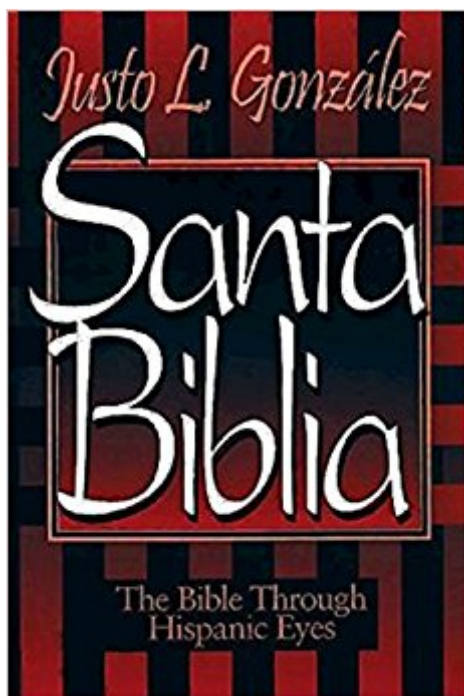


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Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes



Synopsis

Gonzalez explores how a Hispanic perspective illuminates the biblical text in ways that will be valuable not only for Latino readers but also for the church at large. Introducing five "paradigms" for Latino biblical interpretation, Gonzalez discusses theory and provides concrete examples of biblical texts that gain new meaning when read from a different perspective.

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Customer Reviews

Justo L. González has taught at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico and Candler School of Theology, Emory University. He is the author of many books, including *Church History: An Essential Guide* and *To All Nations From All Nations*, both published by Abingdon Press.

González es un ampliamente leído y respetado historiador y teólogo. Es el autor de numerosas obras que incluyen tres volúmenes de su *Historia del Pensamiento Cristiano*, la colección de *Tres Meses en la Escuela de...* (Mateo... Juan... Patmos... Prisión...)

(Español), *Breve Historia de las Doctrinas Cristianas* y *El ministerio de la palabra escrita*, todas publicadas por Abingdon Press.

I wish I'd read this book years ago. I'm a professional biblical scholar and I teach in a private Christian university. I used this text with a small class of Master's Students (all involved in ministry). Their feedback is just now coming in: all positive. By that I don't mean that they are encountering views of Scripture and readings of particular passages that are "old hat" and comfortable. Instead,

each is reporting being very challenged by Gonzalez's readings, but in ways that generate life, faith, and response to the Gospel. Now THAT is something to rave about. Gonzalez is acquainted with general trends in the guild of biblical scholarship and mentions them when relevant, but he is a wonderful spokesperson for an alternative vision for what an encounter with Scripture can look like and mean within a community. Gonzalez is a gracious, generous (but firm) guide into issues of social location in biblical interpretation. I recommend this book for personal or small-group enrichment, but also if you're looking for a textbook for a course on Scripture in general. It is not a resource for historical information on the biblical books, or even genre considerations, but provides careful and faithful interpretations of a range of passages in each chapter. Finally, beyond cultural/ethnic concerns, Gonzalez is aware of--and speaks compassionately regarding--the complex intersections of race, class, and gender that shape a reading of Scripture. But if you're reading this line negatively and expect a "subjective liberal" caricature of a theologian/Bible scholar, you will be disappointed.

I read this book for a class, and wasn't expecting much from it. It entirely changed the way I see the Bible! The voices represented in this text are invaluable for Biblical interpretation. I'd highly recommend this text to anyone looking to have their understanding of Scripture expanded from a new cultural perspective.

Justo Gonzales' book *Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes*, is an excellent aid, as we strive to be informed by various perspectives of biblical interpretation. Gonzales paints a picture of biblical interpretation as viewing a landscape. Gonzales states, "The landscape itself is the same for all of us. Yet each one sees it from a different perspective"(17). This beautiful metaphor is an accurate picture of what happens as we all seek to read and be moved by the scriptures. In the landscape of biblical interpretation, Gonzales aims to give us a glimpse of what the Hispanic perspective of the bible may look like. He explores the themes of Marginality, Poverty, Mestizaje, Mulatez, Exiles, and Solidarity as experienced by Hispanics in the United States, and Latin America. Gonzales takes us through a historical journey of the Latino story, as well as pointing out relevant passages in the bible that parallel the Hispanic experience. With *Santa Biblia*, Gonzales creates an insightful guide to Hispanic biblical hermeneutics, however; he misses some key opportunities to make relevant connections in his exploration of the theme of poverty. *Santa Biblia* is broken down into five main chapters. In the introduction, he lays out for us his postmodern approach to this book and expresses his alignment with the postmodern value for different perspectives. Gonzales also

