

## Road Map for the Rummage Sale

*Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (1989)

35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reflection

I first came across *Mañana* 25 years ago when I was a young grad student visiting Chicago for a conference. I had just given my life to Christ several years before, and I felt a strong calling to become a professor and to use the professorial platform to address issues of race and Christianity. I remember walking into a bookstore near the University of Chicago and stumbling across this copy of *Mañana*. Little did I know that it was a signpost for the direction my life would take.

*Mañana* changed the way I view Christian theology and just Christianity in general. Like many other Latinos, I grew up in an immigrant church and our theology was inherited from missionaries who introduced us to personal relationship with Christ and the Scriptures. This was good and amazing. But, we were also taught—largely subconsciously—to conflate the Gospel with Anglo American culture (69). The Gospel presented to us, moreover, had no social ethic. It focused upon forgiveness and Heaven—deeply important things—but most of our daily lives went untouched by the Gospel apart from legalistic rules against drinking, smoking, or dancing.

*Mañana* helped me both to appreciate my roots *and* understand that the Gospel preached and embodied by Christ and his earliest followers encompassed all of God’s Creation. It also helped me to understand that ethnic culture is a natural fruit of the stewardship of creation, and therefore that my own Chinese-Mexican cultural lenses are valuable for the task of theological reflection.

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Very soon after beginning my job as a professor of Chicana/o Studies at UCLA in 2005, I began to meet students like Carlos. Carlos wrote this note to me in a class I taught about the Brown Church:

“As a Latino growing up as the son of an undocumented pastor in the Midwest, my experience was much different from those who surrounded me. I felt that I could not identify with my peers and I always felt out of place. My white peers accepted me in the way that I stood in right by being [part of their same denomination] but I was not accepted because of my skin color, my race, or my father’s undocumented status. I wanted to believe in what my family and church taught me as truth but I slowly drifted away from my beliefs as a result of the testimony I received from the Anglo church and their members. Even to this day those same Protestants refer to us as ‘wetbacks, beaners, and spics.’ I find myself conflicted with my identity.”

As reflected in this quote from my student, many Latina/o young adults in the United States find themselves in a crisis of IDENTITY. They are disenchanted by the anti-immigrant rhetoric and politics of mainstream Evangelicalism and they seek a spiritual home and identity which encompass their love for Jesus, their diverse God-given cultural heritages, and their passion for racial justice. They find themselves in a spiritual borderlands, caught between institutional Christianity and their immigrant families who first taught them about Jesus. What was observed by Dr. Justo in *Mañana* in the 1980’s is still true today: “younger generations of Hispanic Americans, spurred by the example of Afro-Americans and other minorities, are turning to their cultural roots” (37).

My students think they are alone, however, and do not realize that many have walked the road of spiritual deconstruction and reconstruction before them. Indeed, they are not alone in more than one way. Sadly, 1 million young adults are leaving the church in the U.S. each year. In addition, Brown Theologians like Don Justo have been walking the *same road* for the past 60 years. *Mañana* provides a time-tested roadmap for the often perilous task of theological deconstruction and reconstruction. To borrow John Henry Newman’s framework of faithful development, *Mañana* also reflects the vital characteristic of “chronic vigor”: it has endured and continued to bear overflowing spiritual fruit for more than three decades.

My remarks today are expressed in gratitude to Don Justo for the way in which *Mañana* has shone a theological light for myself and many others who have wandered in the spiritual

borderlands. My remarks will focus upon **five key theological signposts** from *Mañana* which shed light upon the current state of ecclesial affairs and offer guidance for the way forward.

These signposts are:

1. A New Reformation
2. Fuenteovejuna: Communal Theological Insights from the Brown Church
3. Creation: Culto, Cultura y Cultivo
4. Reading the Bible in Spanish
5. Mañana: Living Now into the New Creation

### *A New Reformation*

In 1990, the year that I graduated from Los Altos High School, *Mañana* made the bold claim that a new reformation, the “Reformation of the Twentieth Century,” had begun. Dr. Justo posited three macroevents and five characteristics which marked this new reformation. These macroevents consist of:

1. The end of the Constantinian era, and the concomitant rise of what was then the new right.
2. The failure of the North.
3. A growing self-consciousness of the peoples of the Global South and minorities and women in the United States.

