

World

# LATIN AMERICAN

Agenda

2011



**WHAT GOD?  
WHAT RELIGION?**



## Our cover image, by Maximino CEREZO BARREDO

### *WHY DON'T YOU CHANGE GOD?*

*In order to change our lives  
we have to change God.*

*We have to change God  
in order to change the Church.*

*To change the World  
We have to change God.*

Pedro CASALDÁLIGA

Other resources:  
Primer, courses, digital Archive, etc.  
Cfr. page 237.

## This year we remind you...

We are celebrating the **twentieth anniversary** of the Agenda by putting online all the English editions of the Agenda in digital form. This is for those who are our passionate readers, our friends who are nostalgic about those early Agendas and for anyone who want to keep a digital copy of the Agendas.

For its part, the **Archives of the Latin American Agenda** are still online. They offer all the materials that the Agenda has produced and in three languages. Community animators, teachers, professors and pastoral workers will all find there a treasure of resources for their popular education activities, for formation, reflection and debate. You can do a search by theme, title, author or year of publication at [servicioskoinonia.org/agenda/archivo](http://servicioskoinonia.org/agenda/archivo). Now, when we complete 20 years of the Agenda, we are putting all the available Agendas on line, digitally.

**We put the accent on vision**, on attitude, on awareness, on education... Obviously, we aim at a practice. However our "charism" is to provoke the transformations of awareness necessary so that radically new practices might arise from another systemic vision and not just reforms or patches. We want to ally ourselves with all those who search for that transformation of conscience. We are at its service. This Agenda want to be, as always and even more than at other times, a box of materials and tools for popular education. Take a look also at «[servicioskoinonia.org/teologiapopular](http://servicioskoinonia.org/teologiapopular)», where we habitually publish our "courses of popular education."

**[latinoamericana.org/2011/info](http://latinoamericana.org/2011/info)** is the web site we have set up in the network in order to offer and circulate more material, ideas and pedagogical resources that can economically be accommodated in this paper version. As in the past, we will continue the complementarity between paper and electronic versions.

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Additionally, if you want to be advised of new additions (new material, activist campaigns, important new bibliographic information) that we are able to make available in the page of the Agenda, subscribe (without cost) to “Novedades Koinonía” that, in brief weekly or biweekly emails, will communicate this new information to you (without sending attachments, but providing you with the direct link).

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THE AGENDA PLACES THESE RESOURCES AT YOUR DISPOSITION: see page 237

# Holistic Vision of the World Latin American Agenda 2011

As we complete twenty years of the Agenda in 2011, we dedicate the topic to religion, nothing more, nothing less.

Our Agenda, aconfessional, ecumenical, and macroecumenical, coming from the perspective of Latin American liberatory popular education, has always had great respect for religion. Just like our peoples, who have traditionally thought that it was something sacred, untouchable, worthy of respect bordering on reverential fear, or even taboo...

But in these times of so much change, this is also changing. Our "epistemology" is changing. We do not know exactly how, and it isn't happening overnight, but our form of knowing, understanding, and proceeding based on our understanding is changing. We are reasoning in a different way. We no longer have these reverential fears, even less are we frightened by taboos. Society has become more conscientious, more critical, and more mature. We don't think that there is any danger in a critical analysis, if done with respect and honor. We are scandalized by almost nothing, and we do not fall into idealistic intrigues. We recognize more than ever how complex human beings function. It seems to us that now is the time to take on topics that we have never before broached. These are topics that also call for a profound renovation. Because of this, our Agenda is about religion.

Frequently, in our environments, in support of ecumenicism and macroecumenicism, we have thought it useful to put to one side religious topics—relegating them to the privacy of each person—in order to focus on the "historical praxis of liberation," the only thing that would seem to have decisive importance.

But liberation, like oppression, is also religious. From our historical perspective, we can see the role that religion has played in the legitimization of oppressive regimes, just as it has played a role in movements of liberation and emancipation. Additionally, we live in a society that has already been globalized,

in which all of us must deal with the consequences of all the religious positions of our brothers, sisters, and countries. We find ourselves affected by the religious fundamentalism of many human communities, and by spiritualism and lack of historical commitment by large groups inspired by religions that alienate them from the world and its problems, like the massive phenomenon of terrorists who commit suicide attacks in the name of religion, or by the fact that in the only superpower in the world—which, with its votes, doesn't just choose a president but affects all of us economically, politically, and culturally—50% of the population still believes that the world is 6,000 years old (Richard Dawkins), and believes that everything will end gloriously in a rapture to heaven (Sam Harris)...It is not just their problem; it is also our problem.

Religion is not enclosed in temples, or in our interior selves; it is present and influential in our society, in our history, in "Christian capitalism," in people who feel that they are spiritual beings who have had the misfortune of falling into the material world and who are destined to go to another world after their death, instead of feeling like native members of the community of life of this planet, called to co-govern and transform unjust human history. Many attempts at historical liberation have collapsed due to religious fears and demands. Religion also needs liberation. And liberation also needs religion. The struggle for Justice, like the passion for liberation—for which there are so many Latin American martyrs and universal martyrs who preceded them—is a "spiritual" experience. Because of this it is important to deal with religion.

Well, with the same passion as each year, here is our Latin American Agenda on the topic of religion. We want to note the following:

- We write for everyone...and the family of readers of the Agenda is extremely varied: from commit-

ted members of traditional base communities in rural areas, to university students and professors in the great metropolises like Mexico City and São Paulo. We cannot accommodate all material for all audiences.

- The charism of this Agenda is renovation, being on the border, always moving forward, looking not just at the immediate future, and always with a critical dimension. We make suggestions that we know many people have not intuited yet, and we know that, at the beginning, they will seem strange to some... We invite you to critically and carefully evaluate them.

- Also, this year the Agenda is not confessional but macroecumenical... We do not talk about our religion, but about religious data, spirituality, and religions, all of them respectable and true.

- In addition to the paper edition, we are working

to create electronic educational materials including a guide for the educational use of the Agenda for popular educators, and material more structured to take advantage of opportunities to provide courses and workshops on this theme in popular education groups, communities, and classrooms. Keep an eye on the following page for these resources, "Página de información y materiales complementarios," available at [www.latinoamericana.org/2011/info](http://www.latinoamericana.org/2011/info).

- On our 20th anniversary, we are putting digital editions of all our prior Agendas online so they are freely available to the public, for popular educators and individuals readers alike. You can access them here: [latinoamericana.org/Desde1992](http://latinoamericana.org/Desde1992).

In brotherhood and sisterhood,

**José María VIGIL**



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### **Pedagogical Use of the Agenda**

In addition to personal use, this Agenda is designed to be a pedagogical instrument for communicators, public educators, pastoral agents, group leaders, and activists...

The texts are always brief and agile, presented under the pedagogical concept of one page, formatted such that they can be directly photocopied and distributed as "work material" in schools, group meetings, adult literacy programs, or on literature tables. They can also be published in the bulletins of organizations or in local magazines.

The format of the texts is dictated by an "economic" criterion which possibly sacrifices aesthetics in the form of white spaces and illustrations in favor of a greater volume of message. This also allows us to keep a low price so the Agenda is more accessible.

### **Ecumenicism**

This agenda is dictated by a "total ecumenicism," not a "remainder ecumenicism." Because of this, we do not eliminate what is only Catholic or only Protestant, but we

unite the two. Thus, in the list of the Saints, the Protestant and Catholic commemorations have both been included. When they do not coincide, the Protestant commemoration is in cursive. For example, the Apostle Peter is celebrated by the Catholic Church on February 22 ("the Chair of Peter"), and for the Protestant Churches on January 18 ("the Confession of Peter"); the differences can be distinguished typographically.

Kindly, the Lutheran Bishop Kent Mahler, in an earlier version of the Agenda, presented us with the "Protestant Saints."

The Agenda is aconfessional, and, above all, "macroecumenical." The world of common references, beliefs, values, and utopias among peoples and men and women of good will—which Christians call "the Reign"—is shared by all who are partners in this humble, serving, brotherly, and sisterly search.

### **A Non-Profit Work**

In many countries, this Agenda is edited by popular and non-profit organizations that use the money received from the sale of the agenda

to support their work for popular service and solidarity. These centers ensure the non-profit character of each edition.

In all cases, the Latin American Agenda, in its central coordination, is also a non-profit initiative. It was born and developed without help from any agency. The money generated by the Agenda, after adequately compensating the authors who write in its pages, is dedicated to works of popular alternative communication and international solidarity.

Servicios Koinonia, permanently maintained, constantly improved, and freely accessible around the world, the "Tiempo Axial" Collection, and some of the prizes financed by the Agenda are the most well-known.

### **A Collective Agenda**

This is a collective work. Because of this, it has gotten to where it is today. We continue to gladly receive suggestions, materials, documents...

In this way, it will continue being a "collective work, a community patrimony, an annual anthology of the memory and hope of our spiritual Continent."

## WHICH GOD? WHICH RELIGION?

Year after year, our Agenda has taken up major topics, themes of burning human urgency, thinking about life, taking up the challenges that reality lays before us. One theme of burning urgency is religion, a really major theme: God. Thinking about certain parts of the First World where God and religion are “a thing of the past,” some might doubt the relevance of this topic. In fact, it is a disconcerting contradiction to see and feel more religiosity than ever and also more disbelief than ever, along with all the ambiguities and all the opportunities that this implies.

The phenomenon of globalization is played out specifically in this theme because the migrant populations, entering the First World “without papers,” do not enter without their God. They carry with them the God of their lives, of the lives of their ancestors. Today, cultures and religions that were known earlier merely through reading or through television images are today, in every country, part of daily life and a source of conflict in families, on the streets, in schools, at work, and in politics. Nietzsche, who has finally received the peace he deserves after his desperate search, has been found wrong in his categorical axiom. It turns out that God is not dead.

The problem lies in understanding what God we are talking about. Evidently we also need to know what we mean by religion and what we think a truly liberated and liberating religion might be.

So, we ponder those two questions: “Which God?” and “What Religion?” The responses are quite serious and disconcerting.

Speaking of God, a rustic friend in our region, who has no interest in metaphysical categories, answered with utmost simplicity and devotion: “God is a good man.” The prophet Hosea places the following categorical identification in the mouth of God (the God Yahweh), without any possible comeback: “I am God and not a human.” (Hosea 11:9). The writer José Saramago, a Nobel Laureate in literature and a committed and militant atheist, nevertheless makes religion a frequent theme in his writings and has given us a poetic and contemplative definition of God: “God is the silence of the universe and humans are the cry that gives meaning to that silence.” Another Nobel Laureate, the Spanish poet, Juan Ramón Jiménez, has said that having doubts is not contrary to God but rather goes in God’s favor. Our liberation theologians remind us that the opposite of faith is not doubt but rather fear (fear of God, quite often). Which God, what religion,

Translated by Richard Renshaw.

what salvation.... A Pentecostal neighbor gave me food for thought: "Good people are saved because they are good and evil people are also saved because God is good and forgives."

This Agenda, which is the result of many exchanges about the topic and the implications thereof, offers a fairly complete catalogue of the various aspects of the theme: the history of religions and of atheism or unbelief; the difference and complementarity between spirituality and religion; religion that encourages and justifies wars; spiritualism, fundamentalism, and alienation, which have been denounced so many times in the past and yet persist even today; the need for interreligious dialogue; macroecumenicism; the transformation of power, of wealth, and of consumerism into sacred powers; the fall of old gods and their replacement by new ones; the need, the basic thirst, for answers to the major questioning of the human heart; the search for the meaning of one's personal life and that of human society as a whole.

After all the wars and inquisitions, we are beginning to ask whether a true religion can exist by attacking, closing in on itself, and forcing an assent of faith (even though this latter is gratuitous, a matter of the heart, the search of a whole lifetime, and an entire history). All religions can be true and all can contain, simultaneously, a great deal of falsehood. (We need to be grateful for the statement of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. He says that "all religions have the same dignity and importance.")

There has been a practice of making a tripartite classification of the fundamental characteristics of religions according to cultures and periods. The Afro-Indigenous religious world, in this sense, be religions of Nature. Obviously today that Nature would be seen and venerated ecologically. The Oriental religions would be religions of interiority, contemplative, and even gratuitous. And the Judeo-Christian religions would be those of History, of Love-Justice, of prophecy, of politics. Logically, all religions would be a search for God, the welcoming of God, hope in God. It would be a God who is always searching for us, welcoming us, and revealing Godself, each day, in all corners of Human geography. No religion has the exclusive right to that God of all names, a God who forgives and saves because God is love.

The Agenda avoids proselytism and wants to stimulate all the humanizing riches that religions provide, without crusades and without supermarkets. It wants to let God dialogue with God, the God of the Human family and of the whole Universe, always thinking holistically and in terms of persons. God is not a concept, not a dogma. God is more than just a cause. Which God are we talking about? Of which God do we dream? Saint Teresa of Avila had a little poem that is known all over the world. In it she says: God alone is enough. With respectful caring I say to the great Teresa: God alone is enough, Teresa / only if it is that God / who is God and all of us and everything / in communion."

# MARTYROLOGY ANNIVERSARIES 2011

## LATIN AMERICAN MARTYROLOGY

### 1971: 40 years

- 6.9: Hector Gallego, Colombian priest, 34 years old, martyr to the campesinos, Veraguas, Panama.  
8.21: Mauricio Lefevre, Canadian Oblate Missionary, assassinated during a military coup in Bolivia.  
9.1: Julio Spósito Vitali, student, 19 years old, militant Christian, assassinated by the police.

### 1976: 35 years

- 2.2: José Tedeschi (MSTM), worker priest, martyr to the immigrants and “villeros” in Argentina.  
2.13: Francisco Soares, priest, martyr to justice among the poor in El Tigre, Argentina.  
3.23: María del Carmen Maggi, university professor, martyr to liberating education, Argentina.  
3.24: Military coup in Argentina, 30,000 disappeared.  
4.3: Víctor Bionchenko and Lilian Coleman, of the Evangelical Church of Cosquín. Assassinated, Argentina.  
5.14: Beatriz Carbonell, Horacio Pérez, Marta Vásquez, César Lugones, Mónica Mignone, Esther Lorusso, and Mónica Quinteiro: Taken away on the “death flights,” Argentina.  
5.20: Héctor Gutiérrez and Zelmar Michellini, political leaders and militant Christians, martyrs, Uruguay.  
6.16: Aurora Vivar Vásquez, Christian activist, union leader, martyr to the workers’ struggles in Peru.  
7.4: Alfredo Kelly, Pedro Dufau, Alfredo Leaden, Salvador Barbeito and José Barletti, Pallottine Fathers, Bs Aires.  
7.7: Arturo Bernal, Christian campesino, leader of the Agrarian Leagues, killed under torture, Paraguay.  
7.12: Aurelio Rueda, priest, martyr to the slum-dwellers in Colombia.  
7.15: Rodolfo Lunkenbein, missionary, and Simão, Bororo chief, martyrs to the Indigenous peoples, Brazil.  
7.17: Workers, martyrs at the Ledesma foundry, Argentina.  
7.18: Carlos Murias and Gabriel Longueville, priests, kidnapped and killed in La Rioja, Argentina.  
7.25: Wenceslao Pedernera, campesino leader in the Agrarian Cooperatives, martyr in La Rioja, Argentina.  
8.4: Enrique Angelelli, bishop of La Rioja, Argentina, martyr to the Cause of the poor, assassinated.  
8.16: Coco Erbetta, catechist, university student, martyr to the struggle of the Argentinean people.  
9.1: Inés Adriana Cobo, activist in the Methodist Church, martyr to the poor, Buenos Aires, Argentina.  
9.3: Ramón Pastor Bogarín, bishop, university founder, prophet of the Church in Asunción, Paraguay.  
9.24: Marlene Kogler, worker student, martyr in service to the university students of La Plata, Argentina.

- 10.4: Omar Venturelli, martyr to the poor, Temuco, Chile.  
10.11: Marta González de Baronetto and companions, martyrs to faith and service, Córdoba, Argentina.  
10.12: Juan Bosco Penido Burnier, assassinated by the police in front of Bishop Pedro Casaldáliga, Brazil.  
10.22: Ernesto Lahourcade, union leader, Argentina.

