Theologizing *Latinamente*: Had Anselm Known Us!

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After a historical and cultural grounding of Prosper of Aquitaine's lex orandi, lex credendi *and of Anselm of Canterbury's notion that theology is* fides quarens intellectum, *this article examines the importance of constructing an Episcopal Latinoa theology that is clearly validated by the academy but whose most important validation comes from the people who are the church.* Teología de conjunto *(or* teología en conjunto*) demands and expects theologians' grounding location to be within* lo cotidiano *of our people. To theologize* latinamente, *therefore, is a movement, a contextual perspective, and a methodological approach to theologizing within Christian theology, distinguished by a cultural, critical, contextual, justice-seeking, and noninnocent interpretation of Scripture, tradition and doctrine, society and church, and history. It is intent on acknowledging and honoring Latinoa cultures, histories, and stories as legitimate and necessary sources of Christian theology.*

Después de una fundamentación histórica y cultural de la idea de Próspero de Aquitania, lex orandi, lex credendi *y de Anselmo de Canterbury, que la teología* es fides quarens intellectum, *este artículo examina la importancia de construir una teología latinoa episcopal que esté claramente validada por la academia, pero cuya validación más importante proviene de las personas que son la iglesia. La teología de conjunto (o teología en conjunto) exige y espera que la ubicación básica de los teólogos se encuentre dentro de lo cotidiano de nuestra gente. Por lo tanto, teologizar latinamente es un movimiento, una perspectiva contextual y un enfoque metodológico para la teología dentro de la teología cristiana, que se distingue por una interpretación cultural, crítica, contextual, de búsqueda de justicia y no inocente de las Escrituras, la tradición y la doctrina, la sociedad y la iglesia, y la historia. Su intención es reconocer y honrar las culturas, e historias latinoas como fuentes legítimas y necesarias de la teología cristiana.*

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As we look into the future of The Episcopal Church, we must begin by recognizing (perhaps unexpectedly for some) that Latinoas[1] are not just knocking at the door—they already are part of, and have been part of, the Episcopal community. And if Latinoas are part of the body of Christ in The Episcopal Church, then The Episcopal Church is *already* praying, thinking, witnessing, and living the faith *latinamente*. But is it theologizing *latinamente*? Does The Episcopal Church seek to understand the Christian faith *latinamente*?[2]

There are two well-known insights, from many centuries ago, that have greatly impacted the Western Christian theological tradition and the very understanding of theology, as it developed in what today we might call, broadly, the "Western Catholic" way of being Christian and of thinking about Christianity. The authors of these two insights are Prosper of Aquitaine (from the fifth century) and Anselm of Canterbury (from the eleventh). Prosper's insight is that *lex orandi, lex credendi*, and Anselm's that theology is *fides quaerens intellectum*. Both insights are deceptively simple, and both stand on a number of cultural and social assumptions that are not tenable, and never have been.

But before I go any further, I remind the reader that no one thinks, listens, or speaks outside of contexts.[3] I am a theologian, with all that implies. I am also a member of an ethnic, cultural community—like all human beings. And like all human beings, I cannot pretend to bracket my cultural reality while I think, write, or speak from within that reality. Therefore, I will be herein reflecting (inescapably) from within my Latinoa (Cuban American) cultural reality, just as the readers will be reading (also inescapably) within theirs. Don't

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[1] I choose to employ the term *Latinoa* to indicate gender inclusivity, nonbinarity, and cultural identity in a manner that is neither imposed from outside the identified community nor a self-colonizing tool designed to engage the outsider while disregarding the cultural processes of the people identified. I will use *Latina* when only referring to women, and *Latino* when only referring to men.

[2] The present text is a slightly modified version of my paper, read at the Seminary of the Southwest (Austin, TX), during a 2018 gathering of theologians and pastoral agents reflecting on how to "theologize *latinamente*" in The Episcopal Church.