### *End of the Constantinian Era*

“It is the end of the Constantinian era. Ever since the fourth century, the church has existed in politically and socially advantageous conditions (43)...Christianity has been allied with the existing order of society and has profited from it (44)...the New Right defends the old wrongs in the name of ‘Christian civilization...The protagonists may win an election or two. They may even hope to turn the United States into a fascist state. But in terms of long-range history, they are already defeated.” In 2026, these insights ring eerily true.

## *Failure of the North*

Girded with modernist hubris, nations of the North Atlantic during the 19<sup>th</sup> century promised “to usher in a new era of prosperity for humankind” (44). In the words of Mark Lau Branson and Alan Roxburgh, at the heart of this hubris lies “modernity’s wager”:

“a wager that life can be lived well without God. Human beings...seen as autonomous, self-making individuals whose identities are not given but plastic and, therefore, malleable to all kinds of social administration...Autonomy, plasticity, and self-making are the marks of Modernity’s wager, and the creation of technocratic elites with the skills to manage and control desired outcomes” (Branson and Roxburgh, *Leadership, God's Agency, and Disruptions: Confronting Modernity's Wager*, 35).

As Dr. Justo observed in 1990, modernity has lost the bet.

From a theological perspective, I would also that another characteristic of the failure of the North is that the modernist-fundamentalist debates of a century ago have finally run their course.

On the one hand, Christian Fundamentalism has morphed into MAGA Christianity. As the North American church has diversified through immigration from Latin America, Asia, and Africa in recent years, a reactionary movement of white Christian nationalism has arisen which conflates the church with US civil religion and rejects immigrant Christians as undesirable newcomers and even illegitimate believers. As has been mentioned, one result is that millions of Latino young adults, as well as millennials and GenZ of all cultural backgrounds, are fleeing the church, repelled by the increasingly explicit equation of Christianity with nationalism. Perhaps unsurprisingly, and despite their loud and vocal presence in the popular US imagination, this brand of white evangelical Christianity is in sharp numerical decline.

At the opposite religious and political pole, a movement of progressive Christianity has surfaced in recent years to challenge the rise of white Christian nationalism. For this I am grateful. Largely expressed through the mainline denominational descendants of the fundamentalist-

modernist debates, some elements of this politically progressive expression of Christianity stress the social implications of the gospel, while deemphasizing personal experiences of radical spiritual encounter with the Holy Spirit. In recent years, progressive Christians have championed issues such as immigration reform, eco-activism, the ordination of women, LGBTQ civil rights, and marriage equality. Some elements of this politically progressive expression of Christianity limit faith to social activism, while deemphasizing personal transformation and deep spiritual encounter with the Holy Spirit. Similar to their more conservative evangelical counterparts, white mainline Protestants have also experienced a steady decline in numbers, coupled with an older median age of 50. Without significant intervention, this downturn will likely continue into the next several decades.

*Mañana* speaks of this downturn as it was manifesting itself in the 1980's and 90's: "Mainline churches, painfully aware of uninspiring statistics, eagerly grope for explanations and solutions. Most of what one hears are easy prescriptions, as if the malaise had to do essentially with structural matters that some program or constitutional revision could fix" (157).

The fundamentalist-modernist debates of a century ago seem to have reached the end of a road as their contemporary denominational progeny do not seem to possess within themselves what is required to successfully address the pressing problems and spiritual hunger of our current day. There is a feeling that there must be something more than Christianity as a Sunday morning reiteration of a conservative or progressive political talk show.

Though these two poles of Euro-American Protestant Christianity by no means represent the full denominational spectrum of Christianity in North America, the political and cultural divisions which they represent are to be found within most other Christian denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church.

Neither Christianity as a frame for progressive activism bereft of deep spiritual encounter, nor Christianity as a proxy for religious nationalism and personal self-fulfillment, is sufficient to meet

the deepest spiritual hungers of the coming generations. Owing to factors such as age structure and religious switching, such trends of religious disaffiliation will continue into the next several decades unabated, and it is estimated that the numbers of religiously unaffiliated shall increase to 26% of the entire US population by 2050. This translates into 111 million individuals.

As in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, however, hope sometimes springs from unexpected and forsaken places such as “Galilee of the Gentiles,” or, in the words of Orlando Costas—“from Christ outside the gate.” The rapidly growing immigrant church holds much promise for the future revitalization of Christianity in North America.