### 1981: 30 years

- 1.2: José Manuel de Souza, “Zé Piau”, laborer, victim of the main “grileiros” (landowners with false papers), Pará, Brazil.  
1.3: Diego Quic, Indigenous catechist, leader in the popular organizations of Guatemala, disappeared.  
1.7: Sebastián Mearin, rural leader in Pará, Brazil, assassinated by “grileiros.”  
1.15: Estela Pajuelo Grimani, campesina, 55 years old, martyr to solidarity, Peru.  
1.17: Ana María Castillo, militant Christian, guerrillera, martyr to justice in El Salvador.  
1.17: Silvia Maribel Arriola, religious nurse, martyr in a combat zone, she accompanied the Salvadoran people.  
1.18: José Eduardo, union leader in Acre, Brazil, assassinated by a “grileiro.”  
1.21: Oscar Armando Ramos, Salvadoran catechist, assassinated with bullets and mutilated.  
2.4: Massacre of Chimaltenango, Guatemala, 68 dead.  
2.15: Juan Alonso Hernández, missionary, martyr to the Indigenous campesinos of Guatemala.  
2.16: Albino Amarilla, campesino leader and catechist, killed by the army, martyr to the Paraguayan people.  
3.18: Presentación Ponce, Delegate of the Word, and her companions, martyrs in the Nicaraguan revolution.  
3.18: Hundreds of campesino women, children and elderly persons, assassinated by the army in Cabañas, El Salvador.  
4.14: Massacre in Morazán, El Salvador: 150 children, 600 elderly people and 700 women.  
5.1: Raynaldo Edmundo Lemus Preza, of the BECs, in Soyapango, El Salvador, disappeared along with Edwin Laínez.  
5.14: Carlos Gálvez Galindo, priest, martyr, Guatemala.  
5.16: Edgar Castillo, journalist, assassinated, Guatemala.  
5.20: Pedro Aguilar Santos, priest, martyr to the cause of the poor and persecuted, Guatemala.  
6.9: Toribia Flores de Cutipa, campesino martyr, victim of police repression in Peru.  
6.12: Joaquín Neves Norte, lawyer to the rural union of Naviraí, Paraná, Brazil, assassinated.  
7.1: Tulio Maruzzo, Italian priest, and Luis Navarrete, catechist, martyrs in Guatemala.  
7.5: Emeterio Toj, Indigenous, kidnapped, Guatemala.

- 7.15: Misael Ramírez, campesino, community animator, martyr to justice in Colombia.
- 7.20: Massacre of Coyá, Guatemala: three hundred dead including women, children and the elderly.
- 7.25: Angel Martínez Rodrigo, Spanish, and Raúl José Léger, Canadian, lay missionaries, martyrs, Guatemala.
- 7.28: Stanley Rother, American priest who worked for the poor, assassinated, Santiago de Atitlán, Guatemala.
- 7.30: Miguel Hidalgo, pastor of Dolores and hero of the Independence of Mexico is killed by a firing squad.
- 8.2: Carlos Pérez Alonso, priest, apostle to the sick and imprisoned, disappeared, Guatemala.
- 9.11: Sebastiana Mendoza, Indigenous, catechist, martyr to faith and solidarity in El Quiché, Guatemala.
- 9.15: Pedro Pío Cortés, Indigenous of the Achí people, catechist, Delegate of the Word in Rabinal, Guatemala.
- 9.17: John David Troyer, American Mennonite missionary, martyr to justice in Guatemala.
- 9.30: Honorio Alejandro Núñez, Celebrant of the Word, martyr to the struggles of the Honduran people.
- 10.22: Eduardo Capiáu, Belgian Religious, martyr to solidarity in Guatemala.
- 10.23: Marco Antonio Ayerbe Flores, university student, Peru.
- 11.1: Simón Hernández, Indigenous of the Achi people, catechist, Delegate of the world in Rabinal, Guatemala.
- 12.1: Diego Uribe, priest, martyr to the struggle for the liberation of his people, Colombia.
- 12.7: Lucio Aguirre and Elpidio Cruz, Hondurans, Celebrators of the Word and martyrs to solidarity.
- 12.12: El Mozote massacre, a thousand campesinos were tortured and assassinated by the army, Morazán, El Salvador.

**1986: 25 años**

- 1.6: Julio González, bishop of Puno, Peru, killed in an "accident" after receiving a death threat.
- 2.10: Alberto Koenigsknecht, bishop of Juli, Peru, killed in an "accident" for his option for the poor.
- 2.16: Mauricio Demierre, Swiss volunteer, and campesino companions, assassinated by the "contra," Nicaragua.
- 3.15: Antonio Chaj Solís and Manuel Recinos and companions, Evangelicals, martyrs to the faith, Guatemala.
- 3.25: Donato Mendoza, Delegate of the Word and companions, martyrs to the faith, Nicaragua.
- 4.11: Antonio Hernández, journalist and popular leader, martyr to solidarity in Bogota.
- 4.14: Adelaide Molinari, Religious, martyr in the struggle of the marginalized in Marabá, Brazil.
- 5.10: Father Josimo Morais, martyr to land ministry, assassinated by Imperatriz Brasil, a large landowner.
- 5.15: Nicolás Chuy Cumes, Evangelical pastor and journalist, martyr to freedom of expression, Guatemala.
- 5.24: Ambrosio Mogorrón, Spanish nurse and companion campesinos, martyrs to solidarity, Nicaragua.

- 7.6: Rodrigo Rojas, activist, martyr in the struggle for democracy for the Chilean people.
- 9.19: Charlot Jacqueline and literacy activists, martyrs to liberating education, Haiti.
- 10.23: Vilmar José de Castro, activist in the cause of land, assassinated in Caçú, Goiás, Brazil.
- 10.28: Mauricio Maraglio, missionary, martyr to the land, Brazil.

**1991: 20 years**

- 2.2: Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, president of the rural union in Rio Maria, Pará, Brazil, assassinated.
- 3.19: Felisa Urrutia, Carmelita Vedruna, assassinated in Cagua, martyr to serving the poor.
- 4.29: Moisés Cisneros Rodríguez, Marist Religious, victim of violence and impunity in Guatemala.
- 5.3: Felipe Huete, Delegate of the Word and companions, martyrs to the Agrarian Reform, El Astillero, Honduras.
- 5.14: Porfirio Suny Quispe, activist and educator, martyr to justice and solidarity in Peru.
- 5.21: Jaime Gutiérrez Alvarez, religious, Colombia.
- 5.21: Irene McCormack, missionary, and companions, martyrs to the cause of the poor, Peru.
- 6.1: João de Aquino, president of the Workers' Union in Nueva Iguazú, assassinated.
- 7.7: Carlos Bonilla, laborer, martyr for the right to work in Citlaltepétl, México.
- 7.8: Martín Ayala, activist, martyr to solidarity among the marginalized of his Salvadoran people.
- 7.13: Riccy Mabel Martínez, symbol of the struggle of the people of Honduras against military impunity.
- 7.15: Julio Quevedo Quezada, catechist in El Quiché, assassinated by State security forces, Guatemala.
- 7.27: Eliseo Castellano, priest, Puerto Rico.
- 8.9: Miguel Tomaszek and Zbigniew Strzalkowski, Franciscans, Missionaries in Peru, witnesses to peace and justice.
- 8.25: Alessandro Dordi Negroni, missionary, martyr to the faith and to human development, Peru.
- 9.14: Alfredo Aguirre & Fortunato Collazos, martyrs to commitment to their brothers in San Juan de Lurigancho, Peru.
- 9.30: Vicente Matute and Francisco Guevara, Indigenous martyrs to the struggle for land, Honduras.
- 9.30: José Luis Cerrón, university student, martyr to solidarity among youth and the poor in Huancayo, Peru.
- 12.16: Indigenous martyrs in Cauca, Colombia.

**2001: 10 years**

- 5.5: Bárbara Ann Ford, 64, American Sister, for helping the victims of war to speak out, Guatemala.
- 9.19: Yolanda Cerón Delgado of the Company of Mary, Director of Social Ministry in Tumaco, Colombia, assassinated.
- 10.19: Digna Ochoa, engaged in the investigation of disappearances, killings, torture... assassinated, México DF.
- 12.19: Claudio "Pocho" Leprati, neighborhood leader, catechist, assassinated; Rosario, Argentina: pochormiga.com.ar

# Premios otorgados en los certámenes...

• El Premio del **Concurso de Cuento Corto Latinoamericano** (500 euros) lo han ganado, ex aequo, a partes iguales, **Aroldo Moisés PESCADO**, guatemalteco (angu\_sdei@hotmail.com), con «Los titanes del tiempo», y **Susana BENAVIDES**, costarricense (delosangeles25@hotmail.com), por «El recuerdo o la esperanza». Publicamos ambos cuentos cortos en esta misma edición de la Agenda (págs. 236-237). Convocamos para el año que viene la XVIIª edición del Concurso. Véase la pág. 17.

Una amplia antología de «Cuentos cortos latinoamericanos» -ya más de ochenta-, no sólo los ganadores, sino los mejores de entre todos los que se presentan a concurso, está siendo puesta en línea como una sección de los Servicios Koinonía, con los mejores cuentos recibidos en todos estos años. En: [servicioskoinonia.org/cuentoscortos](http://servicioskoinonia.org/cuentoscortos)

• El premio del Concurso de **Páginas Neobíblicas**, dotado con 500 euros, ha sido concedido a **Gerardo GUILLÉN DE LA ROSA** (gerardoguillen10@gmail.com), por su página neobíblica «Jesús los envía en misión», actualización del envío de Jesús a los 72. Publicamos en esta edición el texto ganador. El Jurado otorga una mención honorífica a la página de **Orlando VALDÉS CAMACHO**, por su página «El árbol, símbolo de vida y comunión con Dios». (Véase págs. 238-239). Felicitaciones a todos...

Convocamos la XVIª edición de este Concurso en esta Agenda Latinoamericana'2011. Vea la pág. 17.

Una amplia antología de «Páginas Neobíblicas» (ya más de un centenar) recibidas para el concurso en éste y otros años, continúa siendo publicada como una sección de los Servicios Koinonía: [servicioskoinonia.org/neobiblicas](http://servicioskoinonia.org/neobiblicas)

• El jurado del Concurso de Género sobre el tema «Perspectiva de género en el desarrollo social», patrocina-

do por el **Centro de Comunicación y Educación CANTERA**, de Managua, Nicaragua, ha otorgado un accésit, de 100 US\$, a **Vilma Amanda AGUINAGA**, de Managua, Nicaragua, (javiernicjuridico@hotmail.com), por su trabajo «La lógica de la irracionalidad» (lo publicamos en la página 240). El primer premio ha quedado desierto.

Con las mismas bases bajo un nuevo enfoque, queda convocado el certamen para el año que viene, con el tema de «La espiritualidad». Véase la pág. 17.

• En el Certamen de **Novedades Ecoteológicas**, convocado por el **Grupo de investigación «Ecoteología»** de la Facultad de Teología de la Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá, ha resultado desierto este año. Con una nueva temática y en un nivel muy asequible, es convocado de nuevo este año en su VIIª edición. Véase la pág. 20.

• En el Certamen «**Concepción cristiana del ser humano y antropocentrismo**», ha quedado desierto. Con las mismas bases, nueva dotación y nueva temática, es convocada la Xª edición del Certamen. Cfr. pág. 19.

• El premio del concurso convocado por el **Colectivo Ronda de Abogados**, de Barcelona, ha quedado desierto. El concurso es convocado para el próximo año, en su IXª edición. Véase la pág. 18.

• La **Revista Alternativas** y la **Fundación Verapaz** ha otorgado el **Premio Antonio Montesinos**, en su XVª edición, a la Hna Luisa CAMPOS VILLALÓN OP. Véase el premio y su justificación en la página de al lado, 15.

Recordamos que para este Premio se puede presentar candidatos para la consideración del Jurado; véase la convocatoria, renovada para su XVIª edición, en la pág. 17.

Los premios que proclama esta página son los concedidos en los certámenes convocados por la Agenda'2010; véalos también en: <http://latinoamericana.org/2010/premios>

Las convocatorias de esta Agenda'2011, para 2012, véalas en: <http://latinoamericana.org/2011/convocatorias>

• En el concurso de **Socioecología urbana**, convocado por el **Grupo de Reflexión «Converses a sa serena»**, el Jurado, ha otorgado el primer premio, ex aequo, a partes iguales, a EcoBase ([www.cultivobiointensivo.net/EcoBASE](http://www.cultivobiointensivo.net/EcoBASE)), de República Dominicana, junto con **Melba Alejandra BOTALÍN AGUILÓ** ([botalin@cultstgo.cult.cu](mailto:botalin@cultstgo.cult.cu)), de Cuba, por sus respectivas participaciones. El premio está dotado con 800 euros. Felicitaciones...

• El concurso convocado por **«Redes de Solidaridad y esperanza»**, ha resultado desierto. Todos los concursantes han recibido un certificado de acreditación. **«Redes»** vuelve a convocar el concurso con una nueva temática en su ya VIª edición. Véase pág. 16.

• Son tres los Concursos cuyos plazos para el envío de participaciones es posterior al 31 de marzo, lo que hace que su resultado no alcance a ser recogido en nuestra Agenda, cuyo cierre tiene lugar en abril; los concursos son:

- sobre **«Instrumentos pedagógicos para el cambio de conciencia ambiental»**, convocado por la **Fundación ECODES**,

- sobre **Difusión de los principios del decrecimiento**, convocado por la **Comissió de la Agenda Llatinoamericana**,

- y el convocado por la **Coordinadora Continental Latinoamericana de las Comunidades de Base**.

El resultado de estos concursos será publicado en internet, el primero de noviembre de 2011, junto con el resultado de todos los concursos convocados por la Agenda, en su página: [latinoamericana.org/2011/premios](http://latinoamericana.org/2011/premios)

**FELICITACIONES** a todos los premiados, y nuestro **AGRADECIMIENTO** a todos los que han participado. Les esperamos un año más...

Cada año, los premios de los concursos de la Agenda latinoamericana se publican en la edición siguiente, y también, el primero de noviembre, en su sede virtual: <http://latinoamericana.org>

La Revista **«ALTERNATIVAS»**  
y la Fundación **VERAPAZ**,  
de Managua, Nicaragua, otorgan el

**«PREMIO ANTONIO MONTESINOS  
al gesto profético en defensa  
de la dignidad humana»**,  
en su XVª edición, de 2011, a:

**Luisa CAMPOS VILLALÓN op**

Fundadora y actual Directora del Centro Antonio Montesinos, dedicado a la formación en derechos humanos con los grupos más vulnerables y pobres, con sede en el Convento de los Dominicos en Santo Domingo, República Dominicana, Luisa CAMPOS ha dedicado su vida al trabajo con los/as más pobres del país y del Caribe, y ha tenido gran impacto en la vida religiosa, a través de CODAL y de Justicia y Paz de la Orden dominica. Luisa Campos es fundadora del Centro Dominicano de Asesoría e Investigaciones Legales, CEDAIL, de apoyo a los grupos más marginados y excluidos del país.

Ha dedicado gran parte de su larga vida al estudio de la vida de la primera comunidad dominica en la Isla y sus repercusiones para los derechos humanos en el resto del Continente. Su tesis de teología «Pedro de Córdoba, Precursor de una comunidad defensora de la Vida» (publicada por Ediciones MSC, Santo Domingo 2008, 207 pp, prólogo de Carlos Aspiroz, Maestro de la Orden de Predicadores) es un revelador aporte a la actual reflexión sobre la contemplación y la acción de los evangelizadores hoy.

La vida religiosa dominicana y los pobres del país han sido testigos, por largos años, de la constancia, arduo valor, riesgos y ternura en el compromiso con los pobres, de la Hermana Luisa Campos op, una expresión del «gesto profético en defensa de la dignidad humana» que este premio de la Fundación Verapaz quiere enaltecer.



## CONCURSO TRANSFORMANDO NUESTRA IDEA DE DIOS

VIª Edición

A pesar de que la mayoría de nuestro Continente Latinoamericano se declara cristiano, encontramos serias diferencias y contradicciones sobre la concepción de Dios. El mundo está plagado de pobreza y desigualdades, pero nuestro Continente «cristiano», es el más desigual de todos, en términos económicos(\*).

Por otra parte, en los últimos años han ocurrido «desastres naturales», como en Haití y Chile, que han llevado a cristianos a decir: «eso es castigo de Dios»...

*¿En qué Dios creemos? ¿En qué Dios queremos creer? El Dios en el que creemos; ¿es el Dios de Jesús?*

**REDES**, (<http://redesperanza.org>)  
Red de Esperanza y Solidaridad de Puerto Rico,

**CONVOCA** a todos y a todas a reflexionar sobre estas preguntas.

Envíe su reflexión (de hasta 7.000 pulsaciones), personal o colectiva (con su comunidad, sus alumnos/as, sus vecinos, su grupo de amigos/as...), antes del 31 de marzo de 2011, a: [inforedes@redesperanza.org](mailto:inforedes@redesperanza.org)

El premio está dotado con 500 dólares y un diploma acreditativo de participación.

(\* Véase la p. 21 de esta misma Agenda.



## INVITACIÓN DE LAS CEBs DE A.L.

En el marco del Relanzamiento de las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base, la Articulación Continental de las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs) de América Latina y el Caribe,

**INVITA** a participar en la recogida de **TESTIMONIOS** de Vida de Mujeres de las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base. Queremos recuperar testimonios:

- del aporte de las mujeres de CEBs en la vida cotidiana, ordinaria donde se gestan cosas extraordinarias. Es una forma de dar rostro a las mujeres que han construido y construyen comunidad en la iglesia y en la sociedad y cuyo testimonio nos anima y enriquece.

- de nuestras matriarcas, mujeres de larga trayectoria en este caminar.