goes on to acknowledge the wide range of people that make up the Hispanic community, and so his attempt in this book is to find the common thread among the Latino community. Gonzales also offers us a brief view of his background and his experiences as from his youth, to his career in academia. We then move onto the theme of marginality where, Gonzales explores how marginality affects the Hispanic view. He uses both biblical references, and secondary sources to take us through this theme. One of the themes found in this chapter is the relationship between those that are in the margins, to those who are in the center of society and politics. Gonzales writes, "As Hispanics, we stand at the margin of the dominant cultural and political trends in our society"(33). Here, he identifies a common thread that occurs among Hispanics and how so many Hispanics find themselves on the fringe of society. The chapter on the theme of poverty draws on the biblical stories of the day laborers and the early church in Acts. Here, he walks us through these biblical stories and points to how poverty affects the Hispanic reading of the bible. One story he uses is the story of Abraham in Isaac. A common reading of this text is to highlight Abraham's obedience to God and his willingness to sacrifice. Gonzales uses insights by Daniel Garcia, to show us how the Hispanic perspective of this passage may be more for the ram, than for Abraham. Hispanics may see themselves as the ram that conveniently appears in order to spare the children of the wealthy(58). His exploration of the theme of Mestizaje and Mulatez draws uses historical examples and the story of Paul in the New Testament, as he worked to define his cultural identity. In Chapter 4, he explores the theme of exiles and aliens and explores the familiar issues of immigration. In this chapter, he explores the old testament stories of Ruth and Joseph. He points out that like Ruth and Joseph were immigrants that help their families and their country, in the same way Latinos are able to be a blessing especially here in America. He then moves on to the theme of solidarity where we explore the Latino connection to family. He also notes, that as latinos immigrate to the United States, one of the elements that is lost, is the element of family. Gonzales concludes the book by reminding us of the importance of different perspectives and how the meaningful contribution that the Hispanic perspective has to the biblical landscape. The theme of marginalization seems to capture all the themes covered in this book. This may be why Gonzales chose to make marginalization the first theme to explore. Each progressive chapter seems to be getting more and more specific. Each theme seems to point the to the idea of being an outsider or on the margins of society. Gonzales also introduces the phrase "The Bible has been good to us!"(23) which is a reoccurring theme through out the entire book. The phrase captures what Hispanics find as they read the scriptures. In Gonzales' words, "What they find is rather a worldview, and interpretation of their own predicament, put things under the light and give them a sense of worth and of hope"(117).

Basically, as Latinos read the Bible, they are looking for solidarity and hope, given their marginalized and outsider position. As Hispanics read the Bible they see this as the Bible "being good to them." Being of Hispanic decent myself, I was very excited to read about Gonzales' view of the Hispanic hermeneutical perspective. Although, he succeeds in showing us the Hispanic perspective, I argue that he did not represent the theme of poverty sufficiently by not making enough connections to the Hispanic perspective. As he explores poverty, he assumes that the reader will make the connections on his own. The theme of poverty is personally meaningful to me, as it is part of the story of my family. His exploration to marginality in Hispanic hermeneutics is exceptionally beautiful. His use of secondary sources along with biblical examples works remarkably well to support his arguments. To sum up his exploration of this theme, Gonzales states it beautifully, "A reading from a perspective and experience of marginality tells us that bringing the marginalized to the very center of God's love and God's community is an essential part of the gospel of Jesus Christ"(55). In other words, reading the Bible from "Hispanic eyes," we are able to see that God longs for us to reach out to the marginalized witness to them about God's love. I also found his insights about the early church helpful, and how he in turn offers some criticism for the church today. He writes "the reason why we are declining is that we have lost our sense of mission, and in so doing we have lost one of the greatest sources from which the church has traditionally been renewed"(54). Here, he offers us a keen insight into how critical it is for us as the church community to embrace the marginalized. Failure to embrace the marginalized affects the core purpose of the church, which is to spread the gospel, to all the world. On the theme of poverty, Gonzales chooses to explore several biblical passages, such as, Jesus' parables of the day laborers and the early church in the book of Acts. As he explores these biblical stories, he makes suggestions as to how poverty may affect the Hispanic view. He spends more time explaining these biblical stories in the context of poverty than in drawing connections to the Hispanic experience. As we explore these biblical stories, it seems as though Gonzales is hoping that the reader will be able to make the connections on his own to the Hispanic view. Poverty is something that profoundly affects the Latino community, and Gonzales misses opportunities to engage this theme. At the end of the chapter, he does address the issue of poverty and what a terrible force it is. Gonzales asserts "Poverty, as experienced by vast numbers of Hispanics in our barrios and migrant camps, is dehumanization"(75). This statement lets me know that Gonzales understands the awfulness of poverty among Hispanics, however, throughout the chapter he does not engage with it as fully as I was expecting, after reading his insightful chapter on marginality. Gonzales' analysis of the other themes covered in his book have brilliant insights and connections to the Hispanic experience.

Through exploring the themes of Mestizaje, Mulatez, exiles, aliens, and solidarity he captures the Hispanic experience and shows how this affects Hispanic hermeneutics. Being Latino myself, Gonzales' insights reminded me of my Hispanic experience and how it affects my reading of the bible. Santa Biblia, is a veritable hermeneutical resource for the Christian community, as we seek to read the scriptures faithfully. Gonzales offers us many accurate insights into the Hispanic view of the biblical landscape. Although I found his exploration of the theme of poverty a bit lacking, the themes he chose, effectively address the Hispanic experience in the United States, and Latin America. This book offers us an excellent reference, as we open ourselves to be affected by all the cultures in the Christian community, in particular the Hispanic community.

This book is helpful for understanding Latino culture, even if one is not a Christian. The author is humble and insightful. If one is Christian, I believe this book will help broaden one's understanding of the Bible, although the book isn't a bible study per se.

Outstanding book, I recommend strongly to any pastor or preacher.

This book has totally shaped and affirmed the way that I look at scripture. He's a genius.

Santa Biblia is a well-written account of a Hispanic perspective of theology. Gonzalez offers fresh perspective on the Scriptures, particularly as he shows us what they look like to the marginal, poor, and exiled.

This is an excellent book that shows how Hispanics have read the Bible in the past and continue to do so today. Recommended for non-Hispanics who want to understand the Hispanic's hermeneutics and for Hispanics who longed for religious scholarly literature that deals with their most pressing issues in the area of biblical interpretation.

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