This is the hope of *Mañana*.

At the same time that North America is experiencing such an overall marked collapse in formal religious identification, it is also experiencing a diversity explosion, reminiscent of John’s vision of the New Jerusalem of people from every language, tongue, tribe and nation. The United States is in the early stages of a profound racial and ethnic “mestizaje,” in which cultural groups from every continent on the globe are freely mixing in a historically unprecedented way. From 2010 to 2020, the multiracial population of the US grew 276% to 33.8 million people; the Black or African American population increased from 38.9 million to 46.9 million; The American Indian and Alaska Native population, alone and in combination, increased from 5.2 million in 2010 to 9.7 million in 2020--a 86.5 percent increase. The Hispanic/Latino population climbed by 23% to 62.1 million; and the Asian American community, comprised of people having origins in East Asia, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, increased to 24 million. The White population, itself also comprised of diverse ethnic origins in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, remained the largest race or ethnicity group in the United States, with 204.3 million people identifying as White alone and 235.4 million people reporting White alone or in combination with another group. However, the White alone population decreased by 8.6% since 2010.

The Census Bureau projects that the multiracial population will triple by 2060, and it is estimated that as much as 20 percent of the entire US population will be mixed race by 2050. In fact, in the near future, the growth of the mixed-race population will outpace that of Asians, Latinos, whites, Blacks, and Native Americans. Maybe Vasconcelos was right; he happened to be just a couple hundred miles off in his geography.

In the decades to come, these cultural demographic trends will continue to become more pronounced. The demographic future of the United States is written on the wall. The United States is in a profound pluralistic transition.

These demographic changes are driven by several major factors which also hint at the future of Christianity in the United States. First is the aging nature of the US population. Within the next decade, Baby Boomers will all be older than 65, and older adults will come to outnumber children for the first time in US history. Second, the US is also experiencing falling fertility rates. As a consequence of this shift toward an increasingly older population and declining birth rates, the United States will be required to turn to international migration in order to sustain the labor force, economy, and market demand. The end result is that immigration will soon become the primary driver of population growth in the US. Immigrants will increasingly sustain the United States, socially, economically, and even religiously.

### *The Browning of the US and Global Church*

This rapid trend towards cultural diversity is reflected in the changing demographics of the US church. The North American church is “browning” as white representation is in decline and all other ethnic groups are together increasing. Immigration from places such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia is fueling this rapid ecclesial change, and in fact, one in three American evangelicals is now a person of color. Accordingly, approximately one quarter of all Christians in the US come from first generation immigrant families. As part of these rapid changes, grassroots expressions of church are gradually replacing the formal structures and practices of Euro-American Christendom.

These domestic trends coincide with the fact that the global pendulum of Christianity has already swung in the direction of Africa, Latin America, and Asia. As Allen Yeh writes, Christianity has always been polycentric, and it now has a new geographic center. The expression that Christianity is a “white man’s religion” is already not true. By 2050, moreover, it is estimated that the majority of Christians in the world will live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with four out of every ten Christians residing in sub-Saharan Africa. The present and future face of the Church of Jesus of Nazareth is “brown,” and Christianity is returning to its historical origins as a faith of the marginalized born in the Near East. In the decades to come, Christian immigrants from Latin America, Africa, and Asia will redefine the US church in practice, polity, and theology.

This supplies a hermeneutical advantage, for, as discussed in *Mañana*, Scripture was birthed and first interpreted by those at the margins of society prior to the Constantinization of the church. According to Dr. Justo: “North Atlantic male theology is [no longer] taken to be normative, universal theology, to which then women, other minorities, and people from the younger churches may add their footnotes.” (52) “Hispanic theology whose first steps we now witness, is but one element of that vast reformation and can be properly understood only when viewed within that larger context.” (43)

Christian immigrants from the Majority World bring with them a vibrant personal faith driven by radical dependence on Jesus made necessary by suffering and the struggle to survive. There’s an “abuelita faith,” or “grandmother’s faith” that has been tested and purified by many testimonies of God’s faithfulness and passed down to successive generations. Such radical belief is often associated with the rapid global spread of Protestant Pentecostalism, as well as with charismatic Catholic Christianity in Africa and Latin America, but this characteristic of Southern Christianity transcends formal Pentecostal denominational affiliation.

