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## An Analytical Exegesis and Critique of Justo González' Christology Offered in "The Word Made Flesh" from Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective

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*Say Something Theological: The Student Journal of Loyola Marymount University Theological Studies*

## **An Analytical Exegesis and Critique of Justo González' Christology Offered in "The Word Made Flesh" from *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective***

By Dillon Cook

**Abstract:** The following is a brief synopsis of my research concerning the Hispanic Liberation Theologian, Justo L. González' Christology rendered in one specific chapter, "The Word Made Flesh," of his book *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*. However, it must be noted that what is argued here is limited in scope. What this is, is essentially a brief evaluative summary. González is a particular theologian that has not been read *in full* yet (including other works), therefore, González' arguments that I have critiqued may be sufficiently buttressed in other chapters post or prior to this particular chapter analyzed. Yet, it is the case, that the chapter itself isolated, manifests a fairly comprehensive account, and a worthy piece of theological/philosophical literature. Nevertheless, what occurs in the following writing is a very brief biographical introduction on González, a summary of González' main points from his chapter "The Word Made Flesh," and a reasoned evaluation of González' argument, as I have interpreted it, with my own conclusion for this work. It is observed that, (1.) González is in the process of developing/arguing from a particular theological perspective with oppressed groups in mind, particularly Hispanics in relation to spiritual/physical liberation, and (2.) he is critical of the Christian Church, primarily the early historical Christian Church (but the modern-day Christian Church is not excluded) and its *a priori* presupposing of God/humanity (as it is tethered to socio-political corruption/imperialism) set apart from the existential experience and biblical revelation of the Christ. González offers a new Christology on the latter that will be discussed below. As mentioned above, it is the case that González may argue elsewhere something at odds with my argument below. For example, in the beginning of González book *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, he does seem to admit that he is in great debt, and/or owes much to the Christian tradition that he has inherited. Thus, it is clear that (1.) he is existentially tethered to, and embodied in the Christian tradition/spirit in *some* form or fashion, and (2.) González heralds *some* significant type of authority within Christian Scripture. González does admit *this* in the beginning of *Mañana* which is expected and normative within the Protestant Christian community. However, I think the conclusion that I offer in the following raises some questions about González' logical consistency within this chapter. Essentially what is argued is that González has eroded the foundation that his argument stands on, thus it needs clarification and/or better buttressing for establishing his Christology. It is also argued that González doesn't *explicitly* acknowledge his own use of rational theory in his own rejuvenated argument

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for his Christological foundation. This isn't to say that I think González is wrong; he may be right. However, his Christological argument needs better founding or better clarification. (On another note: there were also problems I found in González' reasoning when it came to dismissing previous controversial Christologies within the historical Christian tradition, and on occasion footnotes are made concerning the issue, but these issues would open up new trajectories beyond the scope of the purpose here.)

**Keywords:** Justo L. González, Word Made Flesh, Christology

For the purposes of this paper, I will be rendering a small evaluative summary of the Hispanic Liberation Theologian,<sup>1</sup> Justo L. González, and his Christology found in the chapter "The Word Made Flesh" of his book *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*.<sup>2</sup> Upon reading this, if I were to identify the audience, it is my belief the author's message would likely be directed toward students, scholars, educated Christians, the intellectually curious/rigorous, and *naturally*, this includes Hispanics and/or other oppressed groups who may seeking liberative truth amidst the community. What González is seeking to accomplish has been brushed upon, implicit by title.<sup>3</sup> But more specifically, I will

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<sup>1</sup> The Theologian being: Justo L. Gonzalez, a "retired professor of historical theology", who "attended United States Seminary in Cuba and was the youngest person to be awarded a Ph.D. in historical theology at Yale University. Over the past thirty years he has focused on developing programs for the theological education of Hispanics, and he has received four honorary doctorates." HarperCollins Editors, "Justo L. González," *HarperCollins Publishing*, unknown date, <https://www.harpercollins.com/blogs/authors/justo-l-gonzalez-20145203444350>.