- de diferentes generaciones de mujeres que desde su desarrollo en comunidad se han comprometido en diferentes servicios (ecología, salud, participación ciudadana, catequesis, cultura...)

- testimonios colectivos de comunidades en las que las mujeres han emprendido acciones a favor de la vida.

Con las siguiente **BASES**:

1. Podrán participar laicos/as, sacerdotes, agentes de pastoral, religiosos y religiosas, comunidades.

2. Los trabajos deberán ser presentados en formato digital. De preferencia deberán venir acompañados de 3-5 fotografías de las mujeres que presentan o de su labor realizada. En español o portugués. Extensión libre.

3. El envío deberá acompañarse de identificación completa del autor/es y una presentación personal, que incluya: tiempo de participar en CEBs, servicios desempeñados, responsabilidad actual en CEBs, diócesis y parroquia a la que se pertenece...o si no pertenece a una comunidad pero las conoce y desea escribir también es válido)

4. Al participar otorgan gratuitamente a la Articulación Continental de las CEBs, entidad convocante, el derecho de publicar sus trabajos -siempre con el reconocimiento de su autoría-, con fines de divulgación e intercambio y promoción de las CEBs.

5. Los testimonios deberán ser enviados antes del 1 de octubre de 2011, a: [ceb\\_continental@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:ceb_continental@prodigy.net.mx)

6. Los testimonios serán compilados en una edición digital que será publicada en febrero del 2012 en la página continental de las CEBs: [www.cebcontinental.org](http://www.cebcontinental.org)

7. Más información: [luromac@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:luromac@yahoo.com.mx) (Carmen Romero) o [ceb\\_continental@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:ceb_continental@prodigy.net.mx) Y en el tel. (52) (55) 56 88 63 36.



## Concurso de «Páginas Neobíblicas», XVIª edición

La **Agenda Latinoamericana** convoca la XVIª edición del Concurso de «Páginas neobíblicas»:

1. Temática: tomando pie en alguna figura, situación o mensaje bíblico, sea del Primero o del Segundo Testamento, los concursantes intentarán una «relectura» desde la actual situación latinoamericana o mundial.
2. Los textos no deberán exceder de 9000 pulsaciones. En castellano o portugués o catalán, en prosa o poesía, teniendo en cuenta que, supuesta una calidad

básica en la forma, lo que se premia es el contenido, el acierto y la creatividad en la «relectura» de la página bíblica escogida.

3. Los trabajos habrán de llegar antes del 31 de marzo de 2011 a: [agenda@latinoamericana.org](mailto:agenda@latinoamericana.org)
  4. Premio: 350 euros y su publicación en la Agenda'2012.
- Será hecho público el 1 de noviembre de 2011 en <http://latinoamericana.org/2012/premios>

## Concurso «Género y compromiso político», XVIª edición

El **Centro de Comunicación y Educación Popular CANTERA** ([www.canteranicaragua.org](http://www.canteranicaragua.org)) y la Agenda Latinoamericana convocan la XVIª edición del concurso «Perspectiva de género en el desarrollo social». Las bases son:

1. Temática: «La vivencia de la espiritualidad en la equidad de género. La espiritualidad vista desde la conexión de la persona con el Universo, consigo misma, con la Naturaleza y con la Sociedad». En estilo de ensayo.

2. Extensión e idioma: Máximo de mil palabras, ó 6000 pulsaciones. En castellano, portugués, o en otros idiomas adjuntando una traducción al castellano.

3. Los trabajos habrán de llegar antes del 15 de marzo del año 2011 a: Cantera, Apdo. A-52, Managua, Nicaragua, [cantera@ibw.com.ni](mailto:cantera@ibw.com.ni), tel.: (505)-2277.5329
4. El texto ganador será premiado con 500 US\$. El jurado podrá declarar desierto el premio, pero podrá también conceder uno o varios accésits de 100 US\$.

## Premio Antonio Montesinos al gesto profético en defensa de la dignidad humana, XVIª edición

La **Revista «Alternativas»** y la **Fundación Verapaz** convocan esta XVIª edición del «Premio Antonio Montesinos al gesto profético en defensa de la dignidad humana en América Latina». Bases:

1. Se quiere significar con esta distinción a la comunidad, grupo humano o persona cuya defensa de los derechos humanos actualice mejor hoy el gesto profético de Antonio Montesinos en *La Española* cuando se enfrentó a la violencia de la conquista con su grito «Éstos, ¿no son seres humanos?».

2. Cualquier grupo, persona o comunidad puede presentar candidatos a este premio, razonando los motivos y acompañándolos con firmas si lo cree oportuno, antes del 31 de marzo de 2011, a: Fundación Verapaz / Apdo. P-177 / Managua / Nicaragua / tel.: (505)-2265.06.95 / [revista\\_alternativas@hotmail.com](mailto:revista_alternativas@hotmail.com)

3. El jurado admitirá a concurso tanto acciones puntuales, cuanto trabajos duraderos o actitudes proféticas mantenidas a lo largo de mucho tiempo.
4. Premio: 500 US\$. Podrá ser declarado desierto.

## Concurso de «Cuento Corto Latinoamericano», XVIIª edición

La **Agenda Latinoamericana** convoca esta décimo-sexta edición del Concurso, con las siguientes bases:

1. Puede concursar toda persona que sintonice con las Causas de la Patria Grande.
2. Extensión e idioma: máximo de 18.000 pulsaciones. En castellano o portugués.
3. Temática: el cuento debe tratar de iluminar, desde su propio carácter literario, la actual coyuntura espiritual de América Latina: sus utopías, dificultades, motivaciones para la esperanza, alternativas, la interpreta-

ción de esta hora histórica...

4. Los textos deberán llegar antes del 31 de marzo de 2011 a: [agenda@latinoamericana.org](mailto:agenda@latinoamericana.org)
5. El cuento ganador será premiado con 350 euros, y será publicado en la Agenda Latinoamericana'2012 (en unos 18 países). El fallo del jurado será hecho público el 1 de noviembre de 2011 en <http://latinoamericana.org/2012/premios>
6. El jurado podrá declarar desierto el premio, pero también podrá conceder accésits de 100 euros.

PREMIO  
«COL·LECTIU RONDA DE ABOGADOS»  
IXª EDICIÓN

## DEFENSA JURÍDICA DE LOS POBRES Y DIMENSIÓN ESPIRITUAL

El Col·lectiu Ronda de Barcelona, asesoría jurídica, laboral, económica y social al servicio de las clases populares, fiel a su tradición de pensamiento y de compromiso, convoca la IX edición del Premio Ronda para el año 2011, para homenajear las iniciativas de defensa jurídica de los pobres fundamentada en una sensibilidad o dimensión explícita o implícitamente religiosa.

A primera vista puede parecer incongruente que el Col·lectiu Ronda, que se considera laico, convoque un premio con connotaciones religiosas. Pero hemos considerado que la laicidad comporta el pluralismo, y por lo tanto incluye tanto a las personas con sensibilidad religiosa como a las que se profesan agnósticas o ateas. Las experiencias que éstas llevan a cabo están fundamentadas, sin duda, en la estimación para el otro, y por lo tanto por una disposición de compartir, que tiene como apoyo la dimensión altruista. Así, la convocatoria va dirigida:

A aquellas experiencias en las que la vivencia religiosa o sensibilidad amorosa o dimensión altruista mejor se muestre como defensora de los pobres. También va dirigida a las experiencias de defensa de los pobres en las que figuren recursos y enfoques en los que la dimensión espiritual, en el más amplio sentido de la expresión, estén presentes, o en las que el compromiso de defensa se fundamente en aquella dimensión.

Obviamente, cuando hablamos de «pobres» nos estamos refiriendo también a los excluidos, marginados, oprimidos, y cuando decimos «dimensión espiritual» tenemos en cuenta el pluralismo mencionado más arriba.

Por todo eso, el Col·lectiu Ronda de Abogados,

### CONVOCA:

a las entidades, grupos, colectivos y personas que desde la dimensión espiritual explicada se dedican a la defensa del pobre, a participar en un concurso, con las siguientes

### BASES:

**Presentación de un informe** claro y concreto sobre la experiencia y la relación de la misma con la sensibilidad o dimensión espiritual. Habrá de referirse al contexto social, la composición y motivación de la persona o entidad concursante, así como las actividades realizadas y la evaluación de los resultados. Debe incluirse adicionalmente una memoria informativa de presentación de la entidad.

**Idioma:** castellano, portugués o catalán; o cualquier otro en el que se publica la Agenda acompañando traducción a cualquiera de los citados.

**Envío y plazo:** Deberá ser enviado, antes del 31 de marzo de 2011, a: [agenda@latinoamericana.org](mailto:agenda@latinoamericana.org) y a [jpujol@cronda.coop](mailto:jpujol@cronda.coop)

**Premio:** 1500 (mil quinientos) euros. Podrá ser declarado desierto, y también ser concedido algún accésit.

CERTAMEN  
AGENDA/MISSIO INSTITUT  
X<sup>A</sup> EDICIÓN

# HACIA UN CONCILIO MACROECUMÉNICO

## Planteamiento

En 2012 se cumplirán 50 años del comienzo del Concilio Vaticano II. Quizá haya sido el acontecimiento religioso occidental que más influyó en el pasado siglo XX. Sus desafíos fueron tantos que el miedo suscitó la involución.

Pero, balances aparte, 50 años más tarde, el mundo con el que el Concilio Vaticano II dialogó ya no existe. Nuestra problemática actual es muy diferente. Tal vez, ni siquiera un *Vaticano III* tendría sentido... ¿Debería ser un *Jerusalén II*, o un... concilio macroecuménico?

En el mundo actual, en el que la Humanidad ha tomado conciencia

- de que es una única familia,
  - de que «todas las religiones son verdaderas»,
  - de que está en peligro inminente la viabilidad de la vida humana en el planeta,
  - de que sólo habrá paz en el mundo cuando la haya entre las religiones
  - y de que es preciso replantear de un modo nuevo el sentido y el papel de la religión en el mundo humano y en la vida del planeta,
- ¿cuáles podrían ser las prioridades, la temática, los protagonistas, la metodología de ese posible Concilio macroecuménico?*

La **Agenda Latinoamericana Mundial**, en la décima edición de este certamen, **CONVOCA** a los teólogos y teólogas, y les invita a elaborar teológicamente esta temática, sobre las siguientes

## BASES:

- Pueden participar teólogos/as de cualquier país y de cualquier confesión o religión. Se valorará especialmente la participación de las teólogas, aunque sin discriminación de género hacia los teólogos.

- Extensión mínima: 15 páginas (30.000 pulsaciones).

- Los trabajos, que han de ser inéditos y originales, bien centrados en el tema, y serán presentados en castellano, portugués o catalán.

- Entrega: antes del 31 de marzo de 2011, por correo-e, a la **Agenda Latinoamericana** ([agenda@latinoamericana.org](mailto:agenda@latinoamericana.org)), con copia a [raul.fornet@mwi-aachen.org](mailto:raul.fornet@mwi-aachen.org)

- El premio, patrocinado por el **MWI, Missionswissenschaftliches Institut** de Aachen (Aquisgrán, Alemania), consistirá en 1.000 (mil) euros.

- Al participar, los concursantes otorgan a los convocantes el derecho a publicar los textos ganadores, en cualquier medio.

# CONCURSO DE «EXPERIENCIAS ECO-TEOLÓGICAS» DIÁLOGOS ENTRE ECOLOGÍA Y RELIGIÓN

VIIª Edición

El equipo de investigación «ECOTEOLÓGIA», de la Facultad de Teología de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Bogotá, Colombia)

**CONVOCA** al concurso «EXPERIENCIAS ECO-TEOLÓGICAS: Diálogos sobre ecología y religión», cuyas bases son:

1. **Participantes:** El certamen tiene un enfoque macroecuménico, por tanto pueden participar en él, sin ningún tipo de restricción, todas las personas, comunidades e instituciones que sintonicen con las causas de la Patria Grande.

2. **Temática:** Dado el enfoque general de la Agenda Latinoamericana Mundial 2011, cada trabajo deberá socializar experiencias en las que se innove el sentido de lo religioso a partir de la conciencia y la gestión ecológicas. Se trata de dar a conocer experiencias que sean significativas en el diálogo entre ecología y religión, por medio de las cuales se plantee, intuya, sugiera... nuevas imágenes de Dios (representaciones mentales, modelos, metáforas, etc.) desde la perspectiva de la ecología profunda, superando la visión «teísta» clásica de un «theos-Zeus» transcendente, exterior, 'ahí-arriba', 'ahí-afuera'. Una Divinidad encontrada más bien aquí-abajo, adentro, en la misma interioridad de la materia-energía, en relación con la evolución del Universo o el carácter inmanente-transcendente-transparente del Dios Creador respecto a su Creación.

3. **Pautas:** Para presentar las experiencias, los concursantes pueden hacer uso de lenguajes alternativos (narraciones, poesías, canciones, videos, fotografías, entre otros) en los que se describa el contexto, se precise la acción o el proyecto y se expliciten los contenidos ecoteológicos que aportan para vislumbrar otras formas de comprender a Dios a partir del diálogo entre ecología y religión. En cualquiera de los casos, es necesario redactar un documento más descriptivo y analítico de la experiencia.

La **extensión** máxima para el documento completo es de 10 hojas tamaño carta (o 20.000 pulsaciones) en castellano o portugués (si el trabajo está en otro idioma diferente debe incluirse una traducción al castellano).

4. **Fecha límite:** Los textos, que deben ser inéditos y originales, deberán llegar antes del 31 de marzo del 2011 a [ecoteologia@gmail.com](mailto:ecoteologia@gmail.com) con copia a [acaceres@javeriana.edu.co](mailto:acaceres@javeriana.edu.co) o a la Carrera 5 n° 39-00, Piso 2 Edificio Arrupe, «Equipo Ecoteología», Facultad de Teología, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá D.C. – Colombia.

5. **Incentivos:** El texto ganador será premiado con 250 US\$ y un paquete de materiales eco-pedagógicos. El jurado podrá declarar desierto el premio, así como conceder uno o varios accésits. Asimismo, los mejores trabajos serán divulgados a través de la página de la Universidad Javeriana, desde el enlace «Ecoteología». La Agenda Latinoamericana Mundial podrá publicar total o parcialmente aquellos trabajos que mejor contribuyan a impulsar el diálogo ecología – teología en nuestro *Oikos*: la Creación.



# PREMIO A LA DIFUSIÓN DE LOS PRINCIPIOS DEL «DECRECIMIENTO»

IIIª Edición

La «Comisión Agenda Latinoamericana», de Girona, Cataluña, España,

**CONVOCA** este concurso, con las siguientes bases:

**Temática:** El «decrecimiento», como alternativa al crecimiento ilimitado.

**Contenido y formato:** Se premiará a la persona, comunidad o entidad que, mediante trabajos escritos, organización de cursos o conferencias, trabajos de investigación, realización de material audiovisual, creación de material pedagógico para adultos o escolares, ejecución de acciones directas, etc., realice una mejor difusión de los principios del «decrecimiento».

**Plazo y envío:** Los trabajos o memorias de los actos organizados tendrán que llegar antes del 31 de junio del 2011 a: Comissió de l'Agenda Llatinoamericana, calle Santa Eugènia 17, 17005-Girona, España. Tel.: + 34 - 972 219916. Correo-e: [llatinoamericana@solidaries.org](mailto:llatinoamericana@solidaries.org)

**Idioma:** En cualquiera de los idiomas en que es publicada esta Agenda: catalán, castellano, portugués, inglés o italiano.

**Premio:** 500 euros. El jurado lo podrá declarar desierto, pero también podrá conceder uno o más accésits de 100 euros. La decisión del jurado se hará pública el 1 de noviembre de 2011 en: [latinoamericana.org/2012/premios](http://latinoamericana.org/2012/premios) y en: [llatinoamericana.org](http://llatinoamericana.org)

## L.A.: THE MOST UNEQUAL CONTINENT

### THE RICHEST 20% RETAIN 57% OF THE WEALTH

Inequality between the rich and the poor in Latin America has increased in recent years. Today, the richest 20% enjoy 56.9% of resources, while the poorest 20% receive just 3.5%, which makes it the most unequal region in the world.

“The country with the least inequality in income in Latin America has more inequality than any country of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) or any country of Eastern Europe,” the document signals.

Brazil is the least equal country, given that the richest 10% capture more than half (50.6%) of income, compared with the 0.8% that the poorest 10% of the population receive.

Mexico is the second most unequal country, given that the richest tenth of the population receives 42.2% of income, compared with the 1.3% that the poorest tenth receive.

In Argentina, in third place, 41.7% of income is obtained by the highest portion of society in contrast to the 1.1% of income that the least favored receive.

In Venezuela, in fourth place, the richest 10% collect 36.8% of money and the richest 30% control 65.1% of resources, while the poorest 10% are obliged to survive on barely 0.9%.

In Columbia, the richest 10% obtain 49.1% of income, in contrast with the 0.9% that the poorest have. In Chile, the number is 42.5% in comparison with 1.5%.

