

# Latina *Evangélicas*. A New Voice in Hispanic/ Latina Theology

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In doing theology, Latina *evangélicas*<sup>1</sup> begin with the Scriptures. In this case, allow me to begin from Jeremiah 6: “They have made little of the wounds of the daughter of my people, superficially saying, ‘All is well,’ when in fact nothing is well” (Jer 6:14).<sup>2</sup> The question *evangélicas* ask is, *Who will heal the wound of the daughter of my people?* Why do I ask this?

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1. Unlike the English word “evangelical,” *evangélica* does not have a narrow theological connotation per se. I use it here to refer to women who understand themselves as a people who preach the gospel and who, though perhaps recent converts, inherited a Protestantism linked to missionary movements to Latin American and the Caribbean and which has been further influenced by more contemporary charismatic movements.

2. For the purposes of the effect that this combination of translations has on how we read and listen to the verse, I have brought together two different translations, the New International Version and the Common English Bible.

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## The State of Latinas

The American Religious Identification Survey of 2008 showed that the Latin@<sup>3</sup> community is 90.9% Christian with 65.8% being Catholic. Among Latin@ Catholics, women comprise 51%, and, among the mainline Protestant, Baptist, Pentecostal, and nondenominational charismatic groups, they comprise 45–58% of the religious population. This female Latina religious population is also very young. The trend furthermore shows that Protestant women are becoming more religiously conservative.<sup>4</sup> What is the state of Latinas in the United States?

The Center for American Progress estimates that the Latina makeup of the female population of the United States will increase from 16.4% today to 25.7% in 2050.<sup>5</sup> While Latinas are moving forward in the areas of health and education, we still have a long way to go to close racial and ethnic disparities. Policies such as the Affordable Care Act help advance the quality of life of Latinas. This is important as Latinas still have twice the death rate from cervical cancer of all women and, although teenage pregnancy dipped to a historic low in 2010, even so, 39% of Latina adolescents become pregnant. I serve as a dean of education in the fourth poorest county of the United States. I have students who are great-grandmothers at forty-five years of age, women who by the age of thirty have between three and five children. The rate of unintended pregnancy among Latinas is twice the rate experienced by

3. The term “Latino/a” is written as “Latin@” in order to retain in English the mixed-gender nuances of the word in Spanish.

4. Juhem Navarro-Rivera, Barry A. Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar, “U.S. Latino Religious Identification 1990–2008: Growth, Diversity and Transformation. A Report Based on the American Religious Identification Survey 2008” (Hartford, CT: Trinity College, 2008), <http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2011/08/latinos2008.pdf>.

5. Mareshah Jackson, “Fact Sheet: The State of Latinas in the United States” (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2013), <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/SOW-factsheet-Lat.pdf>.