[3] Latinoa theologians have written extensively on contexts and contextualizations as inescapable, as well as limiting and enlightening perspectives. See, for example, C. M. Nanko-Fernández, "*Lo Cotidiano* as Locus Theologicus," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. O. Espín (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 15–33; O. Espín, *Grace and Humanness: Theological Reflections Because of Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), esp. 51–79.

assume, however, that my remarks here are (because of my cultural contextuality) any less universal or more particular than yours—because unless the readers claim divinity for themselves, they are just as bound by their specific cultural contextualities and limitations as I am by mine, and their statements are just as universal and as particular as mine. The days of cultural naiveté (and of naive imperialism), I hope, are beginning to stay behind us. I am also spouse, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather; sibling, son, grandson, cousin, and uncle; friend, colleague, and neighbor, as well as several other roles we have in our society. Furthermore, I am writing as a Western Catholic Christian, which refers to a manner of understanding and living Christianity that developed in, and became mostly associated with, the Western European world. After the sixteenth century, Western Catholic Christianity accompanied the colonizing, imperial movements of Western European nations. Consequently, by Western Catholic, I do not mean a denominational body, but a manner of living and understanding that may be found today in the Anglican Communion, in the Roman Catholic Communion, in the Old Catholic Communion, in the churches of the World Lutheran Federation, and arguably in other ecclesial bodies, as well.

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi

Prosper of Aquitaine is a somewhat strange historical character who lived in the fifth century CE.[4] A disciple of Augustine of Hippo, Prosper was not liked by most of his contemporaries, but he did occasionally have a brilliant intuition or two. *Lex orandi, lex credendi* ("the law of praying [is] the law of believing") is supposed to be one of them.

Lex orandi, lex credendi cannot be taken as a self-evident and universally valid dictum, because theology, in actual practice, does not happen in the skies, and neither does praying or believing. Although theological studies deal with theoretical constructs and ideas, theology does not craft itself out of ideas, theories, or abstractions. Let me underline that theology is crafted by real people in real-life situations. Theologians do not live, work, or think in the skies of the universal. Whatever theology is and says takes place within, because of, and as

[4] On Prosper of Aquitaine (ca. 390–463), see J. Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, 100–600* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 319–57.

a response to, the real lives of real people who are the real church. The Christian church is not, has never been, and can never be a theoretical construct, but it is a real-life community with a real-life message, real-life needs, and real-life institutions. Likewise, theology is a real-life response crafted by real-life persons, living in real-life situations, who attempt to contribute to the real-life questions and quests of their fellow real-life Christians.

And if we were to subtract "real life" from any of the above, we could fall into some kind of theoretical Christianity that might satisfy some because of its theoretical or "spiritual" sophistication, but it would ultimately fail because it stopped being Christian when it stopped being really human. Christianity (and its liturgies and theologies) either exists in, as, and for real life, or it doesn't exist at all.

Theology also deals with, and is impacted and shaped by, many considerations, pressures, interests, and conflicts that have other origins and other agendas not strictly theological or Christian. Theologies can be, and have been, manipulated or crafted into the service of ideologies and interests that might not be transparent or honorable. To pretend otherwise would be irresponsible and naive. To professionally work in theology today, therefore, involves dealing with political, cultural, and other interests that may bear the stench of manipulation and power, as well as social asymmetries. Theology can only happen within daily reality—what in Latinoa theology we call *lo cotidiano*.

The reality of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the phrase attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine, is that Prosper does not seem to have ever written that phrase in any of his works, at least not as quoted.[5] The original version of the phrase, the phrase Prosper did write, was *lex orandi legem statuat credendi* ("the law of praying establishes the law of believing"). In other words, prayer establishes doctrine. How and what we pray establishes how and what we believe. The expression was first coined by Prosper in an argument against the Semi-Pelagian theology of grace, a set of theories formally condemned in the Council of Orange of 529.