The most equal countries of the region are Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay, although even in these three, the differences between the rich and poor are abysmal, since the 10% most rich consume more than 40% of resources.

Urbanization has not diminished poverty in Latin America. The number of poor has significantly increased in the last decades. In 1970, there were 41 million poor people in the cities of the region, 25% of the population. In 2007 there were 127 million urban poor, 29% of the urban population. The rural poor in Brazil make up 50.1% of the population. In Columbia it is 50.5%, in Mexico it is 40.1%, and in Peru it is 69.3%. The exception is Chile, with an index of rural poverty of 12.3%.

# PANORAMA OF RELIGIONS IN THE WORLD 1910-2010

FRANZ DAMEN

Belgium - Bolivia

On the occasion of the centenary of the First World Missionary Conference (Edinburg 1910), the data and analysis of the panorama of religions were brought up to date and published in 2000<sup>1</sup>. The following analysis complements them<sup>2</sup>.

## 1. The religions of the World

In the following table the statistics on members of the major religions of the world in 1910 are shown in comparison with those of 2010, including their percentages with respect to the total world population. The last two columns show the average annual growth of these religions during the last century (1910-2010) (\*) and above all during the last decade (2000-2010) (\*\*).

Demography of the Religions of the World				
(in millions)	1910	2010	*	**
World population	1759 (100%)	6096 (100%)	1.38	1.21
Christians	612 (34.8%)	2292 (33.2%)	1.33	1.35
Muslims	220 (12.6%)	1549 (22.4%)	1.97	1.82
Hindus	223 (12.7%)	948 (13.7%)	1.46	1.46
Agnostics	3.36 (0.2%)	639 (9.3%)	5.39	-0.36
Buddhists	138 (7.8%)	468 (6.8%)	1.23	1.25
Chinese Popular Rel.	392 (22.3%)	458 (5.6%)	0.16	0.85
Indigenous Religions	135 (7.7%)	261 (3.8%)	0.66	1.21
Atheists	0.24 (0.0%)	138 (2.0%)	6.55	-0.09
New Religions	6.86 (0.4%)	64.4 (0.9%)	2.26	0.46
Jews	13.1 (0.7%)	14.6 (0.2%)	0.10	0.61
Spiritists	0.32 (0.0%)	13.9 (0.2)	3.84	1.15

World population is currently growing 1.21% per year. A large majority (88.7%) of the world population claims to be religious. During the last century, Christianity and Hinduism as well as Buddhism have maintained their relative presence among the world population. On the other hand, Islam has showed a strong growth.

In the twentieth century, world religions have been affected by considerable changes. Among these can be included:

- The massive conversion of members of ethnic and indigenous religions to universal religions especially to Christianity (in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America) and to Islam (in North Africa and Western Asia).

- An explosion of unbelief (agnostic and atheist) throughout the world, especially under Communist regimes and under the influence of secularism in Europe and North America.

- Birth, as a traditional determining factor in the growth and decline of religions, has been giving way to factors of conversion and defection.

- Globalization and planetary migration have created a large diversity both among religions and within these same religions. In general, the great religions seem to be relatively stable. The religious panorama seen today is less monolithic than in 1910. In the past century, Islam has stood out as having the greatest world growth, especially in Africa and Asia. On the other hand, the relative presence of ethnic and indigenous religions that were the majority religions in Africa and Melanesia in 1910 were cut in half in favor of Christianity and Islam.

The factor that, at the beginning and middle of the twentieth century, had largely encouraged the explosive world growth of unbelief and atheism was Communism (the Russian and Chinese revolutions). In the last 100 years, world Christianity has suffered a relatively slight decrease, while a profound displacement was observed in its ethnic and linguistic composition. The notable decrease happened in the Northwest part of the world and in central Asia but was compensated by strong growth in the world of

1. BARRETT, D.B.; KURIAN, G.T., JOHNSON, T.M., World Christian Encyclopedia, Oxford University Press, Oxford 22001, 2 vols.

2 Sources: JOHNSON, T.M.; ROSS, K.R. (orgs.), Atlas of Global Christianity: 1910–2010, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, 361 p.; Status of Global Mission, 2010, in Context of 20th and 21st Centuries, in the International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 34/1 (2010) 36.

the South. While in 1910, 96% of all Christians lived in Europe and North America, in 2010 more than 60% live in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Apart from a notable growth in Asia, Christianity saw a phenomenal growth in central Africa from 1.1% to 81.7% of the population. At the same time, the small Christian minorities in populated countries like China and India, in fact, represent an important part of the world population. Like other world religions, they have diversified considerably in the last 100 years.

The statistical data presented do not tell us about the rhythm and real fluctuations that have affected growth or decrease of world religions during the last century. However, the data covering the last decade (2000-2010) give us some idea of the situation in which we find ourselves today.

Comparing average growth—its proportional annual indices—in the last decade (2000-2010) with those of the period from 1910-2010, one can already see a notable decrease in the growth of the world population. In this context, the great religions seem to hold up well and even improve their rhythm of growth. At the same time, the ethnic religions (popular Chinese religion and indigenous religions) reveal a clear resurgence, and Judaism has managed to be restored. On the other hand, both the new religions and spiritism, and above all agnostics and atheists suffered great losses in the last decade.

## 2. The religions in Latin America

Demography of Religions in Latin America				
(in millions)	1910	2010	*	**
Population of LA	78.2 (100%)	593 (100%)	2.05	1.28
Christians	74 (95.2%)	549 (92.5%)	2.02	1.27
Agnostics	0.446 (0.6%)	17.1 (2.9%)	3.72	1.38
Sspiritists	0.31 (0.4%)	13.6 (2.3%)	3.85	1.19
Indigenous Religs.	2.72 (3.5%)	3.7 (0.6%)	0.31	1.12
Atheists	0.012 (0%)	2.9 (0.5%)	5.6	1.43
Muslims	0.067 (0.1%)	1.86 (0.3%)	3.37	1.19
New Religions	0.005 (0.0%)	1.83 (0.3%)	6.08	2.26
Jews	0,029 (0.0%)	0.93 (0.2%)	3.52	0.26
Buddhists	0.007 (0.0%)	0.80 (0.1%)	4.84	1.76
Hindus	0.186 (0.2%)	0.78 (0.1%)	1.44	0.43

At first glance, the religious demography of Latin America has not changed much in the course of the last century. Christianity has largely maintained its traditional presence as an almost hegemonic religion. At the same time, although they have expanded greatly, the other religious movements and religions continue to be in a minority position.

In Latin America, the number of agnostics and atheists has greatly increased in the last century. Spiritism had a new momentum, especially in Brazil. Unexpectedly, the presence of Jews grew after the Holocaust. Among the new religions, the Baha'i faith stands out as the religion with the most rapid growth on the continent.

On the other hand, the exceptional case of indigenous religions is striking. They were already a small minority and declined much more to the advantage of Catholicism and Protestantism.

A comparison of the average statistics of 2000-2010 with those of 1910-2010 reveal that, at the beginning of the 21st century, there was a remarkable decrease of 37.5% in the average growth of the population of the subcontinent. Only Christianity has maintained its rhythm of "biological" growth." The other religions, as also agnostics and atheists, have suffered a considerable relative setback. In comparison, during this decade and in contrast with what happened in the 20th century, indigenous religions have been showing an explosive growth.

## 3. Christianity in Latin America

Demography of Christianity in Latin America				
(in millions)	1910	2010	*	**
Population of Latin America	78.2	593.69	2.05	1.28
Christians	74.4	549	2.02	1.27
Catholics	70.6	478	1.93	0.78
Protestants	1.09	57.1	4.04	2.52
Anglicasn	0.8	0.89	0.11	0.50
Independent Churches	0.034	41.08	7.37	1.76
Orthodox	0.008	1.06	4.99	2.38
Marginal Christians	0.004	0.011	8.13	2.66

Between 1910 and 2010 Christianity maintained its overall percentage in Latin America. Catholicism

continues to keep its dominant position.

At the same time, there have been changes to the internal composition of Latin American Christianity. Protestants (above all Pentecostals and Evangelicals) and independent churches have come to occupy considerable space.

But, in spite of the growth and vitality of the charismatic movement, Catholicism has not managed to maintain its relative growth. Nor have the independent churches, the Orthodox and the marginal Christians managed to assure their “biological” growth.

Demography of Christianity in Latin America by Regions				
Christians in:	1910	2010	*	**
Latin America	74.7 (95.2%)	548 (92.5%)	2.02	1.27
Caribbean	7.9 (97.7%)	35.3 (83.6%)	1.5	1.18
Central America	20.5 (99.0%)	147 (95.5)	1.99	1.24
South America	45.9 (93.1%)	366 (92.1%)	2.1	1.3

In the 20th century, Christianity became more differentiated in the various regions of Latin America. It is in the Caribbean region that Christianity grew the least. The official recognition of Voodoo religion in Haiti favored its notable growth. Cuba promoted the growth of agnosticism and atheism, but in the last decade its political regime also allowed a notable resurgence of Christianity, especially of Catholicism and Protestantism.

As in the Caribbean, so also in Central America, massive migration, both internal and external, was an important factor for the internal diversification of Christianity.

Christianity stood up better in South America. Nevertheless, there was a dramatic decrease of indigenous religions (from 5.1% of the population in 1910 to 0.6% in 2010).

In Central and South America, the relative demographic presence of Christianity changed very little, while at the same time significant internal changes happened through the impressive growth of Protestant, independent and marginal churches and in Catholicism through the charismatic movement. Uruguay, with its tradition of agnosticism and atheism, continued to be the least Christian country in Latin America. □

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**Brazil** is the least equal country, given that the richest 10% capture more than half (50.6%) of income, compared with the 0.8% that the poorest 10% of the population receive.

**Mexico** is the second most unequal country, given that the richest tenth of the population receives 42.2% of income, compared with the 1.3% that the poorest tenth receive.

In **Argentina**, in third place, 41.7% of income is obtained by the highest portion of society in contrast to the 1.1% of income that the least favored receive.

In **Venezuela**, in fourth place, the richest 10% collect 36.8% of money and the richest 30% control 65.1% of resources, while the poorest 10% are obligated to survive on barely 0.9%.

In **Columbia**, the richest 10% obtain 49.1% of income, in contrast with the 0.9% that the poorest have. In **Chile**, the number is 42.5% in comparison with 1.5%.

The most equal countries of the region are **Nicaragua**, **Panama**, and **Paraguay**, although even in these three, the differences between the rich and poor are abysmal, since the 10% most rich consume more than 40% of resources.

Urbanization has not diminished poverty in Latin America. The number of poor has significantly increased in the last decades. In 1970, there were 41 million poor people in the cities of the region, 25% of the population. In 2007 there were 127 million urban poor, 29% of the urban population. The rural poor in Brazil make up 50.1% of the population. In Columbia it is 50.5%, in Mexico it is 40.1%, and in Peru it is 69.3%. The exception is Chile, with an index of rural poverty of 12.3%. □

## RELIGIONS AND BIRTH RATES

Data from Google, *Le Monde Diplomatique* and *atrio.org*

Google, under the heading of "Birth Rates in the World," offers some striking statistics. In central Africa there is an index of between 40 and 50 births for every 1,000 inhabitants; at the opposite pole, Europe has about 10 births for 1,000 inhabitants. For its part, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, in a long study entitled "The Myth of Conquering Islam" published in January, 2010, presents surprising data about the birth rate in Muslim countries in the North of Africa and in the Middle East. In these countries, taken together, the birth rate has declined between 1975 and 2005 from a figure of 6.8 children per woman to 3.7 (in their fertility period between 15 and 49). Here are the data from some of these countries: Morocco, from 7.3 to 2.4; Algeria from 8.4 to 2.6; Saudi Arabia from 6.5 to 3.6; Tunisia and Iran from 7.3 to 2.

The speed of this decline is surprising. Europe passed from an average of nearly 6 children to the current figure of 2 over 40 years, between the 50s and 90s; the Arab countries did the same over 30 years and the decline continues. The lack of influence of religious faith on the birth rate is surprising. For example, in Iran where in spite of a theocratic regime and the preaching of the Ayatollahs in favor of birth, the rate continues to decline. From 6.8 children per woman in 1985, right in the middle of the Islamic Revolution, it has today reached 2 children per woman.

Even more curious is the case of Lebanon. A Muslim and Christian country, the birthrate has declined more among Muslims than among the Maronites, who are Catholic. From a lay-agnostic point of view, *Le Monde Diplomatique* points out that the decline in the birth rate is in direct relationship, not with the level of religiosity, but with the level of literacy and modernization in each country. For example, in Libya, where tribal organization remains alive, the birth rate has not declined and in Yemen, a very underdeveloped and poor country, it also remains high, while in the other countries of the Arabian peninsula the rate is almost at the European level. This same factor, namely the cultural and technical underdevelopment, explains the high level of birth rate that persists in Central Africa. *Le Monde Diplomatique* suggests that Muslim religion is setting aside communitarian values and is opting for values with an individualistic character.

## RELIGIONS AND VIOLENCE

STILL TODAY

Associated Press and Efe, 03/08/2010

A new wave of interreligious hatred in Nigeria has left 500 dead. According to local authorities, about 500 persons from three villages, with a mostly Christian population, have been assassinated by assailants with machetes in an attack that is interpreted as a reprisal for the assaults that took place in the same area less than two months ago and that also left 236 dead. On this occasion, it is Muslim pastors from the Fulani culture who attacked Christian settlements. At the beginning of the year, the violence started with Christians.

Once again, violence has taken place in Jos, a city situated in the center of the country, where the Muslim North meets the Christian South. These two communities have been in conflict throughout the history of the country, which gained its independence in 1960.

According to the declarations of eye-witnesses gathered by various information agencies, most of the victims are "women and children." "We have seen that those who are assassinated are the most defenseless, like children and old people: those who can't flee," declared Mala Lipdo from the Christian NGO, Stefanos Foundation, to France Press. The attacks on people have been brutal and bloody. According to witnesses, some of the victims were caught with fishing nets and animal traps in order, later, to be knifed to death. In the events of January, the witnesses say that many of the victims were buried alive in water wells.

The tensions between Christian and Muslim Nigerians are also palpable in the government. During several months of uncertainty and skirmishes in the upper echelons, the President of Nigeria, Jonathan Goodluck (a Christian) was authorized to replace temporarily the convalescing Umaru Yar'Adua, (a Muslim), who had been hospitalized since November, 2009. Christians and Muslims take turns at the Presidency of the country according to a tacit agreement. The conflicts that had protagonists among Christians and Muslims in Nigeria have taken the lives of 12,000 people since 1999 when the Sharia, or Islamic law, was implanted in 12 Northern states of the country. □

# THE MAP OF RELIGIOUS UNBELIEF IN THE WORLD

## THE MAP OF DISBELIEF

**CARDENAL PAUL POUPARD**

*Former President of Pontifical Council for Culture*

*In an interview granted to zenit.org, Cardinal Poupard, who was the man chosen by John Paul II for Culture, traces "the map of religious unbelief in the world," highlighting the most remarkable features of each region or country. Although the data are changing rapidly, we have here the "map" from an official point of view, that of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.*

Religious unbelief isn't uncommon anymore, says the president of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

"Unbelief is no longer a phenomenon reduced to a few individuals but a mass phenomenon," warns Cardinal Paul Poupard. It is manifested especially "in countries where a secular cultural model prevails," he adds. In an interview with ZENIT, the French cardinal sketched a map of religious unbelief in the world, a problem analyzed by the culture council during its assembly in the Vatican.

- *Aren't many sociologists talking about a "return to the sacred"?*

- Cardinal Poupard: Many talk about a "return of the sacred" without specifying that this is rather the emergence of a new weak religiosity, without reference to a personal God, something more emotional than doctrinal.

We are witnessing the de-personalization of God. This new religiosity does not coincide with a return to the faith and it is a real challenge for Christianity.

- *What relation does this religiosity have with atheism?*

- Militant atheism is receding in the world. But there is a phenomenon of practical unbelief which is growing in cultural realms penetrated by secularism.

It is a cultural form that I would describe as "neopaganism," in which religion is an idolatry of material goods, a vague religious feeling that is rather pantheistic, which is at ease with cosmological theories, such as those of New Age.

Evidently, it is necessary to reflect on this phenomenon, which is typical of the secularized cultures of the West.

- *What are the results of the study made by the assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture?*

- The situations vary from country to country, from continent to continent.

In **Africa**, unbelief affects the population of Euro-

pean origin and its influence is felt in the large cities. In a country such as **South Africa** there are more than 6,000 different churches. It is difficult, therefore, to speak of unbelief.

For **North America**, in the **United States** the self-confessed atheists are 1%, while those with "no church" are 15%. The majority of American citizens pray, while only 1% state that they never pray.

In **Latin America**, **Cuba** is the only country where there is still an officially atheist regime in power. It is significant that after 40 years of atheist education, 86% of Cubans say they are believers, although only 15% go to Church.