<sup>2</sup> Justo González is an U.S. immigrant who, "grew up in Latin America," "a country where hardly 4 or 5 percent of the population was Protestant" who has been significantly influenced by his status as a minority as a Protestant in Latin America, and a ethnic minority in the U.S. where in his book *Mañana*, he brings to the table Lope de Vega's play, *Fuenteovejuna*—a tale about a small town by the prior name, about tyrannical rule where the people rebel and overthrow the tyrannical ruler and when questioned by a judge "Who killed the commander?" the response by the community is "Fuenteovejuna, my Lord." González suggests in doing this, "they are not simply trying to cover for one another. What has happened is that through their suffering and final uprising, such solidarity has arisen that they do believe that it was the town, and not any individuals in it, that killed the commander. Not only will they not shift to a more individualistic responsibility; they could not do so even if they tried. 'Fuenteovejuna, *todos a una*,' has become more than a battle cry and is now the very reality by which they live." González suggests that this philosophy is like this book, *Mañana*. "It includes material and insights gleaned from hundreds of encounters and discussions with Hispanics in all walks of life and with various levels of theological sophistication." Justo González, "A Minority Perspective," in *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 22-29.

<sup>3</sup> His theological title, and methodology is that of a "Hispanic Liberation Theologian," seen in line one.

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claim two things (and fungible in how they work/intersect): picking up González' "The Word Made Flesh," we find that: 1.) He is in the process of developing/arguing from a *particular*<sup>4</sup> theological perspective with oppressed groups in mind, particularly Hispanics in relation to spiritual/physical liberation, and 2.) He is critical of the Christian Church (including the early historical Christian Church), and its *a priori* presupposing of God/humanity (as it is tethered to socio-political corruption/imperialism) *set apart* from existential experience and *biblical revelation* of the Christ. González offers a new Christology on the latter two points. Following, I will provide a reasoned evaluation on whether González was successful in arguing his thesis, which will be argued, that it lacks clarification.<sup>5</sup>

Now, to briefly dwell on whether this particular issue is relevant—in short, it clearly is. Christians have been taught traditional (majority and predominant forms) of Christian theology without the liberative aspect (as "Christianity" marginalizes/oppresses minorities) throughout the world, including amidst the U.S., and I believe González is likely trying to erode this prevailing norm. And, this *is* a historical problem within the Christian tradition, its Scripture, and its historical Christological formations—as these types of conversations *continue* to be of relevance in modern times.

### **Summary of "The Word Made Flesh" in Justo Gonzalez' Mañana**

González appears to be arguing that the Christian Church's tradition and its Christology has been corrupted; he suggests that the early church formation attempted to rid itself of its history of imperialism, terror and conquest, but didn't quite go far enough. "Although the Council of Nicea, in affirming the eternal divinity of the Word, avoided the extreme 'Constantinization' of God, it did not go so far as to state that immutability is not a characteristic properly to be applied to the Christian God."<sup>6</sup> Essentially it *neglected* its duty by its own human situatedness, its own socio-political/sociorhetorical limitations. As González states, "The political and intellectual pressures at work in the church and its

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<sup>4</sup> "All I can say is that what appears in the pages that follow expresses much of what I have shared with and learned from \*my Hispanic sisters and brothers\* over the course years. Clearly, I cannot claim to speak for all of them, for there are among Hispanics many varieties and shades of opinion. But \*I also cannot speak without them.\*" Justo González, "The Word Made Flesh," in *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 29. Asterisk\* added for emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> Given the fact that this is a section/chapter out of a larger picture of González' work, it could clearly be the case that the critique I will offer has been prior dealt with in other chapters, articles, or works extending beyond the section covered here in this book.

<sup>6</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 139.