Global theologians also bring distinct perspectives that have the potential to address many of the burning spiritual and social questions facing the North American church. Calvin and Zwingli have good things to say, but little poignance for pressing issues of race and culture. The faith of

immigrants will revitalize the US church in many ways unforeseen. From such faith, revival can certainly spring.

Stated another way, Christians from the Global South bring distinct community cultural wealth and spiritual capital to the waning U.S. church. The Euro-American church is coming close to the end of its spiritual rope, and does not possess within itself the cultural resources to save itself. In theological terms, John the Seer refers to this community cultural wealth as the “glory and honor of the nations” (Revelation 21:26). According to John, every ethnic group of the world possesses distinct “glory and honor” which is of eternal value for the service of God, the Church, and the world. This cultural treasure or “glory” is a reflection of the glory of God in and through each of us as God’s unique children. Contrary to white Christian nationalist discourse, God does not make “shithole” countries, and those of every ethnic community possess equal dignity in God’s eyes.

As Latinas/os we read the Bible through the lenses of our God given community cultural wealth. In the words of Dr. Justo, we read the Bible “in Spanish” or with “Hispanic eyes.” By this he does not mean reading the Bible in a Spanish translation, but rather, reading Scripture in light of the distinct , and diverse, historical experiences of Latinas/os in the United States. “If it is true that we bring a particular perspective to history and to theology, then we must also bring a particular perspective to the interpretation of Scripture. And, once again, it may be that this perspective will prove useful not only to us but also to the church at large” (75). The New Reformation requires that we read the Bible in Spanish, but also in Arabic, Chinese, Laotian, Tagalog, Hindi, Swahili, and through the lenses of all of the cultural groups which God has created. As a Jesuit somewhere has said, “We will not know God fully until the Gospel reaches all of the countries of the world.”

*Mañana* predicted all of these trends 35 years ago. To be honest, I think that *Mañana* was a little bit ahead of its time. The New Reformation is now a bit clearer for many others to see. Dr. Justo is like Peter Abelard, Arnold of Brescia, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, or Erasmus, who sounded the clarion call before most could hear it or had eyes to see the coming storm of the Protestant

Reformation. I am reminded of Luther's famous statement about Jan Hus: "We are all Husites without knowing it." All of us here are Gonzalites without knowing it.

### *Another Critical Race Counterstory*

Rubén and Sandra were "gemelos." They immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico, fleeing gang violence and poverty. In Mexico, their parents Juan and Emilia had come to faith in Christ through a white U.S. missionary named Jim. Jim often told them stories about how the U.S. was a land of freedom, liberty, and economic opportunity, and how God had blessed the country because its founders were Christians. Juan thought to himself: "if this one person is so educated and brings so much economic wealth to our little town, can you imagine a whole country filled with people like him! It must be a paradise!" Missionary Jim saw that Juan was a gifted preacher and had many spiritual gifts. Once Juan preached to a crowd of 100 people, and virtually everyone streamed to the front of the altar, in tears, to give their lives to Christ.

The transition to the U.S. was tough for Juan and Emilia, and their children Rubén and Sandra, who were thirteen years old when their family settled in Orange County. Juan soon became disenchanted as he crashed into the wall of denominational racial paternalism and outright racism. For Rubén and Sandra, even though they were top students and athletes, and their father was even a pastor, they often experienced racism when attending the "Americano" youth group.

Rubén and Sandra went to college looking for answers that would help them with their social identity crisis. How could their social identity as followers of Christ be reconciled with their ethnic cultural identity as Latinos? In Chicana/o Studies classes they found good answers which explained the inequalities they grew up with both in Mexico and Santa Ana. They found few spiritual answers, however, as many professors expressed outright animus towards their inherited Christian faith with little room for nuance.

One semester during sophomore year, Sandra decided to take a class on the “historical Jesus.” She found some things interesting, and others confusing. She learned about Jesus’ marginalized status as a poor Galilean, son of a carpenter and family which was colonized by the Romans. One of the books they read, however, claimed that Jesus was a violent revolutionary, and another that he was misogynistic and ethnocentric. Her professor also claimed that Jesus’ divinity was a later invention, and that Jesus was likely married to Mary Magdalene. “If this Jesus was the cornerstone’ of the Christian faith, what would the building of Christianity look like,” she thought to herself.

