, the role of criticism, while activist in nature, is seen as focusing on the religious-ecclesial realm. It calls for attention to the insights that such communities discover in the Bible, with their ramifications for interpretation and church alike. Criticism thus inserts the needs and insights of migrants—the vulnerable and the dependent—into the global church and its pilgrimage with the Bible. A connection to the global framework behind migration in social-cultural terms is not pursued.

A FINAL COMMENT

The similarities shared by these visions of and projects for Latino/a criticism are evident; no less evident is the diversity that prevails among such similarities. All proposals embrace the religious-theological tradition of reading the Bible, but they do so with varying views of biblical authority. All ascribe a role to readers in interpreting the Bible, but they do so with differing degrees of agency. All posit the community as the foundation, optic, and objective of interpretation—imbued by an overriding awareness of marginalization, a clarion call for solidarity and liberation, and an unwavering appeal to ideals of social justice—but they do so with varying shades of attention to the social-cultural imbrications of the community in the world. A critical mapping for the future is thus well laid out.

In the end, this mapping also yields a vision of the Latino/a critic as a public figure not only in the Latino/a community but also beyond it—in the religious-ecclesial realm, the academic-scholarly field of studies, and the social-cultural world at large. In so doing, the mapping further yields a vision of how minoritized critics approach biblical interpretation as a discursive framework, among others, within the overall dialectical framework of dominant-minority formations and relations and the process of minoritization in the country.

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SBL Press