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theological leadership were too strong to allow them to avoid the Hellenization—and therefore the Constantinization—of God.”<sup>7</sup>

But what did it neglect? According to González, it neglected dealing with the “Hellenization” of God, which is therefore the “Constantinization” of God. But what does this mean? For one thing, it means (in modern times) what we call a “Westernizing” of Truth with a capital T: This means holding superior “objectivity” over subjectivity. It means holding superior “reason” over emotion; it means holding superior “dualistic-thinking” over non-dualistic thinking; it means holding superior “idealism” over practicality or praxis’ it means heralding superiority to “either/or” thinking over “and/or” thinking; it means “essence” over non-essence, etc., and so forth. As González suggests, “Such Constantinization” by process,

[W]as a relatively simple matter. After all, ‘No one has ever seen God.’ All that was necessary was to bring about a change in people’s minds as to who God is. In order to do this, the Greek notion of *being* was readily available. By showing the ‘*rationality*’ of this notion—on the basis that *only the fixed and given is strictly rational*—and the *anthropomorphism of the images with which Scripture* and early Christian theology described the living God, the exponents of theology of the status quo were *able to do away with a great deal of the biblical picture* of an active, just, loving and avenging God. At the same time, allegorical interpretation *dehistoricized* the Bible, and thus God’s activity in history was transmuted into perennial and supposedly ‘higher’ meanings.<sup>8</sup>

It also appears to suggest it’s when corrupted socio-political power structures, utilized Christianity for colonization, imperialism, and conquest, at the abuse of its actual and existential truth. As González suggests, “Great pains were taken to mitigate the scandal of God’s being revealed in a poor carpenter.... Art depicted him as either the Almighty Ruler of the universe, sitting on his throne, or as the stolid hero who overcomes the suffering of the cross with superhuman resources and aristocratic poise.”<sup>9</sup> However, through it all there was one Truth that couldn’t be Constantinized—the Christ. “This fact was Jesus, the carpenter from Galilee who was called the Christ. Although ‘no one has ever seen God,’ here was one whom people had not only seen but also heard and even touched (1 John 1:1).”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 139.

<sup>8</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 139. Italicized emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 134.

<sup>10</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 134. John 1:1 states: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (King James Version)



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González *also* takes us through a historical and anthropological formation of Christology within the Christian tradition, and he takes a look at many different forming movements that have affected the epistemological formation, and how these largely theoretical/abstract/dualistic/static presuppositions have infected the historical-to-current Christology of the Christian Church. González also spends a lot of time on why and how the *appeal* to Gnosticism was part of the early Christian tradition, as he concludes this portion of history to be a cultural byproduct of socio-political oppression and abusive power structures of the time, against the afflicted and oppressed, and consequentially leading to a religious escapism in the ideal/abstract whilst rejecting the materiality of the Christ-God. González notes,

[S]ome Christians developed a theology that made it possible for them to claim faith without taking the risk faith implies for any oppressed group. This theology was gnosticism. The gnostics were *well aware of the evil and injustice that abound in this world*. Their solution, however, was not to oppose that evil but rather to surrender this world to the powers of evil, and to turn to a wholly different realm for their hope for meaning and vindication.<sup>11</sup>

For González, it is no question concerning the connection between the Hellenization of the Gospel and Oppression; it makes sense that Gnosticism, would be a natural human response to this power-slanted oppressive theology. He says,

These ideas were fairly common in the Hellenistic world before the advent of Christianity, and therefore the attempts to join them to the new faith were another aspect of the general adaptation of Christianity to surrounding cultures that took place during the early centuries of the life of the church. This historical assertion, however does not contradict our thesis that the appeal of gnosticism was connected with socio-economic pressures and agendas. What took place was something similar to the process by which the philosophical notion of Immutable One came to be equated with the God of Scripture. Gnostic ideas of salvation, like philosophical views of the One, *were already playing a significant role in the world into which Christianity spread*.<sup>12</sup>

González is critical of Gnosticism<sup>13</sup> for its otherworldly nature and pacification.

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<sup>11</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 134.

<sup>12</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 141.