The professor also assigned a text called, “A New New Testament.” The book adds 10 texts to the New Testament, and was compiled by a 19-member council which included biblical scholars, church leaders from the Episcopal, United Methodist, United Church of Christ and Lutheran denominations, and even an expert in Eastern religions and yoga.

Curious about these churches she was not familiar with, Sandra decided to start visiting one of them. The parishioners were welcoming and kind, though most were older and white. That was fine, her parents had taught her to respect people of all cultural backgrounds, and she knew this was what the Bible taught. Sandra was so surprised, in a good way, that the first sermon she heard talked openly about issues of social justice. This emphasis was refreshing, and she was grateful because she had never heard such issues discussed in church.

But after a few months, she grew weary. There was almost an exclusive focus on justice issues, and she missed the deep personal encounters with the Holy Spirit from her parents’ church. Her abuelita had even been miraculously healed of heart problems after a prayer service, and so she had no doubt that Jesus was real and that he transformed lives. A later sermon, or “homily” as they called it, was even titled, “the Gospel According to Rachel Maddow.” “It’s hard to put my finger on it,” she whispered to herself, “but this church, and the class I took, feel just as ‘white’ as the conservative churches I left, but from the opposite direction. There’s gotta be something more than church as a Sunday version of MSNBC or Fox News.”

Sandra was confused.

### *Rummage Sale*

According to Phyllis Tickle, every 500 years the Church has a “rummage sale.” A “venta de garaje” if you will.

“[E]very five hundred years the empowered structures of institutionalized Christianity, whatever they may be at the time, become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered in order that renewal and new growth may occur.”

“...about every five hundred years the Church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale...we are living in and through one of those five-hundred-year sales.” Anglican Bishop Mark Dyer

In *Mañana*, Dr. Justo supplies a theological roadmap for the rummage sale. AETH and the Gonzalez Center offer “behind the wheels training” using this roadmap for pastors, students, and families like Juan, Emilia, Sandra, and Rubén. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Justo supplies theological signposts such as:

1. Fuenteovejuna: Communal Theological Insights from the Brown Church
2. Creation: Culto, Cultura y Cultivo
3. Reading the Bible in Spanish
4. Mañana: Living Now into the New Creation

To each of these I will now turn.

### *Fuenteovejuna: Communal Theology*

First, let me speak about approach or method. It is said that if you give someone a fish, then they can eat for a day, but if you teach them to fish...

The approach of “Fuenteovejuna” has taught me to fish. Fuenteovejuna style theology is a method of communal theology, “a constant dialogue among the entire community” (30). It consists of communal reflection upon the sacred, as opposed to the “exaggerated

individualism” of much of the theological guild where, “[t]heologians, like medieval knights, joust with one another, while their peers look at the contest from a distance—if they look at all” (29).

In the Acknowledgments section, Dr. Justo speaks of the community of interlocutors which shaped *Mañana*. He writes: “most of them I do not even know by name. Many are ancient Christian writers who have now been my companions in life for over three decades. Others are colleagues and friends, both in this country and throughout the world whose writings and conversations have taught me much” (7).

I don’t know how much Dr. Justo anticipated that his readers would reflect upon these particular two sentences, but I have been reflecting upon the truth therein contained for the past four years. Books like *Worship in the Early Church* and *A Concise History of Christian Doctrine* have led me down a delightful theological path of our ancestors in the faith. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, St. Cyril, Augustine, St. Anthony, and other desert fathers and mothers have become my friends, too.

As I have reflected upon Dr. Justo’s words, I have come to understand that communal theological reflection means the whole church, the communion of saints over 2,000 years. In my reading, Fuentovejuna represents the intercultural, intergenerational, cross-socioeconomic community of believers over the past 2,000 years; the local church and the global church. Our ancestors in the faith from every tribe, language, nation, and tongue who have gone before us. Women and men, of every age. We need the combined insight of all members of the Body of Christ to fully understand the Gospel and to know God more fully. No one is left out or an add on. Indeed, God has given even greater honor to the parts that lack it (1 Corinthians 12:23-25). Wise theological discernment is necessarily done “en conjunto,” in conversation with the entire Body of Christ, past and present. Christianity is a generational process, and it includes *all the generations*.