Another singular case is **Mexico**, where for 70 years a regime governed that was controlled by Masonic groups of anti-clerical orientation. Yet, 90% of Mexicans are Catholics and 100% are devoted to the Virgin of Guadalupe. This gives an idea of the profound roots of popular religiosity.

In **Central America**, popular piety resists the sirens of the secularized model.

In **Brazil**, where the greatest number of Catholics in the world reside, we are witnessing the move of believers from the Catholic Church to other Christian groups. In the '50s, Catholics were 93.5%; today they are 73.8%. In the same period, the Christian churches have grown to 15% from 0.5%.

In **Argentina**, 4% of the population declares itself atheist and 12% agnostic.

In **Asia**, the situation is altogether different. As an Asian bishop has commented: "There is no phenomenon of unbelief because there is no belief."

In **Japan**, for example, there is a real supermarket of religions. If we add up the number of Shintoists, Taoists, Buddhists and Christians, we reach a percentage of 125% of the population, as many say they follow several religions.

In the **Philippines**, the only country in Asia with

a large Christian majority, with 82.9% Catholics and 4.57% Muslims, only 0.3% leave blank the box in the questionnaire on religion.

**South Korea** is an interesting country, with the largest number of conversions to Catholicism.

- *But where is the phenomenon of unbelief manifested?*

- Painful news comes from Europe, with notable differences between the Mediterranean area, the center and the north.

In **Italy**, 4% declare themselves atheist and 14% indifferent. The majority are believers, but only participate every now and then in the life of the Church.

In **Spain**, a process of cultural and religious pulverization is taking place, supported by governments of Socialist culture.

In **Central Europe** we come across the three countries with the highest number of persons without religion: Belgium with 37%, France with 43%, and the Netherlands with 54%.

**France** is the country with the greatest number of atheists: 14%. In this case I am tempted to make a comparison with the end of the Roman Empire.

In the **United Kingdom**, 77% of the population declares itself Christian. The Anglicans are in the majority, but the number of Catholics who go to Church is higher than that of the Anglicans in absolute numbers. In Great Britain, 14% say they have no religion.

In the **Scandinavian** countries -- **Iceland, Denmark, Sweden** and **Norway** -- Catholics are a growing minority thanks to the arrival of new immigrants from the Philippines and Korea.

In **Denmark**, those with no religion are 11%, 11.6% in **Norway**, and 12.7% in **Finland**. In these countries, on one hand there is secularization, and on the other, the worship of nature, of pagan influence, which regards nature as sacred.

In **Germany**, a distinction must be made between the East and West. Sixty percent in the former republic of the East say they have no religion, while in the West this percentage is 15%, found especially in large cities.

In **Poland**, there are very few nonbelievers. But one can say that Marxist materialism is being replaced by consumerist materialism and this is the greatest problem.

In **Hungary**, of 10 million inhabitants, only 887

people say they are atheists. But the majority of the population live their religion in their own way.

In the **Czech Republic**, half the population declares itself atheist or without religious confession, while **Slovakia** is Catholic in the majority.

- *In terms of statistics, what can be said about the Muslim countries?*

In countries of Muslim majority there is no reliable data because if one is not a believer, one cannot declare it. This is the reason why all the numbers are false.

- *After tracing this map, what conclusions do you draw?*

- Militant atheism is receding, but there is a drop in active membership in the Church. Unbelief is not growing in the world, with the exception of the countries where the secularized cultural model prevails.

Religious indifference is growing in the form of practical atheism. From the pastoral point of view, what is most worrying is that atheism and unbelief is growing among women. For millenniums, the faith was transmitted in the family by mothers, while now we are witnessing a break.

Moreover, there is a new fact: the growth of those who are indifferent, that is, men and women who believe without belonging and belong without practicing.

There is an increase in those who say they are religious but do not go to Church, and who believe in a whole series of practices, which border on the magical.

- *Given this situation, are there signs of hope for the Catholic Church?*

Cardinal Poupard: Of course, I point out especially the new religious movements: Neocatechumenals, Focolarini, Communion and Liberation, Charismatic Renewal. For a quarter of a century we have seen them expand numerically and geographically. I meet them everywhere in the world, and they have also grown in spiritual intensity and depth.

It is a reaction of life inspired by the Holy Spirit to respond to the secularized culture. At a time when there seems to be a dissolution, they show a strong sense of aggregation and belonging, witnessing a strong religiosity rooted in the ecclesial and personal encounter with Christ: in the sacraments, in prayer, in the liturgy, in the celebration of Mass.

# RELIGION IN EUROPE AND IN LATIN AMERICA

## FROM A SWISS PLEBISCITE REGARDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF MINARETS

PAULO SUESS

*São Paulo, Brazil*

Switzerland is famous for the secret of its banks and for the precision of its clocks. Recently, with its 7.7 million inhabitants, it has garnered worldwide attention not for some bank scandal or for its clocks being slow, but rather for a plebiscite regarding the construction of minarets (11/29/2009). A minaret is the tower of the mosque, from which the caller summons the faithful Muslims to prayer. The great majority of the nearly 350,000 Swiss Muslims are emigrants from the old Yugoslavia and from Turkey, and, of the more than 100 mosques that there are in Switzerland, only four have minarets. That being said, 57.7% of voters were in favor of a prohibition on the construction of more minarets.

Surveys have shown that in other European countries the result of this vote would have been similar. Which means that what occurred in Switzerland was not an isolated incident. Ignorance and intolerance, which confuse Islam with Al Qaeda and the Taliban, result in a fear of the "Islamization" of a country, along with worries about the loss of cultural identity and of the separation of church and state. For different motives, the Swiss government, the Vatican, the Evangelical churches, the Catholic bishops, sectors of the general population, and some left-wing political parties were in favor of the construction of new minarets. Their efforts were in vain. The political, religious, and civil institutions, with their politically correct opinions, have lost some connection with the people.

Facing Islam and other non-Christian religions, the signals given by the dominant sector of the Catholic Church have almost always been ambivalent. We still remember the polemical address of Benedict XVI in Regensburg University (9/12/2006). We also recall the opening discourse of the 5th General Conference of CELAM (the Latin American Bishops Council), in which the Pope claimed that the conquest of America brought the indigenous to an "unknown God" and that the bringing of the Gospel "did not assume, at any time, an alienation of pre-Columbian cultures, nor was it the imposition of a foreign culture." In both cases, to quell the outcry this provoked, there was not enough water to baptize the few neophytes that still wanted to join the

mystery. To speak of violence and intolerance, the European Christian of whatever denomination doesn't need to peer into in the murky waters of other religions.

These minarets are indicative of changes in European societies due to the immigration of those who arrive from other cultures and regions in search of employment, and who are inclined to integrate into a welcoming society, without cultural or religious assimilation. To invite workers or permit immigration into the European Union is not the same as importing machines. People immigrate with their cultures and religions, which are visible, and they are permitted to live their identity.

Switzerland is a small European country, and Europe is a small region on the planet Earth. But, in a globalized society, ideas, economies, and processes of organization have lost their territoriality. The North-Atlantic world continues to dominate economies and ideologies worldwide. The Catholic Church monitors its churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America according to European cultural standards. This practice has produced a theological, ministerial, and administrative homogeneity of seminaries, parishes, and liturgies. At the same time, on some level considered secondary, there exist cultural niches of great diversity and friendly inter-religious relations. They are not the result of the exploitation of the labor of migrants, but come from the same colonial coexistence which produced a permanent exchange between indigenous, Afro-American, and Christian religions. The new religions and confessional groups of migrants, along with secularization and urbanization, have deconstructed the image of the homogeneity of the Catholic continent.

Today, in the majority of Latin American countries, with their four million Muslims, or in Brazil, with its million, it would be impossible to consider a victorious vote against the construction of minarets or something similar. Latin American society has incorporated as a constitutional habit of life the "bob and weave" which is a form of light tolerance, which does not pass judgment over the truth or untruth of the tolerated doctrine. The difference with Switzerland is in the greater liberality of the Latin American population, who inhe-

Translated by Stacy Kilb

rited the alchemy of survival from colonized indigenous and African-Americans peoples. Survival is a good motive for tolerance by subordinates.

Where there is human life, there are symbols. How many religious symbols can a secular society support without abandoning this particular state of being, which in a plural society is something positive, because it guarantees peace among religions, this peace which threatens dominant faiths? The tendency of the political culture of lay and secular Europe points toward the progressive prohibition of religious symbols. The name of "God" doesn't appear in the Constitution of the European Union, and only appears in five Constitutions of its 27 member countries. By judicial order, crosses and religious images have vanished from schools and public buildings in the majority of countries. In pluri-cultural and multi-religious countries, can a crucifix on the wall of a school or a public building be considered as favoring one religion over another? Can the wearing of the Muslim veil be prohibited for Muslim public school teachers?

With globalization, these questions have also arrived on the doorstep of Latin America. In Brazil, the question of statutes governing religious symbols has emerged not as the result of a battle between minarets and the towers of cathedrals, but between religion itself and secularism, between public and private life. The National Council of Justice, in its May 29, 2009 session, rejected four petitions to remove religious symbols from the buildings of the Judiciary. The Council alleged that the crucifixes and other objects are symbols of Brazilian culture and do not interfere in the impartiality of Justice. Already the third National Human Rights Program, signed by President Lula on December 21, 2009, has sought both "mechanisms to assure the free exercise of diverse religious practices" and to impede "the ostentation of religious symbols in public establishments of the Union." The State of Brazil may not have an official religion, but neither is it atheistic, as one can deduce from the preamble of its Constitution, which uninhibitedly invokes the protection of God. It is difficult to distinguish between public life and private religion, as shown by the proposal of the Regional Attorney General of Citizens' Rights in July of 2009, which proposes the removal of religious symbols from easily accessible sites or those which can garner public attention, in federal public locations in the State of Sao Paulo, but still allowing them on the

desks and in the offices of public servants. According to this proposal, the judge may place a statue of the Virgin of Aparecida on his work desk, but may not allow an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe or a cross to adorn the Tribunal of Justice.

The processes of cultural rationalization have produced a disenchantment of the world (Max Weber) and the functional differentiation of old family unity into the spheres of politics, economics, and rights, by the processes of work and organization. Religion has become one of these spheres, one among others, losing its dominance (Emile Durkheim). The two processes, rationalization as disenchantment, and differentiation into separate functional spheres, have unceremoniously tossed religion from its throne.

In modern European and Latin American societies, the collectively shared group of values has been diminished, but a nucleus of fundamental values is necessary in order to guarantee the social integration of all citizens. Thus, religions have made a resurgence in new configurations in the post-secular world. Religions have a future, because their transcendence (their proper sphere) rises above the instinctual dimension and is an essential quality of the human being. They have a future because, in their entirety, in a world of contingencies, relativism, and total pleasure, they are capable not only of saying – along with Freud and Lacan – that the limitation of pleasure grounds human society, but also of translating this limitation into "compensations," through images of hope, signs of justice, and actions of solidarity.

"Future" and "limitation" point to new forms of churches and ecclesiastical organizations, capable of embracing otherness without losing their own identities. The future will not come from limitations on minarets or Third World theologies. It will come with the elimination of the scandal of intolerance and the sorrows of hunger. For this, we must unite ourselves in a "productive chain" as builders of solidarity and peace, with the rebellious and lucid sectors of Switzerland, of the Vatican, and of the world. Whoever is incapable of recognizing the theological state of the Latin American continent will also be unable to recognize the hand of God in the religion of the Other and in the construction of their minarets. Citizens who are incapable of accepting the minarets of the Muslim faithful will one day be obliged to accept the rifles of the unfaithful.

# LOOKING TOWARDS 2050

ARE THERE TOO MANY OF US? WORRIES ABOUT THE PLANET AND THE POOR

VERÓNICA CALDERÓN

*São Paulo, Brazil*

## Overpopulation

The severity of the food crisis, the surprising increase in the population of the least developed countries, and the effects of climate change are some reasons to repeat the same phrase: "There are too many of us." And we will be more. In 2012, the global population will reach 7 billion people. In 2050, Earth will be home to 9.1 billion. The great majority of new residents will live in poor countries. According to UN estimates, in 2050, the Spanish population, for example, will be practically equal to its 2009 size: about 42.8 million people, very far away from the expected growth for countries like Niger, Somalia, and Uganda, whose populations will grow by 150% over the next 40 years. The populations in developed countries will remain virtually the same and in some even decline. In contrast, the world's poorest nations will have an accelerated growth. Of the 2.4 billion additional people there will be by 2050, 98% will live in poor countries. Are there sufficient resources and space for all?

Birth rates have fallen by 50% in the last 30 years, and they are expected to be reduced further. Even in the poorest countries in the world, the birth rate will be halved. The forecasts of the UN agree that the trend will continue. In 2050, it is estimated that global fertility will be only 1.85 children per woman. Without contraception, world population would grow to the 11 billion in 2050. Birth control has been essential. But it is not the only solution by a longshot.

For over 200 years, the warning was already explicit: the Englishman Thomas Malthus warned in his famous "An Essay on the Principle of Population" that natural resources would be insufficient to meet the world's population. Researcher Rosamund McDougall, deputy director of the NGO Optimum Population Trust, warns that "more than 9 billion people would have a terrible impact on Earth, not only in the quality of

life. The amount of greenhouse gas emissions would make it impossible to live on the planet in 2050."

Who will occupy the Earth then? The population in the 49 poorest countries in the world will double, 840 million to 1.7 billion people, according to the report Perspectives on World Population, released in 2008, and developed by the Research Division on Demography and World Population of the United Nations.

Developed countries, by contrast, will not suffer a significant change in their populations: 1.23 billion in 2009, and 1.28 million in 2050. Japan, Georgia, Russia, and Germany will even lose 10% of their population. The British scientist and writer Fred Pearce believes that the problem is not how many of us there are, but in how we share our resources. "It is clear that the problem is excessive consumption in developed countries and not overpopulation in the poorest," he says.

## Carbon dioxide emissions

The consumption of a person in the U.S. emits 20 tons of carbon dioxide every year, the equivalent of two Europeans, four Chinese, ten Indians or 20 Africans. 80% of the population will pay the economic and environmental impact of the consumption of 20%. Stephen Pacala, director of the Environmental Institute of Princeton University has calculated that the 500,000 richest inhabitants of the world--about 0.7% of the current population--are responsible for 50% of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide. And the situation will worsen in coming years. "The challenge is, in fact, to ensure that resources are shared out more equitably. The effects on the environment are extremely difficult to reverse through birth rates," warns Pearce. "Even if we were to reduce fertility to zero in the world, emissions of greenhouse gases

should be lowered at least 50% by mid-century," he explains.

## Hunger

In addition to the effects of climate change, the least developed countries are facing starvation, the direct or indirect cause of 58% of all deaths in the world according to a UN study published in 2004. The World Resources Institute warned recently that in 2050 another 25 million malnourished children in the world will be added to the 150 million who are hungry today. Poverty levels continue to rise: between 1981 and 2001, the number of people living on less than a dollar a day in sub-Saharan Africa doubled from 164 million to 316 million. Over the next 40 years, two thirds of the world population will live in developing countries.

The fact is that today, one billion people (one sixth of the world population) suffer hunger. In 2050, it will be 1.7 billion, 18% of the projected population by then. In addition to the deteriorating environmental, conflicts and poor development cause food shortages. African farmers employ the equivalent of 1% of the fertilizer a farmer in a rich country uses. While people in poor countries consume a diet based on vegetables, the rich consume food that is fed on vegetables. To produce a kilo of meat, at least 10 kilos of grass are necessary. An average American eats 120 kilos of meat per year, while in developing countries, the average is 28 kilos.

"Cooperation would make a significant difference," argues Stephen Pacala. "Famines are due, in the majority of cases, to the poor development of countries and because production has been insufficient," he says. The lack of technologies being deployed in less developed countries and the effects of the global economic crisis have worsened circumstances.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) warned in 2008 that annual expenditure on imported foodstuffs in the poorest countries could be four times more than in 2000. "For the poorest consumers who spend 60% of their income on food, the increase means a brutal blow to

their finances," the report notes. The FAO also notes that in order to fight hunger, the world must produce 70% more food in 2050 than at present.

The challenge is not new. The so-called "green revolution" succeeded in doubling the production of food between 1960 and 1990. And now, 60% of land is still fertile in the world. But what guarantees sustainable development in poor countries over the next years? Pearce and Pacala agree that a good start is investment. One report of the British Ministry of Development estimated in 2008 that to reduce world hunger, it would be required to invest at least 900 million pounds (\$1.504 billion dollars) to ensure development and technologies necessary to encourage agriculture in the poorest countries.

## Urgency of effective measures

FAO's budget in 2008 totaled about 870 million. In 2009 it rose slightly to 930 million dollars. Comparing this figure with the 700 billion dollars which the U.S. government spent to avoid the bankruptcy of investment bank Bear Stearns, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae mortgage companies, and the insurer AIG in September of 2008, the worldwide budget dedicated to combating hunger represents only 2% of this amount.