<sup>13</sup> According to Gnostics, González states, "[O]riginal reality--and therefore also ultimate reality--was purely spiritual. The physical world is not part of a divine plan of creation but is rather the result of a mistake. In this world, and in the material bodies that are part of it our souls entrapped, although in truth they belong to the spiritual world.... This secret knowledge has

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However, as part of the exegesis, it must be said that he spends a lot of time on this topic for his Hispanic readers and/or other oppressed communities due to the fact that there is often even a contemporary temptation for Hispanic communities (and other oppressed communities) to resort to this otherworldly theology that tends to reclude from the world, seeing the material world as completely evil, but more importantly, pacifying a fight against the oppressive forces that are corrupting the world's beauty. González states,

Gnosticism, and its accompanying docetism, have always been a temptation for the oppressed. Whenever people have felt overwhelmed by their problems, or by the powers above them that control their lives and they cannot affect, they have fled to some sort of gnosticism.... This temptation, which has become prevalent due to the sense of lostness of the individual in today's world, is even stronger for those who belong to powerless groups. But when Hispanics succumb to the gnostic-docetic temptation, even though we may believe we are exalting Jesus, in truth, like the early gnostics, we are depriving him of his greatest glory. And we are also depriving ourselves of the most far-reaching consequences of his saving work, whereby we shall be given 'all things' jointly with him.<sup>14</sup>

Here, there is also an implicit Capitalist Western Civilization critique, of the priority of the individual over the community, and how climbing the capitalist ladder in an oppressive world may cause one to remove oneself spiritually in effect, and that Hispanics must avoid this temptation.

González also discusses the flip-side of that, where Christological formulations have taken the opposing side of the spectrum. Here, he takes a look at another Christological controversy called, "Adoptionism." González states, that "Adoptionism" was "[...] a view that took many different shapes but that in general declared that Jesus was a 'mere man' who somehow had been adopted into divine sonship."<sup>15</sup> Adoptionism purported that the human being we know as Jesus was adopted into divinity in some form or fashion. González implies that the epistemically situated nature of this Christology exemplifies the partaker's own socio-political privilege/situatedness for the simple fact that Hispanics and other oppressed minorities could never accept this. In example, González states,

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been brought to earth by a messenger from on high, whom Christian gnostics...usually identified with Christ. As his message was spiritual, and this world of matter is evil, Jesus did not really come in the flesh but only appeared to do so. This view of Jesus, called docetism, had great appeal for many Christians, for it seemed to exalt Jesus by declaring him to be a purely heavenly and divine creature." González, "The Word Made Flesh," 141.

<sup>14</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 143.

<sup>15</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 144.

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In general, the rank and file of early Christians do not seem to have found adoptionism particularly alluring. The same is true of oppressed Christians today. Adoptionism is *not* a temptation for Hispanic Americans, for Afro-Americans, or for the poor in Latin America. The revival of adoptionism among liberal theologians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has had little effect beyond the middle class [...]."<sup>16</sup>

For the logical implications of this Christology suggest that Christ inherited divinity according to Jesus's rugged-individualism; his own merit, based off of his situated placement in society. Thus, for Hispanics and oppressed others, this narrative, and therefore Christology is a lie.

The reason for this is that *adoptionism* is the christological expression of a myth that minorities and other oppressed groups have always known to be oppressive. This is the myth that 'anyone can make it.' Those who belong to the higher classes have a vested interest in this myth, for it implies that their privilege is based on their effort and achievement. But those who belong to the lower classes and who have not been propagandized into alienation from their reality know that this is a myth, and that the few that do make it are in fact allowed to move on in order to preserve the myth.<sup>17</sup>

For González, "Jesus Christ must be more than the first among the redeemed, more than the local boy who makes good. He must also be the Redeemer, the power from outside who breaks into our reality and breaks its structures of oppression. He must be more than the 'adopted' son of God.' He must be God adopting us as sons and daughters."<sup>18</sup> While I empathize with González' sentiment concerning the sociorhetorical placement of oppressed individuals within an oppressive society, it is of relevance to, at least, to ask the question of whether sociorhetorical placement within a society (from a non-privileged standpoint) would be a *necessary condition* for the missed opportunity of being "adopted into" some form of divinity. In other words, is the analogy between (1.), the ability to "elevate economically" based on socio-political situatedness within the economic structure, fitting for assessing (2.), the Christology of

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<sup>16</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 144.