Although a variant version of the expression (that is, *lex orandi, lex credendi*) developed in later centuries to indicate the intimate

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[5] See G. Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), A. Kavanaugh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1984), W. Taylor Stevenson, "Lex Orandi-Lex Credendi," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. S. Sykes, J. Booty and J. Knight, rev. ed. (London: SPCK, 1988), 187–202.

connection between prayer and belief, the original form of the phrase (the version Prosper actually wrote) bears significance not only for liturgy, but also, and especially, for church doctrine, because it does not establish the reciprocal, equal relationship that *lex orandi, lex credendi* has come to signify. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*—grammatically, in Latin—implies, or at least allows, a reciprocity between the two halves of the phrase that Prosper's original dictum does not convey or allow. In other words, *lex orandi legem statuat credendi* does not suggest that doctrine establishes prayer, but the other way around—and only the other way around. If Christians claim to hold something doctrinally, then whatever it is they hold doctrinally must flow from what they pray as Christians.

Jesus did not announce a doctrinal system, but rather a new relationship with God and neighbor, and although a prayer life is certainly not everything in Christianity, without a prayer life there is no Christianity at all. As my grandmother wisely used to say to us when we were children, "The devil knows all the doctrines, and knows them to be true, but he is still the devil." I guess that, in her way, my grandmother knew that doctrinal orthodoxy, by itself, is not Christianity.

Latinoa Episcopalians are already demographically too important to be dismissed as unfortunately some would try to, in direct violation of good ecclesiology, and in direct contradiction of Prosper of Aquitaine's time-honored phrase. Latinoas cannot be Christian except as Latinoas. This, obviously, can be said of every other human group, and it can and should be said, although it is historically clear that this has seldom been the pastoral, doctrinal case. To pretend that "deculturization" or assimilation into another's culture is a requirement for the practice of Christianity is to falsify the incarnation and the New Testament, and to adulterate much that is necessarily assumed whenever we talk of living the Christian faith. Being treated as a second-class Christian or theologian because one does not live or think in the culture of the dominant is also doctrinally and morally unacceptable, and an example of an imperial attitude that borders on idolatry. This also means that if we doctrinally define "church" as a people, then we cannot pretend that this people is somehow a generic, amorphous group in cultural, social, ethnical, racial, or gender terms. Instead, the church is first and foremost real people in real daily life: specifically contextualized persons and local communities.

Differences in contextualizations do not and cannot authorize the prioritization of contextualities within the church (as in a childish

game of "my contextuality is better than yours") unless we wish to explicitly contradict and adulterate the New Testament. In the words of Eastern Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, "Otherness is constitutive of unity, and not consequent upon it. Otherness is not a threat to unity but the 'sine qua non' of unity."[6] We can no longer pretend that the church can be understood, or can run itself, as if it were not already significantly Latinoa, and already massively nonwhite across the world. We have to start taking seriously the real-life consequences of our doctrinal affirmations and developments. Therefore, if we doctrinally say that the church is a people, and if the factual truth is that this people are no longer what they once were (demographically, culturally, linguistically, and so on), then let's add two plus two and realize that it comes out to four, and not to a mythological number invented to satisfy a dominant group. When we speak doctrinally of the "church," we must speak of real people, or we are not speaking of church at all. And if in the name of church we divide Christians into groups, based on their similarity or not to the dominant, we will have created something very different from the church of the apostles.

The difficulties of the "how do we do this?" cannot blind us to the doctrinal, pastoral, and theological issues and necessities raised by the new demographic and cultural facts. But, for help with the "how do we do this?," we can again call on Prosper of Aquitaine, and his answer would again be, "The law of praying establishes the law of believing." Let me suggest three initial steps, specifically focused on the growing Latinoa presence in the church.

The first step, I would suggest, is to wonder how Latinoa communities pray. Because how they pray would, according to Prosper, tell us how and what they believe.