Many conversations around theological deconstruction today, however, act as if Christianity has only existed for the past 500 years. On the right, that means from the time of the Protestant Reformation. On the left that often means since about the time of Columbus. Circumscribed by the era of European colonialism, we end up fighting over a limited set of theological constructs, categories, and presuppositions--round and round we go. Meanwhile, the geographic centers of Christianity have already moved on.

A quote from C.S. Lewis often comes to mind: "If you join at eleven o'clock a conversation which began at eight you will often not see the real bearing of what is said." C.S. Lewis

And so, in order to understand where we are now as the church in the US, we need to understand history. This is where I feel such a kindred spirit with Dr. Justo as a historian myself.

As I've learned from *The Story of Christianity*, the movement of Jesus of Nazareth existed for about fifteen hundred centuries before the arrival of European colonialism onto the world scene. For the first 1,000 years of Church history, the geographic center of Christianity was Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. As I learned from Andrew Walls, the emperor of China first contemplated the truths of Christianity at the same as the English King of Northumbria! My Egyptian Coptic Orthodox friends are the stewards of a Christian tradition tracing back to Mark, and, with the exception of about 130 years, they have been persecuted continuously.

You might call the church of the first 1,000 years the original "Brown Church." By this I mean the diverse Global Church which existed prior to the social construction of "whiteness" as a theological construct and justification for colonialism. Until 451, the original Brown Church had a strong theological consensus. Until the Great Schism of 1054, a general theological consensus existed all across the world, notwithstanding some theological disputes serving mostly as proxies for political conflicts. Interesting story. In 1989-1990, the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox churches—right around the time of the publication of *Mañana*-- came to a joint Christological agreement after 1500 years of divorce. They realized that their Christological

divisions were largely semantic, informed originally by linguistics and politics. Remarkably, after 1500 years, both ancient branches of the church retained remarkable theological agreement. As Dr. Justo says in *Mañana*, when scuba diving, what stands out most underwater is not what moves, but what stays the same and does not change. In the torrential waters of U.S. Christianity today, many are looking for what is stable.

As previously stated, I have found that most conversation around theological and spiritual “deconstruction” focus upon 1492-present. If the Resurrection of Jesus was 8:00 am, then 1492-present is like 4:00 pm-5:00 pm in the grand scope of Christian history. And yet, so many, including myself, have analyzed the problem of Christian nationalism as if the past 500 years comprise the sum total of Christian history. I submit this is why so many of us get stuck in trying to detangle ourselves from the racism of the US church. We’re joining a conversation at 5:00 pm that began at 8:00 am, and our lack of context keeps us from being able to see clearly enough to propose healthy solutions for renewal and reconstruction.

I think it makes sense to start with the early church and the theological consensus of the first 1,000 years—the Great Tradition as it is called-- as a point of departure for the theological rummage sale. I don’t know if this is what he intended, but this is the approach I have gleaned from Dr. Justo. It was the community of the early church which received the Scriptures and formed the canon based upon a common understanding of apostolic tradition. The early church lived closest in time to Christ and the Apostles, and some, like Irenaeus, were only two generations removed from the 12. I think I can say this and still be a Protestant. It doesn’t mean the early church got it all right, but their sight is certainly much clearer than a “sola scriptura” approach which says “I read the Bible, this is what it means to me, therefore it is true.” Building upon the theological consensus of the early church, we can do our best to discern faithful theological development from pure innovation. As Dr. Justo writes in another book, doctrine is like the foul lines on a baseball field or the warning signs on the edge of a cliff. Within the foul lines there are almost limitless various of plays which are possible, but a ball hit outside of the foul line can never be a home run. We can also look to history to learn from the ways in which some have fallen off the cliff.

This is *Fuenteovejuna*. As a theological approach, Fuenteovejuna allows us to look to the entire history of the Church, both to learn and to sift. East, West, North, South. The early church, the medieval church, the church of the modern era and emerging voices, in communal reflection, to search for the through lines of faithful development. By its very nature, the Church is a cultural mestizaje.

In the words of the foreword, “Justo opens the way for new religious mestizaje, a new and fruitful encounter of traditions which will be the Christian expression of the future” (20). I think this is what is meant by a new ecumenism.