<sup>17</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 144-145.

<sup>18</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 144-145.

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Adoptionism where one “elevates spiritually” in some form or fashion to the point where one is adopted into Divinity?<sup>19</sup> However, this is not a topic I will venture into further beyond my footnote below.

Moving on, González is also critical of “Alexandrine Christology,” whereas from his perspective, it over-emphasized Christ's divinity. Alexandrine Christology had a tendency to “insist on the reality of the union and the full divinity of Jesus, even at the expense of his humanity.”<sup>20</sup> Yet on the other hand González is also critical of the opposing end of the spectrum, the “Antiochene Christology.” According to González, “This insisted on the full humanity of Jesus, and also on his full divinity, but feared that too close a union between the two would result in the humanity being swallowed up in the divinity. For this reason, Antiochene Christology has been characterized as ‘unitive’ counterpart from Alexandria.”<sup>22</sup>

And this debate continues throughout the 4th and 5th centuries (and further according to González), yet in the middle of the former, he takes note of a specific controversy between “Arianism” and “Apollinarism.” Here, Apollinaris was responding to Arian objections, where in, “His view, simply stated... was that Jesus did indeed have a human body, but that he did not have a human ‘rational soul.’ In him, according to Apollinaris, the divine Word, the eternal Son, took the place of the human rational soul. Translating this into simple language, what this means is essentially that Jesus was physically human, but that psychologically he was purely divine.”<sup>23</sup> However, González was critical of both “Arianism” and (particularly) “Apollinarism.” Gonzalez states,

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<sup>19</sup> One point I will not venture into further in the duration of the paper (however will leave this footnote) is that the Divine in monotheistic Hinduism, especially when it comes to manifestation in human figures [e.g., the Avatar(s)], such as Jesus Christ, for example, who is absolutely considered “fully-realized;” when we look at this occurrence, it seems to be happening in “third world countries” and under poor conditions as the Christ is considered a manifestation of God in monotheistic Hinduism. The purpose of this paper is not on this topic, but I think this is a legitimate objection that needs to be reckoned with, when it comes to *dismissing* Adoptionism. Even the Christ was born under poor conditions and existed under poor conditions in a society of commerce. (This isn't to say that the Biblical accounts record a full-fledged predatory Capitalist economic system as can be seen in modern day), but still this is certainly something to think about.

<sup>20</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 144-145.

<sup>22</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 146.

<sup>23</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 147.

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When we look at Apollinarism from the Hispanic vantage point, we can see that such a doctrine would undo the saving power of the Jesus in whom we believe and would *reinforce attitudes* that lie at the root of the oppression of Hispanics and other minorities Apollinarism implies, as Gregory of Nazianzen pointed out, that the human mind is not in need of salvation, and that our problem lies in our bodily nature. As we have seen, such notions are used by those who control a society that claim since they are supposedly more intellectual, they are superior. Translated into societal structures, this means that the ruling powers—the "mind"—of a society are not in need of redemption—that they are not part of the problem, for the 'problem' is posed by those who perform the physical tasks the society needs for survival."<sup>24</sup>

I am not uncritical of this analogy, but I do believe there is some substance to it, however I make a comment in brevity in the last given footnote.

González then takes a delve into Nestorianism, where he suggests that, "The next major controversy centered around the teachings of Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, who held to Antiochene Christology." González continues, "Nestorius sought to preserve the reality of both natures by keeping them apart—by speaking, for instance, not only of two 'natures' but also two 'persons.'"<sup>25</sup> But once more, González is likewise critical of this Christology, because the two natures render a gap when it comes to applicability for oppressed Hispanics. "Nestorianism has never been a temptation for Hispanic Christians. The reason for this is that we feel the need to assert that the broken, oppressed, and crucified Jesus *is* God. A disjunction between divinity and humanity in Christ that denies this would destroy the greatest appeal of Jesus for Hispanics and other groups who must live in suffering."<sup>26</sup>