The leaders at the G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh (September 2009) agreed to allocate about 2 billion dollars in aid to combat world hunger, but a study published by the International Research Institute for Agricultural Policy and released that October notes that it would be insufficient: "It takes at least about 7 billion dollars a year for agricultural research and infrastructure improvements in rural countries. By continuing a policy that prioritizes profits, the consequences will be disastrous," warns Gerard Nelson, one of the authors of the report.

The priority on solving hunger, a serious effect of the poor distribution of resources in the world, is not new. Asked in an interview in 1972 with Dick Cavett on the effects of overpopulation, John Lennon was clear in defining the first step: "We have enough food and money to feed everyone. There is enough space, and some can even go to the moon."

# ANTHOLOGICAL TEXTS ON RELIGION

Among the most disquieting aspects of the modern world is its general and growing state of dissatisfaction in religious matters...There is no present sign anywhere of Faith *that is expanding*; there are only here and there, creeds that at the best are holding their own, where they are not positively retrogressing. This is not because the world is growing colder: never has it generated more psychic warmth! Nor is it because Christianity has lost anything of its absolute power to attract: on the contrary, everything I am about to say goes to prove its extraordinary power of adaptability and mastery. But the fact remains that for some obscure reason something has gone wrong between Man and God *as in these days He is represented to Man*. Man would seem to have no clear picture of the God he longs to worship.

P. Teilhard DE CHARDIN, *The Future of Man*

«The God in everyone,  
The God we all make,  
The God we all seek,  
And who we will never find.»

Antonio MACHADO

"I am  
a deeply religious nonbeliever....  
This is  
a somewhat new kind of religion."

Albert EINSTEIN

God is the silence of the universe,  
and the human being is  
the cry that gives meaning to that silence.

José SARAMAGO

## The word «God»...

"...is the most heavy-laden of all human words. None has become so soiled, so mutilated. Just for this reason I may not abandon it. Generations of men have laid the burden of their anxious lives upon this word and weighed it to the ground; it lies in the dust and bears their whole burden. The races of man with their religious factions have torn the word to pieces; they have killed for it and died for it, and it bears their finger-marks and their blood. Where might I find a word like it to describe the highest! If I took the purest, most sparkling concept from the inner treasure-chamber of the philosophers, I could only capture thereby an unbinding product of thought. I could not capture the presence of Him whom the generations of men have honored and degraded with their awesome living and dying. I do indeed mean Him whom the hell-tormented and heaven-storming generations of men mean."

M. BUBER, *Eclipse of God*

## WHY DON'T YOU CHANGE GOD?

In order to change our lives  
we have to change God.

We have to change God  
in order to change the Church.

To change the World  
We have to change God.

Pedro CASALDÁLIGA

Perhaps "changing God"—demanded by our same Christian faith—is the most profound and urgent challenge for Christian churches in the greater service of the Reign, of God's Project.

CASALDÁLIGA, Pedro, *O macroecumenismo e a proclamação do Deus da vida*, en TEIXEIRA (org), *O diálogo inter-religioso como afirmação da vida*, Paulinas, São Paulo 1997, pág. 35.

Religion is a feeling of the numinous, of the “totally other,” of the “mysterium tremendum et fascinans.” Rudolf OTTO.

Religion hides the face of God. Martin BUBER.

It is a system of beliefs and practices of a group of people that serves to address the ultimate problems of human life. J.M. YINGER.

It is the belief in spiritual beings E.B. TYLOR.

Religion is what the individual does with one’s solitude...Institutions, churches, rites, bibles, codes of conduct...are the adornments of religion, its passing forms. Alfred N. WHITEHEAD.

Religion is the presence in the world of something spiritually greater than the individual human being... The goal of the human being is to look for communion with the presence that is behind phenomena Arnold TOYNBEE.

Religion is an illusion. Sigmund FREUD.

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. Karl MARX.

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. Emile DURKHEIM.

Religion is a revolutionary desire, a psychosocial impulse to generate a new humanity. Aloysius PIERIS.

Religion is one thing to the anthropologist, another to the sociologist, another to the psychologist (and again another to the next psychologist!), another to the Marxist, another to the mystic, another to the Zen Buddhist and yet another to the Jew or Christian. As a result there is a great variety of religious theories of the nature of religion. There is, consequently, no universally accepted definition of religion, and quite possibly there never will be. John HICK.

Religions speak with an absolute authority which they do not just express through words and concepts, doctrines and dogmas, but through symbols and prayers, rituals and celebration, in both rational and emotional forms. Religions possess the tools to mold the human existence not just of an intellectual elite, but of wide segments of the population. It achieves this in an historically experienced form, culturally adequate, and relevant to the individual. Religion cannot make everything possible, but it can open up and give a “plus” in terms of human life.

- Religion succeeds in transmitting a more profound dimension, an interpretive horizon when faced with pain, injustice, guilt, and lack of meaning. It also succeeds in transmitting a sense of ultimate meaning in the face of death: a sense of meaning for human existence.

- Religion succeeds in guaranteeing the highest values, unconditional norms, the deepest motivations, and the most sublime ideals: meaning (why) and objectives (for what purpose) of our responsibility.

- Through symbols, rituals, experiences, and common objectives, religion succeeds in creating a homeland of confidence, faith, certainty, self-esteem, shelter, and hope: a community and spiritual homeland.

Hans KÜNG, *Projeto de ética mundial*, Paulinas, São Paulo 2001, p. 81-82.

In the modern world, religion is a central, perhaps the central, force that motivates and mobilizes people...What ultimately counts for people is not political ideology or economic interest. Faith and family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for.

Samuel P. HUNTINGTON, *Foreign Affairs*, nov-dic 1993, 186ss

# RELIGION... WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

## CLARIFYING WORDS

### LATIN AMERICAN AGENDA

The word "religion" has several meanings, quite different, which can be grouped into three levels:

1) The 'religions' are systems of beliefs, doctrines, practices, and rites about what is considered sacred, divine, or spiritual, often crystallized in institutions, and, as such, they are social and even political actors, with interests and functions of power. Each of these institutional entreties is what we call "a religion," the "religions."

2) Religion is also the social fact of religion: the fact that human beings are capable of religiosity and have need of it is shown in the manifestations of this religiosity, its cultural, historical, and political impact in society. All of this is also "religion" in society.

3) But religion is primarily an experience of the person: human beings need a reason to live, and we cannot find it if we do not open our hearts in intimacy to the mystery, the sacred, the absolute value of love, the ultimate Reality, the Divine...This spiritual experience is true for every person, with infinite variations, whether inside, outside of, or even against religious "institutions," that is, the religions. It is the religious or spiritual experience, the capacity to perceive and come into relationship with the undefined reality that has been called the sacred, mystery, or absolute. It is important to distinguish these three different levels and bear them in mind.

In any case, all three levels show that religion is a human fact, personal, social, and also institutional. Is here in all societies and it affects our life much more than we think.

We are not dealing with any taboo topic, nor with a field reserved for specialists, nor is it something that falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of institutions religious. Anyone sincerely interested in human welfare and fulfillment should pay attention to this human dimension as a social fact.

In the naive traditional mentality, religion always had a certain taboo character, sacred, as if touching it were a touch of irreverence, or could lead to divine retribution...Fortunately, it is no longer like this: the human sciences and public opinion have helped us to lose that excessively reverent fear and we now deal with the religious theme with ease and depth.

It is important to emphasize the distinction between "religion" and "spirituality":

-Technically speaking, religion makes reference to the institutional dimension of religions, their beliefs and practices, their institutions...while

-Spirituality or spiritual life or spiritual experience refers to the personal and intimate religious life that accompanies each person, in one manner or another, and that can occur both within and outside of "religions."

It should be noted in passing that we would technically need to object to the word "spirituality" because etymologically it is the opposite of materiality, corporality. This is obviously not the meaning it has for us. We do not believe in a composite of two things, but one unique reality, which is simultaneously material, corporal, psychological, and spiritual. Spirituality is already a consecrated word that today no longer makes reference to its Greek origins (or we forget them, deliberately). Spirituality is definitely the profound dimension of the human being, the living out of meaning, the profound experience of reality, the quality of deepening humanization.

Renouncing this spirituality, undervaluing it, or disregarding it by confusing it with "religion" and its institutions, rites, creeds, and dogmas would be a grave error, a tremendous loss for humanity.

# THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ORIGIN OF RELIGION

## CLARIFYING WORDS

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Anthropologists teach us that since our appearance on planet Earth, human beings have demonstrated the capacity to feel the presence of something that does not appear, that--in one form or another--is revealed. The trembling of a plant alongside a path reveals the possibility of a cobra, a precious help in life. It is one of the reasons for the success of the human being in evolution. Our capacity to feel the strange and mysterious opens new pathways not just in the sense of preventing us from falling into danger (the bite of the cobra) but also to give sense to the confusing tangle of events that we confront in life. Weaving things together coherently, based on connecting revealed events, we are able to construct a sense of meaning for our lives.

That is, the human organism is equipped with preliminary instruments to detect things before they are revealed, and is therefore capable of inserting these experiences into a coherent global vision. This is the origin of religion according to anthropologists.

The Hebrew Bible is full of stories that demonstrate this human capacity of sensing something and giving a deeper meaning to apparently ordinary facts. Noah, contemplating a rainbow above the clouds (Genesis 9:13) sees a sign from Yahweh in this; on a hot afternoon, three strange visitors approach the tent of Abraham in Mamre and he recognizes that they are bringing an important message (Genesis 18:1-15); Moses suspects the presence of Yahweh in a burning bush; further on, he senses the presence of Yahweh behind the clouds that cover mount Sinai; sitting at the entrance of his refuge, Elijah

feels the presence of Yahweh in a soft breeze; observing the arrival of small birds in the arid desert, the Israelites exult: "Yahweh is sending us manna from heaven"; seeing a cloud of dust rise in the desert, they sense a new message from Yahweh; in the trembling of the horizon, the travelers in the desert seem to see paradise; suddenly, the donkey of the prophet Balaam refuses to continue on the path and the prophet decides to abandon the journey; in the middle of a banquet in the palace, Nebuchadnezzar sees the fingers of a mysterious hand writing on the plaster of the wall (Daniel 5:5); fleeing from Jerusalem after the defeat of Jesus, the disciples from Emmaus are surprised by the presence of a man who unexpectedly appeared on the road with them (Luke 24:13-35); at the gates of Damascus, Paul suddenly can't take one more step (Acts 9:1-22).

Today is no different: someone drinking a beer in a bar is surprised to see, painted on the wall, the penetrating eye of God; the sick person looks with fright at the cruel angel carrying the scales which determine the chosen and the condemned in the Final Judgment, painted on the wall of the hospital run by religious sisters. We could add many more daily cases, if we pay attention.

We human beings are religious by nature. Our religious nature is made manifest in many diverse ways, but, in any case, we have the capacity to sense something more than what our five senses tell us about, although this sense continues being mysterious, imprecise, and frequently enigmatic.

# GOD AND RELIGION

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It is common doctrine and common view that Christianity is a religion. Its own authority affirms clearly that the Church is essentially a religious entity. It insists upon saying that the Church is a religious and not political entity, even if it has social doctrine, which does not justify any political doctrine. However, having a social doctrine is not common in religions.

Christianity comes from Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was Jewish, but all his actions and his words criticized the official religion of his people, the religion taught by priests, doctors, and his elders. Jesus broke with the religion of the Jews and did not teach any religious doctrine, did not found a religion, and *did not found any religious institution*. After him, little by little, the disciples set up a religious edifice that in the early centuries remained very modest, and only grew when the Church was adopted as the imperial religion of Rome.

Jesus came to proclaim a gospel. This gospel was the proclamation of the *Kingdom of God on this earth*. The Kingdom of God would be like a new creation, a reestablishment of humanity, free from the bondage of sin, free to form a world of peace and brotherhood and sisterhood, where God himself would live.

Religion is a set of institutions where human beings go to find God, to worship, pray, thank, apologize...But Jesus said that there is no need to seek God, for God comes on his own initiative before humans even start searching. And he stays with his people in order to help in any way he can. He calls all human beings *to build a new world*. This is a megapolitics, a global politics, a project of transforming all social relations as well as the interior of the human being. Rather than being a religion, Christianity is the *announcement of a total change in humanity* in all aspects: personal, social, political, economic, and cultural. It comes not to destroy what exists--all cultural, political, and economic evolution. It comes to save what is good in the life of this world, and to straighten out what deviates from this. It preserves and promotes what is humane and destroys everything

that is inhumane.

For 2000 years, the Gospel has shown that it is a force for personal and social transformation. It has awakened freedom on both the personal and societal levels. It has caused transformations of lifestyle. It has fought against slavery, war, poverty, and economic domination. The Gospel points towards a different future, rather than prolonging the past and thinking that some Golden Age has already passed.

But in the history of Christianity, the gospel has been *counterbalanced by religion*. A Christian *religion* was born that had all the characteristics of other religions. Many times, the gospel was reduced to being announced by a small minority of believers in the midst of a mass of religious people who wanted to conserve the past and prevent changes for a more human future. There were situations in which the institution Church fought against those who wished to follow the evangelical inspiration. There were cases in which the gospel was being lived by people separated from the Church: the Catholic religion seemed to be the biggest obstacle in the search for a more humane world. Did not Gandhi said that it seemed strange that Christians were the least likely to understand the gospel?

Religions may think that they have always existed and always remained the same. In fact, they all formed *during centuries* and *evolved* without recognizing their transformation, slowly and permanently. Only Judaism and religions born of it can invoke historical data on their founding.

The human being is a *religious being*. Religion always was at the center of culture and was the source of the most beautiful cultural works. It is still an active source of culture, even if it is less so than in the past. It was the soul of all cultures. The current crisis of secularization does not disprove that theory. The development of technical and scientific rationality has made humans devote more time and concerns to scientific, technical, and economic activities. They have created a multitude of useful items that have led to a consumption which absorbs all resources.

They spend most of the time earning money to buy everything that is offered. No time for religion, which is a free activity, and wasted time from an economic perspective...

This situation has negatively affected the large religious systems, which previously occupied a good part of the time, thoughts, and social relations of humanity. *But religion has not disappeared.* In the United States, there are 38,000 registered religious groups. In the large Brazilian cities, there are hundreds or thousands of groups although many are not registered. These religious groups are more fragmentary, more simplified, usually for smaller groups, without large system of doctrine, with a very small following, and almost without a religious institution. These are groups that form around charismatic people who offer a quick religious experience, accessible to everyone. No prolonged formation is required. They offer a lot and require little. They often do not ask for a personal commitment. But they respond to needs felt by almost all humans.

Humans understand the *meaning of their lives* with difficulty. They live in a world of mystery. Scientific explanations leave out the most important parts of life. Religion explains the mystery of existence, the mystery of the length of life, of birth and death. It explains how to relate to a very disconcerting world. Why are there disasters, droughts, floods, and earthquakes? The outside world seems simultaneously friendly, useful, and dangerous. Human beings do not understand themselves: why all these emotions, fears, rivalries, utopias, all these desires, and all this emotional life? What is it that dwells in our minds? The sciences of religions, psychology, sociology, and anthropology of religion, study all these phenomena.

Ancestrally, the idea came about that this world is managed by *supernatural, external forces* to which many representations have been given: gods, angels, saints, spirits, and occult powers. Since we cannot control or direct our lives, we need to relate to these hidden forces. The superior beings have fears and desires. They can be dangerous or helpful. Religion provides a means for overcoming fears and satisfying desires. But we must know how. Religion teaches the how.

In a disintegrated society like our radical capitalist society, religion offers a identity. Like affiliation

with football teams, social clubs such as the Rotary, and political parties, belonging to a religion helps people situate themselves in an atomized society in which the economic system reduces human beings to the condition of consumer. People say: "I am for team Barcelona," of such-and-such political party, or the like. But they also say "I am Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Jehovah's Witness, spiritualist, etc." This situates and *gives an identity* to people within their society.

All religions are *human constructions*, although they may invoke a supernatural origin, a revelation by celestial beings. We can say that they arise from the energy of God the Creator, but that also applies to the economy, art, social organization, and all that is human. There is not a separate creation for religion.

Religions are *conservative*. They resist changes. Their ideal is the stability of everything, in politics, social organization, economics, and culture. They are the last to accept changes in society. Their world view is cyclical. They cannot understand the value of changes because they do not understand that the future can be better than the past.

When a religion totally dominates a country, it stays the same for centuries. Progress only happens when new social or cultural forces manage to tilt the balance against religious conservatism. The gods do not support changes. Religions believe that changes only bring chaos.

*What happened to the disciples who Jesus left without religion?* In the early days, they were waiting for the imminent return of the Messiah in glory. Hope substituted for religion. When they realized that the Messiah would not come so soon, they had to get used to living in this world and *reinterpreted* everything Jesus had said and done as a guide for living in this world. The gospel was transmitted and *adapted* to the circumstances of each stage of history. But they could not live without religion, because nobody lives without religion. In the second century, pagans still considered Christians *atheists*, because they *had no religion*. But a religion was already forming.