### *Examples of Fuenteovejuna Theology*

Throughout *Mañana*, Dr. Justo models the approach of Fuenteovejuna, referencing a wide range of theologians from Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzen, and St. Ambrose, St. Jerome of Dalmatia, to Harnack, Bultmann, and even Vine Deloria. I would add that he does this with fairness and objective appreciation and criticism for all sides. I can only imagine what it was like to straddle the various denominational and theological poles of the 1980’s, and how hard it was to write *Mañana* in such a way that both opened eyes and created bridges. In this way, *Mañana* is also a model.

I close with a summary of the Gospel based upon what I have learned from *Mañana*. I begin with a quote from Dr. Justo in which he summarizes the major ailment of the U.S. church in the 1980’s, which, I firmly believe is equally applicable today: “The problem really has to do with the meaning of the gospel and how we apply it, not only in our individual lives but also in the communal and structural life of the church” (157).

What is the meaning of the Gospel?

To end where I began, I was raised in an immigrant Latina church which taught basically the following: Jesus died on the cross and rose again so that you might be forgiven of your sins and go to Heaven when you die. Five decades later, I still agree with each of those discrete points of theology, but now know, through the writings of Justo, Catherine, and others, that this is not the full picture. Far from it.

As a professor of ethnic studies for the past twenty years, I also know that apologetic bridges tend to bear traffic in both ways (96), and so the Gospel can also never be equated with any political philosophy, right or left.

### *Gospel of the Pelados*

I have learned from *Mañana* that the Gospel is for all, but especially the “Outsiders.” The “Gospel of the Pelados.” The term literally means bald. In Mexican slang, a pelado is someone very poor, broke, from the lowest social class, and excluded from elite society. Pelado also has the connotation of someone who is uncultured and thereby worthy of less respect. A related, more pejorative term is “naco.”

Pelado and naco can be contrasted with the terms “fresa” and “whitexicans.” Fresa means upper-class, spoiled, snobby, arrogant, out of touch. Whitexican refers to someone wealthier, privileged, and more white-skinned. There are also many hilarious synonyms and variations. “De la high.” “Bro, that dude gives me whitexican vibes.” “Bougie fresa.” “Fresa de Costco.” “Elite energy, carne asada plate.” “Fresa with coupons.” “Fresa mindset, Target paycheck.” “Fresa but drives a Jetta.”

You get the picture.

Most young adult Latinos think Jesus was *a fresa*. A Constantinized messiah of the fresas who justifies the status quo and is ally to the mighty. I remember once being in Chiapas and sharing

with a local academic and activist about the theological framework of Galilee vs Jerusalem. The outsiders and the have nots of Galilee as contrasted with the religious, political, and cultural center of power in Jerusalem. I asked her, where do you think Jesus was from. She said, “Well Jerusalem of course.”

My friend from Chiapas had never heard of the divine scandal of Jesús el pelado, the “stumbling block of Constantinian theology.” “Jesus the carpenter from Galilee who was called the Christ.” “[T]he very real and human figure of the carpenter crucified by the ruling powers, crying in his distress, and yet declared to be ‘very God.’” (140)

The Son of God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, who called Creation very good. Who planted within Creation the very seeds of diverse ethnic cultures, and who returned because we turned away and ruined the plan. Culto, Cultivo, and Cultura—worship, stewardship of creation, and the creation of culture are all interconnected. The Son of God came Incarnate to the very world that He created, to unite humanity and all of Creation to Himself; to heal creation from the insider. The Triune God, the very model of sharing and unity across distinctiveness. Men/women equal in Christ. Justice, mercy, all peoples flourishing, “the union of all things under Christ” (142). New Creation.

In the words of our early Brown Church ancestors, “God became human so that humans could become divine”—Irenaeus (155). “Jesus became what we are that He might make us what He is”—Athanasius. The Gospel of the Pelado.

The hope of Mañana: “the world will not always be as it is. God is already doing a new thing, and we can join it by the power of the Spirit! Mañana is here!” (164)

*Rev. Dr. Robert Chao Romero is a historian and professor of Chicana/o Studies and Asian American Studies at UCLA. He is also an immigration attorney and ordained minister and works to engage students and the Church in issues of race, social justice, and Christianity.*