González also engaged with the historical placement of "Monophysism," while this Christology was *also* a formulation that he found pedantic and problematic as he argued this additionally lacked appeal with Hispanics because of the \*required\* *human* aspect of Jesus here, where the Christ becomes "swallowed up into the divine." To put it another way, González says, "The doctrine Eutyches, usually called 'monophysism'—that is the doctrine of 'one nature'...in general what he and most of his supporters held was that in the union the divinity has overwhelmed the humanity, so that now one can speak as if there were nothing in Christ but the divinity."<sup>27</sup> And again, the Christ-God cannot suffer in

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<sup>24</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 147-148. Again, I'm not sure, if I completely agree with this analogy, and we can see similar concerns raised in above, whether the analogy of economical/political pressures would be \*necessarily\* reinforced by this Christology Nevertheless, my argument for this paper is elsewhere.

<sup>25</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 146.

<sup>26</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 148. *Italicized* emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 152.

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solidarity with Hispanics or the oppressed, as it would be a requisite to be fully human to suffer with them. As González articulates this well,

Monophysism had to be rejected for reasons similar to those that made Gnosticism unacceptable. If in Jesus the human is swallowed up in the divine, to such a point that he no longer functions as a human being, his sufferings are a sham and not like ours. He did not bear our sufferings, and therefore we cannot find in him vindication for those who now suffer. The Crucified one must be truly crucified. [But also...] He must be truly divine, for otherwise his suffering has no power to redeem, and he must also be human for otherwise his suffering has nothing to do with ours. The two must be joined in such a way that his true humanity is neither destroyed nor swallowed up in his divinity.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, González further depicts how the Christological debates continued, but what is most important is that the Council of Chalcedon sort of set the trajectory for the Christology of the Christian tradition and the Church. However, this still leaves an unsatisfactory Christology for González—as it mainly eliminated the more extremes Christological interpretations of Antiochene and Alexandrine Christology. González seems to suggest, that in the most basic sense, it (the Council of Chalcedon) preserves the “unity” of full divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ through salvation.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to this point, for the objection where one may argue, “But, González isn’t completely rejecting the historical Christology.” To that, I would agree. So, I’m not intending to suggest that González is *completely* rejecting this Christological formulation here, it’s just that it simply lacks a sufficient rendering upon its original formulation and throughout the trajectory of history. This has caused horrible consequences. With that established, the main pitfall for González is that, once again, he is critical of the Christian Church (including the early historical Christian Church) and its *a priori* presupposing of God/humanity (as it is tethered to socio-political corruption/imperialism) *set apart* from existential experience and Biblical revelation of the Christ.

Thus, González offers a new Christology on the latter mentioned. According to González, the Christ-God has been observed by humanity, and he appeals to Scripture to make this assertion in the beginning of his argument, “[H]ere was one whom people had not only seen but also heard and even touched (1 John 1:1).”<sup>30</sup> Yet (according to González), we also see that the Christ-God, through Scripture, is One who lives for others. “At his birth, the angel announces to shepherds that ‘*to you* is

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<sup>28</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 149.

<sup>29</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 150.

<sup>30</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 140.



born this day in the city of David a Savior' (Luke 2:11)."<sup>31</sup> He also references the very popular quotation of John 3:16 where he speaks of God's "giving" while recognizing this application in praxis of serving the fellow human being is "seldom pondered."<sup>32</sup>

González then shifts his focus toward the Cross in reference to Christ's living for others, "The cross, toward which the entire gospel narrative moves, is not an accident but the result of Jesus' active giving up his life: 'For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord' (John 10:17-18)."<sup>33</sup> González continues to reiterate that the Christ-God is One found praying, thinking and acting for others all throughout the biblical account (he utilizes, Luke 13:32, John 14:2, Luke 23:34, John 3:16, , John 4:9, *the Beatitudes* (Luke 6:20-26), Luke 1:51-53, Numbers 14:22, 1 John 4:8, and more to make this case).<sup>34</sup> "The for-otherness of Jesus was such that his lordship consists precisely in it" as González so poignantly states.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, what González does here, is he leaves the human/divine paradox to be, indeed, *still a paradox*. In his articulation,

Divine and human are not two opposite poles, like red and violet in the spectrum, so that as one approaches one pole one moves away from the other." [This is that "either/or thinking discussed earlier] "Being more human does not make Jesus less divine. And being more divine does not make him less human. Actually, it is *precisely in his being for others* that Jesus manifests his full divinity, and it is also in his being for others that he manifests his full humanity."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 151.