Jesus had not founded any religion, and he himself never wanted to be treated as an object of worship. But after Easter the disciples began invoking him in worship. Jesus had asked that they *follow him*, but the disciples invented a *religion*. They were

inspired by the Old Testament and later also by *pagan religions*. From symbols left by Jesus, they formed a system of worship in the form of *sacraments*: baptism, the last supper...which at first did not have this religious meaning.

Each generation and each region provided some complement or variation to the worship of Jesus. He had not left any doctrine, but they made Jesus the object of a doctrine. One of the earliest examples is the *Symbol of the Apostles*. Later, they created an entire theological system. Jesus had sent 12 missionaries to announce to the entire world that the *Kingdom of God* had arrived. He didn't organize anything, and he did not plan for what would happen after the death of the 12. The disciples gradually established a system of ministries, laws, and rules. Already at the end of the second century, an episcopate was installed in almost all regions with a Christian presence.

The Christian religion grew and went through a series of transformations until it reached the present system of the Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches. The Churches claim that these transformations do not change anything in their religion. The elements of this religion came in large part from Jewish priestly and cultic traditions. They also came from the religions that Christianity encountered as it expanded. The official thesis is that Christianity purified all pagan religions, accepting only the influences that were not an obstacle to the gospel. The thesis is debatable.

The major problem is that during centuries of Christianity, *religion has increasingly occupied more space in Churches, to the point of hiding the gospel*. The historians of the Church in Latin America, by themselves, can confirm this situation. Once, Charles Maurras, an atheist French publicist from the extreme right, wrote to congratulate the Roman Church because it had managed to purge itself of the dangerous poison of the gospel. This may be an exaggeration, but it has a good bit of truth to it. In many places and times, being Christian consisted in attending services, observing the commandments, accepting mysterious doctrine, and obeying the clergy. The gospel was used as a liturgical element: in liturgy it is necessary for texts to be read, but not exactly to be understood, or even to be heard: the simple fact that they are read is sacred.

In Christianity, increasingly, the clergy controlled

an extensive and rigorous teaching, supervised by a severe magisterium that punished--and continues to punish--the possibility of errors or deviations. It created a theology that, especially after the Council of Trent, was at the service of the Inquisition, defending the opinions of the hierarchy, even when they conflicted with science or history. The strictly monarchical organization required and still requires a *total surrender, even of one's own thoughts*. In a Church of *one mind*, it was difficult to walk with gospel.

However *prophetic groups*, groups of poor people living without contact with the entire system and who could live the gospel without being disturbed by the demands of religion, have always reappeared. This minority has always existed. But even today, when Western society has been largely secularized, the religious system of the Churches maintains a strict discipline that does not permit creativity and social transformations.

The history of Christianity is a permanent tension between two poles, the gospel pole and the religious pole. All reforms inspired by the gospel turn towards the religious pole within a century, and are transformed into religious institutions. This is what occurred with the Reformed Churches and evangelical movements within the Catholic Churches. Just look at the huge institutions that are called religious: monasteries, priestly societies, and religious congregations. At certain times, tendencies to move towards the gospel pole occur: sometimes they succeed in opening up a space; other times they are eliminated by an inflexible religious system.

If we wonder why so many times in history--even recently--*Catholics have been and are still so conservative*, we need not look far for an answer. *When priority is given to religion, conservatism becomes inevitable*. It is something unconscious. Simply put, the interest in combating poverty, slavery, war, racism, or the dominance of class or culture does not enter the consciousness. Religion is lived *outside of this historical world* and is rather lived *in a symbolic world that remains indifferent to the material world* in which our body places us.

Therefore, we must ensure that dialogue or alliance between religions does not become a *conservative league* in which each religion seeks to save its position in society, without concern for individual lives, the life of our society, and the life of our earth.

The global dialogue will also have to be with all those who do not believe in any institutionalized religious system, including those that are aware of the history of religions and fear them.

*This is not to suppress religion.* First, because is impossible: religion is a necessity of being human. Second, secularized capitalist society allows religion to be a space of freedom. However, we want to make sure that religion does not become so dominant that it does not accept the historical movement created by the gospel of Jesus.

At the beginning of the conquest of the Americas there were some missionary groups, including Dominicans and Franciscans, who came with the intent to evangelize. They took the side of the poor, disengaging themselves from the conquerors, denouncing their abuses and crimes. Their names are always cited to defend Church from accusations of collaborating with the conquistadors, which was a fact which occurred with the majority of the clergy. The same Dominicans who excommunicated the Spanish in Hispaniola were denounced to the King by other religious who were there too.

After the Council of Trent, which forced religious to live in their monasteries, evangelization was virtually abandoned, except in some cases and in some experiments, such as the "Reductions" in Paraguay, finally condemned by the Pope, obeying the Catholic Kings. The clergy was devoted to *structuring a Christianity that was an extension of Spanish Christianity*. It was an extraordinary development of the religion. Just visit the ancient colonial cities to see the importance of the temples and convents: Quito, Lima, Ouro Preto, Salvador de Bahia, Mexico City, Oaxaca, and many others bear witness to a brilliant Christianity with many celebrations, much gold, religious art, gorgeous processions, and clergy endowed with full privileges. Temples and convents occupied more than half of the surface of those ancient cities. It was the "triumph of religion." A vigorous campaign to combat idolatry *destroyed almost all traces of the pre-colonial cultures and religions*. Indigenous peoples, prisoners of the *encomiendas* and mines, were completely abandoned. Some Catholic rites were imposed on them, without any explanation, and they were treated in the most inhumane manner. How could they have heard the gospel of Jesus?

*Religion not only tolerated, but supported reduc-*

*ing indigenous people to the condition of slaves, and it supported the slavery of black Africans.* Priests and religious had their own slaves: therefore, the clergy never fought for the abolition of slavery. Indians and blacks were abandoned to the instincts of domination of the colonizers, who wanted to quickly accumulate wealth by the exploitation of slave labor. All of this was in the middle of the "Triumph of Religion" in the colonial cities.

The current situation still has not overcome the schizophrenia that started 450 years ago. There is still huge abandonment of indigenous and black people, although there have been isolated places where some bishops, priests, and sisters have fought to liberate the heirs of these slaves. Immense poverty remains, and, above all, social exclusion. How many indigenous or black bishops are there? How many indigenous or black people are there in the parishes?

On the other hand, among the upper classes and among many of the bishops and clergy, there is a sense of triumphalism: Latin America, a Catholic continent! Brazil, a Catholic nation! Peru, a Catholic country! Argentina, a Catholic country! They don't look at those who are below and who were slaves. How many blacks are there in the rich neighborhoods of the cities? How many blacks and indigenous people are in commercial centers? Whites do not assume any responsibility for the oppression of indigenous or black people. *The greatest inequality in the world in a Catholic continent? That is religion.*

Where is the gospel? Since the 50s of the last century, some minority of the clergy and religious have gone into the midst of these descendants of slaves. But the Church reserves only a small portion of its pastoral attention for these people. Much love during worship and in songs, and in all-white groups, but such little service! A love detached from a reality it does not want to see. The preferential option for poor people in mere words. To understand what is still happening today, just look at the situation of the Mapuche in Chile, in full conflict because white people want to take away what little they still retain in order to use it for their own economic benefit. With the *complicity of the Church*, which contents itself with good words and good intentions, as in Aparecida, and seeks no practical consequences. More than ever, we must return to the gospel of Jesus. We need to leave the locked enclosure of Christianity.

# MANY OPTIONS IN THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

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The beginning of the 21st century has been marked by many difficulties. The great British historian Eric Hobsbawm, in his work *Interesting Times* (2002), pointed out that the 21st century—continuing on from the somber previous century, one of the most violent in history—does not point to substantial changes since it began with “a twilight darkness.” These are difficult times with impressive human and natural catastrophes. They generate considerable disorientation, insecurity, anguish, and depression. According to the World Health Organization, the second major cause of death in the industrialized world in 2020 will be depression. This is a sober diagnostic about the “unease that accompanies the dynamic of our time, the expression also of an “impoverishment of the interior life.”

It is difficult for a human being to live in a state of insecurity and without certainties. We cannot share a social life without order or meaning since the human demand for meaning is a basic anthropological datum. So it is that, in this dark time, we note the growth of diversified spiritual paths as essential mechanisms for the construction of networks of meaning in a fragmented world. We are speaking of “spiritual options,” and not only “religion,” in order to widen the spectrum and broaden the horizons of responses found by human beings to confront the threats in a world become fragile and disenchanting.

There is no doubt that religions occupy a unique function, as powerful systems of symbols elaborated by human beings, to give order to reality and affirm meaning. They also exercise an essential role in the integration of marginal or limit experiences, providing a setting for painful experiences in a cosmic framework of reference. They act as a “sacred canopy,” that is to say as a protection against the difficulties and threats of life. They occupy an important place in the interpretation of painful situations, helping people deal with suffering. Sociologists and anthropologists like Peter Berger and Clifford Geertz point out that religion helps “localize” suffering and death, making the paradoxes of human suffering bearable. They don’t eliminate perplexity, evil, or suffering—nor do they propose to do so—but they attempt to situate us in a meaningful frame of reference that produces relief and security. In situations of great suffering, nothing is more important than finding mean-

ing. It is as fundamental as the need for happiness.

Religion comes on the scene to guarantee the interpretive code of the complex and difficult situations that make up the daily journey of human beings. It becomes possible to confront and tolerate pain. From this it derives its decisive importance in grassroots settings, which only succeed in understanding the world through the entry point of religion. An outstanding personality, Riobaldo from Guimarães Rosa, expressed this sentiment quite well in his classic work *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1967):

“So it is that religion fills a void mainly when there are clashes, when we turn in on ourselves. Prayer heals the madness. Generally that is what the salvation of the soul is... Lots of religion, my friend! For myself, I never miss an opportunity for religion. I take advantage of all of them. I drink the water in all the rivers... For me, just one is not enough; it might not suffice (...) It calms me, lifts me up. Any shadow refreshes me.”

Analyzing the referential spaces of Brazilian society, the anthropologist Roberto de Matta identified three relational fields: the house, the street, and the other world. The house, our most proximate universe, is where we live and die; in it the relationships of family, friendship, and gratuity predominate. The street is the space where we work and confront the arduous struggle for life and it is the space governed by the laws of the marketplace. But there is also another relational universe, which is that of the other world, delimited by churches, hermitages, oratories, synagogues, mosques, cemeteries, and so forth. It is a space marked by the dynamic of eternity and relativity, full of spirits, the dead, angels, saints, orishas, gods, and demons. It is a world of protection in which “everything can have or give meaning.” It is a world of hopes and utopias that can open doors and windows, which aren’t visible in the implacable dynamic of the laws of the market. It is a world in which the possibility of compensations that don’t occur in the realm of the house and the street are affirmed. It is a place where hidden meaning, able to give order to life and create a relationship with the things of life, can be recovered. Everything is possible in the relationship with the other world. As Roberto de Matta says, in religious language, woven out of prayers, supplications, and promises, a “people that has had everything taken from

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it and that doesn't have a chance to speak with its legal representatives can speak, be heard, and receive gods in their own body."

In the sphere of investigations carried out by the social sciences, it is confirmed that religious experiences such as are common in grassroots settings have fulfilled an important function of social cohesion. In Brazil, we have the examples of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) and the Pentecostal and Afro-Brazilian religions that are aimed at a unique dynamic of reconstruction of a new and vital meaning and at intensifying the quality of "being subject" or "being community." Anthropological studies carried out with segments of Pentecostals reveal a primal experience of the "generation of bonds of confidence and fidelity that circulate material and affective benefits by means of mutual help, information (or recommendations) about employment or access to public policies, in addition to the generation of self-esteem and matrimonial ties that tend to give priority to religious relationships above family networks" (Ronaldo de Almeida).

In Brazil we can see today that it is the Evangelicals who live more radically the option for the poor, reaching the most remote and isolated corners of society, responding effectively to the cries of those most unattended, and promoting unusual clustering dynamics. Matrimonial ties are reconstituted, people who were at the "bottom of the pit" rediscover the will to live and the shine in their eyes in order to take up again their daily life. People who are paralyzed by fear, pain, and chaos find in these religious groups a new spirit for living. This is what Emile Durkheim identified as the dynamogenic force of religion that helps us to live, that is to say to confront and overcome difficulties.

This vital and spiritual energy among Brazilian Pentecostals was the object of an analysis by Richard Shaull, one of the fathers of liberation theology. Together with sociologist Waldo César, he tried to identify some elements that escape traditional analysis of the topic, especially the essence of the spiritual experience that animates poor Pentecostals in their faith journey. And it is provoking to hear what occurred among quite a number of the poor in Brazil who, in a situation of extreme instability "come to know a rich experience, an unimaginable one, of healing and of the saving presence of God." At that point their lives begin to be rebuilt. In this spiritual dynamic a "transfiguration and inversion of daily life takes place:" the least in this world come to be the "first of the Lord," the "chosen ones of God."

The same thing also happens in other religious experiences in which the faithful become aware that they can do more. The experience of joy, interior peace, serenity, and enthusiasm for living, experienced in religious groups, gives rise to a new spirit and leads to unusual impulses for concrete action. In the Afro-Brazilian cults also, the faithful surrender their body to the dance of the gods and the result gives them new life: "They are no longer seamstresses, cooks, washerwomen who dance to the sound of the drums during the nights of Bahia: It is Omolu covered in straw, Xangô dressed in red and white, Lemanjá, with his algae hair hanging down. Faces are metamorphosed into masks and lose the wrinkles of their daily labor, the stigmas of daily life made up of preoccupations and misery" (Roger Bastide).

Those who study religion are challenged to broaden their gaze in order to capture the complexity that is contained in those religious experiences, full of vitality, and that occur across various traditions. The presence of other networks that are inserted in this phenomenon of the "return of the sacred" also have to be recognized. They are marked by an extraordinary plasticity: new alternatives for conversion, religious affiliation, and multiple belonging. Here lies the challenge in taking seriously the dynamism of religious experience with its surprising features. It doesn't imply hiding the ambiguity that permeates all historical and concrete religion. The cunning problematic of power also comes into play here. But when our gaze turns toward the concrete experience of the faithful, the authenticity of their faith dynamic... the analysis cannot deny or fail to consider an impressive richness. There is a "foundational fervor" that escapes any possibility of domestication or institutional framing.

However, it is not just religions that construct meaning today. There are significant non-religious spiritual options that are equally important. Horizons need to be broadened to capture all the spiritual energies that produce experiences of humanization. Spirituality is not limited to the domain of the specifically religious. As the Dalai Lama has been showing us, spirituality has to do above all with the "qualities of the human spirit," such as the capacity for love, compassion, hospitality, courtesy, and tactfulness. Religious people are not the only ones able to live out these qualities. They can also be developed, and to a high degree, by people or communities that are not religious. From this we see the importance of speaking of "differentiated spiritual options in the search for meaning."

# THE GOD I DON'T BELIEVE IN

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*The author, a well-known correspondent of El País, wrote an article with this title more than 40 years ago that was so successful that it was turned into a book which was translated into ten languages, and continues to be reissued. It expressed a leap in the religious consciousness of society at the time of the Second Vatican Council.*

Before my book *The God I Don't Believe In* came out as a book, it was the subject of an article that appeared with great scandal on the front page of the now defunct Madrid evening paper *Pueblo*. It has been more than 40 years since then. Those were the hard times of the Franco dictatorship, with censorship of the newspapers. On that occasion, they must have thought that it was something religious and certainly let it pass, without reading it. In the end it was object of scandal for them because the then Archbishop Morcillo of Madrid called and read me the riot act.

How did I dare say, it had to be asked, that one should not believe "in the God that condemns to hell," or in "the God who doesn't need human beings," or in "the God who loves pain," or in "the God that the rich are not scared of," etc.? There were 99 false images of God that helped many to think in that cave-like atmosphere of dictatorial Spain. For example, a young married couple wrote me saying that they were atheistic but they had cut out my article so that, if one day their two small children decided to believe, they would do so in a God "incapable of condemning sexuality."

40 years ago now, the title of that one article gave life to my first book, published in Assisi by Cittadella Editrice. I was opposed to them publishing it. I was just a bit older than 30 and nobody knew me in Italy. The book nevertheless has been the most translated of my books. It is out in more than ten languages, among them in Korean and Indonesian. Today, when I see that the book continues to be published in several countries, I ask myself why. The now deceased Cardinal Giovanni Benelli, told me that it was a fruit of the Vatican II Council that had done away with some negative images of the God of fear.

Perhaps today other new negative images of God should be added to that catalogue. In 40 years, things have changed much, but I believe that the hope in a God that does not condemn continues to

live in many hearts, in the God of compassion understood etymologically: the God that suffers alongside humanity; in the God of pardon, the God that loves our clay, our miseries, like a mother. In the God that is interested in our Planet Earth, in all the disinherited of the world; in all the humiliated; in all the outcasts.