Latinoas pray in public ways. They do participate (and in larger numbers than anecdotal evidence would suggest) in the liturgy of the church. But to think that official liturgical celebrations exhaust their public praying is to not know what goes on, because there are all sorts of other "unofficial" liturgies, public rituals, and prayers in any and all Latinoa communities—rituals and prayers intended to communally express Christian faith and baptismal commitment. Here are also all sorts of other public celebrations, involving families, neighborhoods or towns, and many of these celebrations are as ancient as patristic

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[6] J. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 13–63.

Christianity. In the home there are more prayers and more rituals—all communal, all expressive of shared faith and belief. In other words, Latinoas have constructed and sustained a liturgical universe besides and beyond the "official" liturgies of the "official" church.[7]

With their public, communal praying, Latinoas are not very different from many other cultural groups, except perhaps in stressing the following: (a) among us, family is immensely more important than parish, and neighborhood community has greater weight than any and all official ecclesiastical and civil institutions, and (b) our religious leadership is clearly held by older women (grandmothers, especially). The effective authority in matters of doctrine, belief, faith, and ethical living, among Latinoas, resides with older women and not with the clergy or with the institutions led by the clergy. The "liturgies" presided over by these older women tend to have greater cultural and religious weight and are often much more expressive of who we are, of what we really believe, and of whom we experience as God, than anything parishes or dioceses or official liturgies can offer. The "official" liturgies fade in importance when compared with these "popular" liturgies led by older women—not because we disregard the Eucharist or baptism, but rather because we understand that sacraments and Eucharist are not magical rites and therefore cannot exhaust the prayer life of the Christian community. And if the "law of prayer establishes the law of believing," then Christian doctrine should be sought among the grandmothers and their extended families and communities before turning to the episcopate, to councils and synods, to heady tomes of theological speculation, or to officially sanctioned liturgies. Think of our grandmothers next time you reflect on pneumatology.

Therefore, if we were to seek the contours of a Latinoa theology, and of the purpose of theological education among Christians, and among present and future members of the clergy, we would need to go to the homes and to the neighborhoods, and seek there the faith of the grandmothers and their families. We would need to touch their hearts, and their joys and accomplishments, and their pain and sacrifices, and their hopes, fears, and dreams, and their frustrations and conflicts—as well as their time-honored rituals and symbols. There we will find the sources of real Christian theology and of the real church's liturgy—because, in authentic and unexpected ways,

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[7] Very pertinent remains my *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

doctrinal understandings and liturgies are being constructed (and have been so for many centuries) by others outside of the realm of the dominant and highly educated.[8]

The second step we could learn from Prosper of Aquitaine's phrase is to analyze what Latinoas pray for—what they pray about, with whom they pray, and to whom they pray. And, doctrinally more significantly, Who are they who pray?

Yes, Latinoas pray to God, but frequently with the help and participation of family, of friends, and of the extended community network—both the human ones as well as the "heavenly" ones. Do not be surprised, given the Latinoa emphasis on family, to find this very emphasis exemplified or projected into our faith life. The Virgin Mary and the saints are part of our families too, and are never distant. And because of the Latinoa cultural emphasis on family dynamics and relationships, praying to God often involves or requires the familial network that includes Mary and the saints—not Mary and the saints without God, but not God without Mary and the saints. A Latinoa would feel culturally deprived and impoverished without a family, and so Latinoa Christian faith and life require family, as well.

And what do Latinoas pray about? The same things, I suppose, as everybody else—but given that our people are more likely to be among the working poor, in prayer Latinoas tend to express the frequent concerns of two-thirds of humankind: housing, food, health, employment, education for their children, security, dignity, justice, freedom, rights, and so on. The people of God (today, as well as over the past twenty centuries) have mostly been the working poor, and this social and historical fact cannot be forgotten or downplayed. Who prays has an enormous impact on how and what is prayed. The prayer life of the real church is (and has always been) the prayer life of the working poor, who were also mostly illiterate until the early twentieth century. The nonpoor and literate, on the other hand, are and have always been the worldwide exception in Christianity, and this social, ecclesial reality should have great significance for ethical commitments, doctrinal development, and theological reflection.