<sup>32</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 151.

<sup>33</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 151.

<sup>34</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 154-155. Luke 13:32 states, "And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow,...", John 14:2 states, "...I go to prepare a place for you." Luke 23:34 states "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do....", John 3:16 states "For God.... gave...", John 4:9 the Christ shows humanness to others and seeing humanness in others breaking down tribal barriers, "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that though, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Luke 6:20-26, states, "...Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh., etc." Luke 1:51-53 states, "...He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree., etc." Numbers 14:22 shows God acting justly for the oppressed; stating "Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt..." 1 John 4:8 states, "...for God is love." All of these are testaments of the Judeo-Christian God living for others.

<sup>35</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 154-155.

<sup>36</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 152.



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Another final component for our exegetical purposes, is that within Biblical Scripture, Gonzalez finds the true revealing nature of Christology according to González, which is, what ‘Christ does for us.’ This is at odds with the ‘juridical view,’ where Christ comes to pay a debt, due to human finiteness or ‘inept inspiration’, he argues that this ‘juridical view’ is likewise a product of one’s privileged situatedness in the socio-political sphere, and argues for what he calls ‘the Classical view’ that is closest to the true church, the early church, where “Christ is one in which he conquers the powers of evil and makes us participants of his victory by uniting us to him.”<sup>37</sup>

### **A Reasoned Evaluation on The Success or Lack-There-Of, Concerning the Author's Thesis**

But the contingent problem here for his argument, is that González creates his argument based off of the Christian tradition he already has thoroughly critiqued concerning Christology, and the Biblical Scripture (less explicitly critiqued) from the beginning. How is this the case? Well González argues from the beginning of “And the Word Was Made Flesh,” that the process of Constantinization started “two centuries before with Justin—and even before with Philo” which is going to significantly affect the Christian tradition and Scripture:

By showing the ‘rationality’ of this notion--on the basis that only the fixed and given is strictly rational--and *the anthropomorphism of the images with which Scripture* and early Christian theology described the living God, the exponents of the theology of the status quo were able *to do away with a great deal of the biblical picture* of an active, just, loving, and avenging God. At the same time, allegorical interpretation *\*dehistoricized the Bible\**, and thus God's activity in history was transmuted into perennial and *supposedly ‘higher meanings’*.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, here we find the images of Scripture have been tainted when it comes to their interpretation—based off of González’ deconstruction. We also find present González’ suggesting that the imperialistic status quo was successful in “doing away with a great deal of the biblical picture” to the point of no longer making the Bible historically accurate.

Firstly, it must be said that I appreciate González' motive and trajectory for his Christological argument. I think Liberation Theology rescues Christian Theology. It is a position I hold that I’m not arguing here. However, as the thesis mentioned above, in exemplification of González’ new

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<sup>37</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 154-155.

<sup>38</sup> González, “The Word Made Flesh,” 139. The Scripture critique is embedded in here, however it’s not entirely clear what he means.

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Christology, it is based on the very foundation he eroded in the beginning—*biblical revelation* of the Christ.<sup>39</sup> And *part of* González' critique is the idea of corruption within Christian tradition, *including* corruption within Scripture<sup>40</sup> and alluded to in a couple other places as seen below:

Great pains were taken to mitigate the scandal of God's being revealed in a poor carpenter. His life and sayings were reinterpreted so as to make them more palatable to the rich and powerful. Innumerable legends were built around him, usually seeking to raise him to the level that many understood to be that of the divine--that is, to the level of a superemperor.<sup>41</sup>

From the above block quote, one potential objection from my argument is to suggest that González is better interpreted where he is reaffirming *the valid Biblical Scripture* about the Christ against that Biblical scripture which he has already deemed as corrupted, or Constantinized. And this objection potentially could be further reaffirmed by the following. "Even after all this [the Constantinization] was said and done, there still remained the very real and very human figure of the carpenter crucified by the ruling powers, crying in his distress, and yet declared to be 'very God.' This was and is the stumbling block that no form of Constantinian theology can overcome."<sup>42</sup> However, even if we grant this (which we are not certain), it appears that González would need to show that somehow the Scripture that is quoted *is not* epistemically situated with some other socio-politically tarnished (Constantinized) meaning that obscures truth in Scripture, obscuring the true Christ.

However, *in objection* to my last reply, one perhaps could argue that what González is trying to articulate is that Scripture seems to show itself in a self-evident manner, thus allowing Scripture to speak for itself. Yet, the problem with this is that *terrible lies have been told* and *terrible things have been done* in the name of "letting scripture speak for itself." And applicable here is González formulating a Christology that includes Christ's existence; the same is true with "the Christ's teachings" and/or "What the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christ would mean for the modern interpreter" (this includes even more specific nuances in Scripture, etc.). So, if this is his intended articulation, I argue it must be further qualified.

*A second nuanced version of the same objection:* One perhaps may suggest that *it is* self-evident that this is the Christ's message, *because*, the fact of the matter is, "What colonial power would purport the Christ-God as lowly, or as a humble servant?" Well, at least one answer that could be given in response to that is that political colonial powers historically have been adaptable, and have adapted, and

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<sup>39</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 139.

<sup>40</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 139.

<sup>41</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 140.

<sup>42</sup> González, "The Word Made Flesh," 140.



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contingently *would* benefit off of a lay public that embodies a servanthood, while the rich and powerful focus on self-gain, attainment of property and material resources. While it is the case that González' Christology dismantles otherworldly ideology and pushes for justice, this does not prevent corrupt powers with money and resources from overseeing such counter-endeavors. In order to combat this, there would need to be some form of economic and material venture, similar to what one sees in the minority religious endeavors such as Malcolm X and Black Muslim Nationalism in the 1950s and 60s.

This brings me to another point regarding canonization: If González is critical of the councils' formulation/formation of God (Christology) in an epistemic sense, what stops him from being critical of the councils' *canonization process*? Much of, if not all the Scripture quoted, has undergone some type of canonization recognition by the Councils. Thus, González, would have to show why these books are legitimate canonization, and why for example the Gnostic texts that González was strongly against aren't instead. However, as mentioned above, these issues may be covered elsewhere. And furthermore, what foundation *is* González working on to accept the canonization of the books that are given? However, when thinking about these questions that concern the truth-value of a Christology, and therefore, the truth-value of Scripture for González, there very clearly is an existential component to it. (For example, this type of claim can be found implicit in almost every assertion González makes in regards to the Christological controversies, and why Hispanics could not jump aboard, while maybe others could in their sociorhetorical/epistemic blind-spots. This type of claim requires some existential aspect, some perceptual assessment of reality, *as it is through the lens of human consciousness*.)

And for my last point, I am critical of González' lack of recognition of his own philosophical framework and theoretical/abstract rationalization present within his own argument. Again, *perhaps* this is something that González, does elsewhere—and he certainly did add more of an existential component—but in adding it, *he had to rationalize it back to us*, and therefore, provide some theory/abstract conceptualization. The reality is, we need both, the existential human intuition, and the rational, the conceptual theory. (Perhaps not everything must be bound by Platonic "essence," but that was only part of Constantinization process.) But he is right in that when the one is heralded to the detriment of the testimony of oppressed others, this becomes marginalizing in effect.

I say all of this to suggest that González' line of reasoning may not be wrong in affirming that the early Christian Church formulated an *a priori* presupposing of God/humanity *set apart* from the existential experience and *biblical revelation* of the Christ. However, it needs more clarification, or there is missing information here, or perhaps there is a reality where it is insufficient for his theological argument.

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