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[8] See O. Espín and M. Díaz, eds., *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), and O. Espín and G. Macy, eds., *Futuring Our Past: Explorations in the Theology of Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

I am suggesting that tradition is what we, the church, say tradition is. It is we, the church, who decide whose determination we will be bound by. We determine (and have always determined) whose *lex orandi* establishes our *lex credendi*, and this determination is not and has never been free of interests, or apart from the exercise of dominant power. What Prosper of Aquitaine did not say, but today he could not avoid saying, is that the exercise of power determines the exercise of memory. The choice of whose *lex orandi* we choose establishes and shapes a noninnocent *lex credendi*. It is we who decide which particular exercise of power over memory may claim to be the church's universal claim or tradition.

But, of course, in the "we," not all are equal. The choice of one particular *lex orandi* establishes a *lex credendi* that is claimed to be universally valid, although the historical processes that lead to this choice and to these claims are clearly human processes, socially and culturally contextual, and in no way freer from human limitations than any other human process. The choice and shape of doctrine, theology, or liturgy are political acts. In all societies and churches, however, established power asymmetries among peoples and communities deny equal influence and consequently make all decisions noninnocent.

The third step that Prosper might suggest is perhaps potentially the richest one. If Latinoa ways of praying (and with them the ways of praying of arguably the majority of the church worldwide) challenge some ecclesiologies and some definitions of "church" that seem oblivious to the real-life reality of the people of God, we can ask, What (then) would be an alternative (as *lex credendi*) offered by the Latinoa *lex orandi*?

French theologian Jacques Audinet[9] once said (and I paraphrase): Instead of looking at the spirituality that "flows from" our theology, we should first look at the spirituality that "grounds" our theology (which is another way of phrasing Prosper of Aquitaine's famous insight). And so: What is the core intuition in Latinoa communal praying that, as *lex orandi*, "architectonically" can give coherence to a new way of theologizing? I would answer, with our Latina grandmothers: we are all the people of God. We are all the church. We are not a theological or canonical theory, but a real-life community of Christians, with real-life cultures and with real-life needs, realities, and contributions, just

[9] Late professor of practical theology at the University of Metz.

like any extended family. Therefore, the real-life church has to display this reality in its theological and (not just) pastoral self-understanding.

The people of God (in the US and across the world) are mostly the poor and "disposable" of the world, and the reality of the "preferred of God" cannot be turned into pious platitudes or dismissed as irrelevant to the very core of the religion founded by a poor, landless Galilean peasant (whom Christians claim to be the definitive revelation of the only God!). Unspoken and unacknowledged power asymmetries, in two thousand years of Christianity, seem to have had more shaping power than the faith and prayer of the real church, and seem to have also attempted to erase the contextual specificity of the incarnation.

I am also suggesting that Prosper of Aquitaine's insight, if taken seriously, demands that we contextualize and rephrase the more famous and molding Western Christian insight into what is theology: Anselm of Canterbury's *fides quaerens intellectum*.[10]

Fides Quaerens Intellectum

Interestingly, Anselm's phrase does not appear written in a treatise on theology. It was the first title he thought to give the *Proslogion*, his ontological argument for the necessary existence of God. The meaning of the phrase was explained in the *Proslogion* as "I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but rather, I believe in order that I may understand." Anselm asserts that once the faith is held fast, it must be made to demonstrate its truth by means of reason. In this, he, like Prosper of Aquitaine, follows Augustine of Hippo.[11]

Anselm's phrase is very clear, very reasonable, and even remarkable in the Western Europe of the eleventh century. However, as I said earlier, this phrase is deceptively simple, and founded on untenable assumptions. Building on my observations on Prosper, and because theology is crafted by real human beings we call "theologians," we must ask, Whose faith is Anselm assuming as the faith that seeks understanding? Whose understanding is sought? And how do they

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[10] The phrase referred to here is translated as "faith in search of understanding." On Anselm and his thought, see J. Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology, 600–1300* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 139–44, 256–73, and J. L. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 158–72.

[11] See G. Macy, "Anselm of Canterbury," in *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*, ed. O. Espín and J. Nickoloff (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Books, 2007), 62–63.

understand? Who does the seeking? And how do they seek? And more importantly, for whose purpose?

There is no universally valid and universally understood, decontextualized or noncontextualized theologizing. There is no "innocent" or "interest-free" theologizing. There has never been, and there can never be. Unfortunately, Anselm was assuming an androcentric faith, an androcentric understanding, an androcentric seeking, for androcentric purposes. His "universals" were very "particular."

But what I have just said of Anselm's assumptions can also be said of ours, and by "ours" I mean in the US. Look, for example, at the theologians and works in the typical required readings lists in US schools of theology or university departments of theology. As Eurocentric as could be, and as androcentric too. Those outside of the Eurocentric, "white" US and European theological traditions rarely get acknowledged as having anything significant to contribute, or as not having contributed in the past anything of importance to "real" theology. Even white feminist scholars suffer from this privileging of the white Eurocentric tradition. But more devastating than the privileging of white Eurocentric authors and works and the marginalization of other voices is the extraordinary assumption that the questions and issues of white Eurocentric cultures, societies, and churches are the most important and urgent questions and issues that "real" theology must discuss. The issues and questions of the nonwhite and the non-Eurocentric voices, therefore, are never core issues or urgent questions in real theology and are, at best, pastoral concerns or optional footnotes in recommended reading lists.[12]

Inclusion of names and works from nonwhite and non-Eurocentric voices might be a step in the right direction. Raising questions and issues from the nonwhite and non-Eurocentric traditions would also be a step forward. But as we asked Anselm, we must also ask ourselves, Whose faith is seeking to understand? How is the seeking, and how is the understanding, and for whose purpose? Because well-intended inclusion is still not enough if the nonwhite, non-Eurocentrics remain "guests" at the table set by and for those who have the social, cultural, and ecclesial power to decide and determine who is invited, and what,

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[12] One (unacceptable) argument for the dominant instrumentalization of theology is the assumption that theology and theological education are mainly, if not exclusively, for the ministry or to aid ministers (lay or ordained) in their pastoral work. Critical engagement with, and reasoned prophetic challenge to, the real world (most of which is not interested in engaging the church or its internal "churchy" reflections) are thereby eviscerated.

when, and why is the menu. This sort of inclusion is not equality, nor is it Christian. And that is the problem of Anselm of Canterbury and of the medieval Scholastics that came after him, as well as the problem with his and Prosper's understanding of theology. Their theology does not see its feet planted in a cultural, social, historical, gendered particularity, from which it then pretends to discern the universal; and worse, their theology does not see the other feet planted there in that one shared particularity, nor whose feet they are. In our US context, it is not surprising that the theology taught in our schools and universities (that is, white Eurocentric theology) does not see the many millions of US (and worldwide) nonwhite, non-Eurocentric Christians. Can a theology be, or claim to be, "real" if it ignores or dismisses the majority of the church of Christ? Apparently, it never occurred to Anselm of Canterbury to engage (in the process of theologizing, and not just out of "polite charity") the people who cleaned his latrines, and who worked the fields as serfs. Has it occurred to us?

Theologizing Latinamente

We can only see and understand, and theologize, from our particularities. We see and understand only from our particular perspectives, only from our particular cultural and social locations, only from our particular experiences. And this is inescapable. And there is nothing wrong with this, as long as we do not pretend that there are exceptions, because, factually, there are none. Whatever we might claim to be universal is inevitably, and no more than, a projection from our particular perspectives and locations. Theologies do not escape their own particularities, be they German, French, English, Italian, white, black, Asian, Native American, Latin American, or Latinoa.

The term *Latinoa* is an identity umbrella term. Under it are gathered more than twenty distinct US communities—each also internally diverse—that share at least these five characteristics:

First, their cultural roots and historical origins are found in the lands and peoples that were conquered by the Iberian kingdoms in what became Latin America.

Second, the US Latinoa communities' roots and origins in Latin America inescapably include and display the cultures that came to be through processes of *mestizaje* and *mulataje*.[13] Individuals might or

[13] *Mulataje* is a cultural process of mixing persons, communities, perspectives, cultures, and much more, of African and European descents. *Mestizaje* is the process

might not be racially *mestizoas* or *mulatoas*, but all Latinoa cultures are.

Third, the roots and origins of these communities are not just in what today we "map" as Latin America. The lands conquered by the Iberian kingdoms also included present-day Florida, the US Southwest, and Puerto Rico, and these territories were not without populations when the US militarily occupied and annexed them without the consent of their inhabitants. Most US Latinoas still reside in the lands that were originally theirs.

Fourth, most Latinoas (almost two-thirds of the total) were born in the US and only about one-third are immigrants, most of whom are documented. Three out of four Latinoas are US citizens (by birth or naturalization).[14] The Census Bureau projects that before the year 2050 there will be around 115 million Latinoas in the country (accounting for more than half of the total population growth of the country, even if immigration were completely stopped today).

And fifth, 32 percent of all Latinoas are under the age of eighteen, while 26 percent are between the ages of eighteen and thirty-three. In other words, six in every ten Latinoas are under the age of thirty-three, a young population, especially when compared with the aging US white, European-descendant population. There are now approximately 61 million Latinoas in the US, self-identifying as members of about twenty cultural communities, each internally diverse. *Latinoa* is a term akin to "extended family." The latter is a web of related relationships, but no relationship or familial unit within the web is a replica of any other within the extended family. Therefore, what is shared does not cancel difference, and difference does not negate what is shared.

Explicitly looking at theology, I would underline the following four shared characteristics that are crucially important for a theology done *latinamente*:

1) The presence and importance of the extended families, and within them the role(s) of older women.
2) The prevalence of Western Catholic symbolic, ritual, hermeneutic perspectives, and epistemological assumptions that permeate the cultures and everyone within them—even when

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of mixing Native American and European persons, communities, perspectives, and cultures.

[14] For all statistics herein see www.census.gov.

individuals or families are not self-identifying, denominationally, under this or that or any denominational label.[15]

3) The location, and the defining logic and characteristics of "religious identity" (or religious affiliation) are mainly found in, and bound with, the extended family and not with/in ecclesiastical institutions.
4) The intentional preservation of customs, cuisines, terms, objects, and extended family relationships, that provide or act as identity markers (both public and familial) among Latinoa communities, in order to make the point that "we are 'we,' and not 'they.'"

And so, what is Latinoa theologizing? Latinoa theology needs to be validated by the academy, and so we hold ourselves to the typical and expected standards of scholarship. Latinoa theologians are theologians, no more and no less, with all the requirements, experience, education, and publications as any other theologian. But academic validation is not the most important validation we require and seek. Indeed, there is another validation that is the key to our not being co-opted by the dominant academy's acceptance or applause (or by the dominant academy's politically correct need to convince itself of its own openness while remaining factually deaf to all who are not of the dominant). I am speaking of the validation that comes from our own Latinoa communities. The question for Latinoa theologians is whether our work in fact furthers the goals of our people—their struggles for equality and dignity, for decent housing, education, and health care. An equally necessary question is whether our theology prophetically challenges our people to grow beyond our biases, our idols, and our sins. If the social, political, economic, and religious reality and understanding of Latinoas are not demonstrably and positively affected by our theological work, then the applause or acceptance of the (dominant) academy means nothing, or perhaps it means that we have betrayed our communities' trust. The requirement of validation by the people remains.

Teología de conjunto (or *teología en conjunto*) has been frequently identified with Latinoa theologizing. A group of theologians (that is, a *conjunto*) gather, sometimes with pastoral agents, with regular folk, or with scholars from other fields, and together "create" theology, with

[15] I remind the reader of my explanation of the expression "Western Catholic" at the start of the present paper.

each bringing their own expertise to the group, but all working together for the same purpose and on the same topic. There are a few models of *teología de conjunto*, but they all emphasize the communal, conversational, shared style of doing theology as a *conjunto*, and all models demand and expect the theologians' location to be within *lo cotidiano* of our people.[16] During the past four decades, much has been written by Latinoa theologians individually; therefore, it would be inaccurate to assume that all Latinoa theology has been created only as *teología de conjunto*. But even the individual works have involved and been built upon a great deal of consultation and conversation within *conjuntos*.

So, again, what is Latinoa theology? I'd suggest that it is a movement, a contextual perspective, and a methodological approach to theologizing within Christian theology:

1) It is distinguished by a cultural, critical, contextual, justice-seeking, and noninnocent interpretation of Scripture and doctrine, society and church, and history. It is intent on understanding these in order to impact and empower the daily reality, daily faith, and daily struggles for justice of Latinoa communities, while acknowledging and honoring Latinoa cultures, histories, stories, daily reality, and popular faith as legitimate and necessary sources of and for Christian theology.
2) Consequently, Latinoa theologizing can and does focus on either traditional or contemporary topics within Christian doctrine and biblical interpretation, and on sociocultural realities. Hence, there is no topic typical of, or unimportant to, Latinoa theology—what is unique are the sources, the methodological approaches, the starting point and perspective, the contexts, and the intent.
3) In explicit dialogue with other theologies, other scholarly disciplines and fields of learning, and being ecumenically sensitive (with growing interreligious awareness too), Latinoa theology is distinct in its *en conjunto* methodological approach and in its reverent passion for the real life, faith, and cultures of Latinoa communities, extended families, and persons.
4) Latinoa theology assumes, honors, and incorporates the faith of Latinoa Christian communities, their manner(s) of searching, and theological understanding(s) that explain real life

[16] See Nanko-Fernández, "*Lo Cotidiano* as Locus Theologicus."

while further empowering Latinoa people. A theology, however, that sees itself as seeking "understanding" as its goal is a theology destined to become an opiate, or an instrument of oppression. Latinoa theology, instead, is Latinoa faith in search of the understandings and actions *that will radically transform this world* according to God's will—a new world of justice, participation, and solidarity.

5) Latinoa theology is a contributor to the broader theological academy because it *methodologically* demonstrates that theology is not, and ethically cannot be, "books speaking with books," or "church people" talking with "church people." Latinoa theology models a scholarly pursuit that is a committed, reasoned understanding of the lives, struggles, and faith of real people in real sociocultural situations that cry for justice. It is prophetic and socially engaged. To theologize *latinamente* means that the theologian's feet, as well as their conversation partners', and the topics, questions, and issues reflected upon by theology, are all found, experienced, and addressed within (and only within) *lo cotidiano*.

However, there is an issue still raised among Latinoa theologians: Does the theologian have to be personally Latinoa in order for their theological production to be Latinoa? How much personal genetic or cultural *latinidad* is needed in order to identify a theologian or a theological work as "Latinoa"? It seems consensually settled that the theologian (Latinoa or not) has to be *personally involved* in and with Latinoa communities to such degree that theology be truly and unquestionably born from "the heart of *our* people" (from within, and consciously reflective of, Latinoa people's lives, reality, faith, cultures, and so on). This is a perspective and knowledge not had through books or journals or occasional encounters, but only through daily (personal, committed, and prolonged) engagement within *lo cotidiano* of theologians and their people. Latinoas welcome allies and partners in the struggle, as long as these do not pretend to speak for us or explain us to the dominant (or to ourselves!), thereby again silencing us.

Where are our feet when we theologize? Whose feet are there with ours? What is the relationship among all those whose feet are there? These three questions, and our answers, are more defining of any theology than Anselm of Canterbury's famous insight.