Today, while agnosticism grows, curiously, the search for a different image of God—one without labels—also grows, for a God whom the modern human being, like Job of the Bible, can get upset with call to account, and, like Jesus on the cross, even cry out to for having abandoned humanity to its destiny.

It is not God that is in crisis. It is those false images of God that we have kneaded into our narrow vision of mystery, of divinity, a sterile faith now incapable of moving mountains. Vatican II removed many of the false images of God. It came to defend the view that the blame for atheism in the world was due to the distortions that we believers had made of God and God's son, Jesus. Still, nevertheless, there are many to unmask.

Still we maintain a certain paternalism and a certain religion of power in relation to the figure of God. Key words of the Christian message have ended up prostituted. Even the formidable word "mercy" that Jesus, following Hosea, preferred to "sacrifices," has lost its force because it has been interpreted as code for power in reference to God. It is He who pitied humanity because He is the merciful one, superior in his kindness. Jesus thought of mercy, however, like in the modern term "solidarity." In this way, the key of mercy is not the kindness of God towards the human being whom God aids, but that we human beings need to be "in solidarity" with others, not because we are superior to those to whom we offer our compassion, but because we are equal in dignity, all brothers and sisters of a same race, struck in the image of the Creator. Nobody is superior to anybody else in the

Translated by Michael Dougherty

compassionate logic of Jesus. If one is considered superior in some form, he must wash the feet of others, so that it stays evident that nobody is superior to anybody else.

The same happens with the word “pardon.” Whoever pardons is placed over the one pardoned. Again it is about a relation of power. Jesus, on the cross, gives a magnificent example of how to pardon without humiliating, without feeling superior: “Pardon them, because they do not know what they do.” He does not pardon them, placing himself above those that crucified him, but he excuses them: they did not know what they were doing and therefore they do not need to be pardoned. John XXIII also in his will affirmed that he did not need to pardon anybody, because “he had never felt offended by anybody.”

This is the sublimity of love. There are new faces of God that are harder to reject, at least as a concept, even by agnostics or atheists. They can help us in our modern world—still stirred by the eternal law of violence, envies, mutual hatreds, and ambitions—to find rest on the friendly beach of a God distinct from how God has always been presented to us. God is not the God of laws—whose Sabbath Jesus attacked—nor the bureaucratic God of Canon law, but the God that demands nothing more and nothing less from human beings than to be faithful to the voice of their own conscience, which, certainly, is more severe and demanding than all the laws promulgated by humans. As the convert Cardinal Newman said: “It is better to be wrong following your own conscience than to be right going against it.”

### The God I Don't Believe In (Juan Arias)

I will never believe in:

*The God who “surprises” man in a sin of weakness.*  
*The God who condemns material things.*  
*The God who loves pain.*  
*The God who flashes a red light against human joys.*  
*The God who is a magician and sorcerer.*  
*The God who makes himself feared or does not allow people to talk informally to him.*  
*The God who makes Himself the monopoly of a church, a race, a culture, or a caste.*  
*The God who plays at condemning.*  
*The God who “sends” people to hell.*  
*The God incapable of forgiving what many men condemn.*  
*The God incapable of understanding that children will always get themselves dirty and be forgetful.*  
*The God who demands that if a man is to believe he must give up being a man.*  
*The God who is not feared by the rich at whose doors lie hunger and misery.*  
*The God who is adored by those who go to mass and yet go on stealing and slandering.*  
*The God who isn't able to find anything of His goodness, His essence, wherever love exists, no matter how mistaken it may be.*  
*The God who condemns sexuality.*  
*The God for whom it is as sinful to enjoy the sight of a pair of pretty legs as to slander and rob one's neighbor or abuse one's power to get ahead.*

*The God who deadens earthly reform and gives only hope for the future life.*  
*The God of those who believe that they love Him because they love no one.*  
*The God who thinks war is good.*  
*The God of those that want the priest to sprinkle the whitewashed sepulchres of their dirty deals with holy water.*  
*The God who would deny humans the freedom to sin.*  
*The God who lacks forgiveness for any sin.*  
*The God who accepts and endorses everything that the priests say about him.*  
*The God who puts the law before conscience.*  
*The God that prefers purity to love.*  
*The God who cannot find Himself in the eyes of a child or a pretty woman or a mother who cries.*  
*The God wedded to politics.*  
*The God who will annihilate our flesh eternally instead of resurrecting it.*  
*The God who will accept as a friend anyone who goes through this world without making anybody happy.*  
*The God who, embracing humans here on earth, doesn't communicate to them the joy and happiness of all human loves put together.*  
*The God who would not have become truly human with all its consequences.*  
*The God in whom I cannot hope against all hope.*

Yes, my God is ... the other God.

# ALTHOUGH THERE ISN'T A GOD UP ABOVE

ROGER LENAERS

Holland - Austria

*The Latin American Agenda, in the series that it sponsors, called "Tiempo Axial," has published the book "Another Christianity Is Possible," by Roger Lenaers, which has been very successful throughout Latin America. Encouraged by this, the author has just written the book "Although There Isn't a God Up There Above," developing the same topic. This is a synthesis of the book written by the author. It is worthwhile to debate it.*

This book builds on the previous one, *Another Christianity Is Possible*, and it therefore supposes that we have already said goodbye (at least in theory) to that representation of God in which we were educated, and which is from the biblical tradition. This traditional representation is purely heteronymous: our world, imperfect, transient, powerless...depends entirely on the other world, which is perfect, eternal, almighty...from where a more or less anthropomorphic God governs us. But it is not enough to say goodbye to such a representation in theory. We need to draw out the practical consequences.

Given that modernity is characterized by an awareness of the autonomy of the cosmos and human beings, we need to separate ourselves from everything which an heteronymous vision implies. But even when we reject heteronomy, we continue to unconsciously think and act as if that other world continues to be real and active, providing knowledge and shaping our actions. This question is a simple and clear approach to see where we are unconscious victims of this error: "does this opinion or practice presuppose the action or existence of that other world?" Sometimes it will require careful analysis. If, for example, I am opposed to euthanasia because it violates the prohibition to touch a human life, I am referring, at base, to a commandment, the fifth, and I am therefore under the influence of another world, one which I had thought I had said goodbye to. Or, for example, thinking that Eucharistic species actually change, or that Jesus has left the tomb on Easter morning, or the multiplication of the loaves is a fact...all of these postulate the intervention of a supernatural force in the dominion (autonomous!) of nature. This new book undertakes a cleanup task.

In the first part, the author examines the field of ethics. Traditional Christian ethics is an ethics of law, and given that this law is from above, it is heteronymous, although we do not realize it. In general, what

the law requires is good, and it favors the process of humanization. For law to survive the "death of God," and hence the disappearance of its source, lamented by Nietzsche, there needs to be another foundation and a new justification. Here enters the "theonomy" of a God who is primordial and transcendent Love that is expressed in the evolution of the cosmos, in the form of a calling and an impulse to love. The ethics of theonomy (the modern Christian faith) is an ethics that is guided by the demands of love. These demands are partly identical to those of traditional ethics, but not without their weaknesses and gaps. The weaknesses of an ethics of the law are, among others: always allowing loopholes, responding to the problems of a certain time, and losing its meaning when times change. Its great weakness is that it requires sanctions: the fear that such sanctions inspire takes the place of the free acceptance of the good sought by the law, thus undermining the ethical value of human acts. Sanctions are a means of domestication, and they degrade the human being to the level of animal.

The author examines in more detail three specific weaknesses of traditional ethics, and shows how it is possible to correct an ethics of love, fortunately. First, sexual ethics, which is totally unsatisfactory; the author examines the causes and shows how an ethics of love maintains all that was good in traditional sexual ethics, but releases the dead weight that comes with it. Masturbation, homosexuality, premarital sex... are then seen under an entirely different perspective. Conjugal love leads the author to examine more closely the indissolubility of marriage, which rests on a heteronomous conception of the relationship between spouses, and to criticize the absurd practice of ecclesiastical annulment of marriage.

The second weakness is the absence of guidelines for the use of money. This gap has opened the door to the shameless capitalism we are living. An ethic of love, inspired by Jesus' ethics, which rejects all forms

of greed, would have led to a completely different economic world.

The third weakness of this ethic is that freedom has been sacrificed--an indispensable good for the human being that the Christian should live in fullness, like Jesus--on the altar of obedience to institutions that cannot be justified except from a heteronymous viewpoint. The author tries to find a balance between the need to act as free people and to act as members of the body of the Church, complementary and sometimes contradictory demands. The second part of the book is of a dogmatic nature and discusses four major themes in six chapters, in which the unconscious mixture of heteronomy and autonomy, that is, water and fire, against which this book was written, is clearly demonstrated: the relationship between creation and evolution, death, the Bible, and the Eucharist. How do we approach these issues if we do not appeal to the existence of another world?

1. **Creation.** In Rome it is said that creation and evolution are not opposites. But if, with Rome, creation is seen as an act of God above, there is the implicit acceptance that he can intervene at any time. This is why the neo-Darwinists like Dawkins reject a Creator God, even if he does nothing else. Moreover, what role can that God from above still play when the laws formulated by Darwin and De Vries adequately explain the process? The chapter responds to this double objection by presenting the cosmos as an evolving expression of Mystery, which completely transcends us and which is Spirit. It is never necessary to resort to an intervention by the "God up there." A comparison with a Mozart sonata illustrates this view of the creative act and clarifies the origin of life, animal consciousness, and the human spirit, intractable problems if seen from a purely materialistic viewpoint.

2. It is clear that **death** can no longer be understood as the passage from this world to another, because this other world has disappeared. But tradition has imbued us with its conceptions so strongly that even those who profess autonomy find it very difficult to release the certainties of the past: trial, heaven, purgatory, hell, and limbo, for which there is no longer any place in theonomy. The chapter tries to find an answer for these problems then. For example: what is left of us when we die? What if there is no punish-

ment and no reward...if how one lives doesn't impact this? What then remains of the Justice of God? Even though we do not have fully satisfactory answers, it would be wrong to seek refuge again in heteronomy: we would live in contradiction with ourselves.

3. As for the **Bible**, the Church actually reads it like Muslims read the Qur'an, as words directly from the mouth of God-up-there-above. Two chapters deal with the problems for the modern believer regarding the phrase "Word of God." Although "God" the transcendent Mystery may not "speak," it does not cease to express itself in the evolution of the cosmos and in the profundity of those who are open to its inspiration. When they formulate their inspiration, the result is a human word, marked by the culture and psychology of the author. But these human words resonate with an encounter with the Absolute. This explains the ambivalence of the Bible. Like the Qur'an, the Bible has inspired both humanization and crimes against humanity. In any case, it is a dangerous and completely heteronymous exaggeration to reverence it as sacrosanct, utilizing it to justify whatever we want to think or do.

4. For all the **sacraments**, it is important that from the beginning they have been interpreted in a heteronymous manner: the God-up-there-above's grace would descend at the moment of a particular human action. Regarding the Eucharist, this action of combining would make invisible changes that call to mind magic, especially "transubstantiation," and as a consequence of this, the real presence (understood as the physical body) of the risen Jesus. This interpretation is the result of a heteronymous way of reading the Bible, from a pre-modern vision of the cosmos and its laws. The interpretation of the Mass as sacrifice--another fully heteronymous concept--and which is restricted to privileged male officiants, completes the picture of the problems that beset the modern believer who wants to participate in this ritual. In two chapters, the book shows what actually happens in this ritual and important role it can have in the life of faith.

The book concludes with a chapter that demonstrates that modernity, departing from its axiom of autonomy, necessarily leads to atheism...but that this atheism, if understood correctly, opens our lives up to the God-Mystery that is transcendent Love. 

# 2011: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF...

## 2010-2020: UN DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

*The General Assembly,*

*Reaffirming* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set out therein, without distinction of any kind, in particular as to race, colour or national origin,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and other relevant international human rights instruments,

*Recalling*, in particular, article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law and that, in this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status[...]

*Reaffirming* the commitment to prevent, combat and eradicate racism and racial discrimination,

*Reaffirming* also the universality, indivisibility, interrelatedness, interdependence and mutually reinforcing nature of all civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights,

*Reiterating* the recognition of the value and diversity of the cultural heritage of people of African descent, and reaffirming the importance and necessity of ensuring their full integration into social, economic and political life, in countries where they represent minorities, with a view to facilitating their full participation at all levels in the decision-making process,

*Taking note* of the valuable contributions made by the various initiatives undertaken at the national, regional and international levels to benefit people of African descent and to realize their human rights and

fundamental freedoms,

*Expressing* concern that, despite the efforts, forms of racism and discrimination, and the effects of marginalization and social exclusion against people of African descent, have not been eradicated in some parts of the world,

*Recognizing* that further national and international actions are required to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights, economic, social, cultural, civil and political, without discrimination, by people of African descent, including men, women and children, as well as the continuous improvement of living conditions,

1. *Proclaims* the ten-year period beginning on 1 January 2010 the **United Nations Decade for People of African Descent**;

2. *Decides* that the goals of the Decade should include, inter alia:

(a) *To strengthen* international cooperation and national actions for the benefit of people of African descent in such areas as human rights, gender equality, the environment, development, education, health, employment, housing, and access to information and communication technologies, among others;

(b) *To support* the implementation of actions to enhance the participation and integration of people of African descent in all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of society, and in the advancement and economic development of their countries, while respecting their cultural and ethnic identities;

(c) *To promote* a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage and culture;

(d) *To recognize*, reaffirm and promote better knowledge of the significant cultural, economic, political and scientific contribution of people of African descent in the development and history of societies;

3. *Urges* Member States to adopt and/or strengthen measures, including on legislative, policy, institutional and operational matters, in order to effectively pursue the goals defined in the present resolution and all other relevant internationally agreed objectives that have a positive impact for the realization of human rights of people of African descent[.]

## 2011: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS

*The General Assembly...*

*Recalling* the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/ or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and other relevant conventions,

*Recognizing* that forests and sustainable forest management can contribute significantly to sustainable development, poverty eradication and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals[.]

*Emphasizing* the need for sustainable management of all types of forests,

*Convinced* that concerted efforts should focus on raising awareness at all levels to strengthen the sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations,

*Decides* to declare 2011 the **International Year of Forests**;

*Requests* the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to serve as the focal point for the implementation of the International Year of Forests, in collaboration with Governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and international, regional and subregional organizations and processes as well as relevant major groups;

*Invites*, in particular, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, as the Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, within its mandate to support the implementation of the International Year of Forests;

*Calls* upon Governments, relevant regional and international organizations, and major groups to support activities related to the Year, inter alia, through voluntary contributions, and to link their relevant activities to the Year;

*Encourages* voluntary partnerships among Member States, international organizations and major groups to facilitate and promote activities related to the Year at the local and national levels, including by creating national committees or designating focal points in their respective countries[.]

## 2011: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CHEMISTRY

*The General Assembly,*

*Recognizing* that humankind's understanding of the material nature of our world is grounded, in particular, in our knowledge of chemistry,

*Stressing* that education in and about chemistry is critical in addressing challenges such as global climate change, in providing sustainable sources of clean water, food and energy and in maintaining a wholesome environment for the well-being of all people,

*Considering* that the science of chemistry and its applications produce medicines, fuels, metals and virtually all other manufactured products,

*Being aware* that the year 2011 provides the opportunity to celebrate the contributions of women to science on the one-hundredth anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry to Maria Sklodowska-Curie,

*Being aware* also that the year 2011 provides the opportunity to highlight the need for international scientific collaboration on the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the International Association of Chemical Societies,

*Noting* the adoption by the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its one hundred and seventy-ninth session of a proposal for the proclamation by the United Nations of 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry, and noting also the unanimous resolution of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, at its 2007 Council meeting, to have 2011 proclaimed the International Year of Chemistry,

*Recognizing* the leading role of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry in coordinating and promoting chemistry activities at the national and regional levels around the world,

1. *Decides* to proclaim 2011 the **International Year of Chemistry**[:]

3. *Encourages* all Member States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year to promote actions at all levels aimed at increasing awareness among the public of the importance of chemistry and promoting widespread access to new knowledge and to chemistry activities.

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# Latin American Agenda



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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24/31	25	26	27	28	29	30

## January

## February

## March

1 S	1 T	1 T
<b>2 S</b>	2 W	2 W
3 M	3 T	3 T
4 T	4 F	4 F
5 W	5 S	5 S
6 T	<b>6 S</b>	<b>6 S</b>
7 F	7 M	7 M
8 S	8 T	8 T
<b>9 S</b>	9 W	9 W <sup>Ash Wednesday</sup>
10 M	10 T	10 T
11 T	11 F	11 F
12 W	12 S	12 S
13 T	<b>13 S</b>	<b>13 S</b>
14 F	14 M	14 M
15 S	15 T	15 T
<b>16 S</b>	16 W	16 W
17 M	17 T	17 T
18 T	18 F	18 F
19 W	19 S	19 S
20 T	<b>20 S</b>	<b>20 S</b>
21 F	21 M	21 M
22 S	22 T	22 T
<b>23 S</b>	23 W	23 W
24 M	24 T	24 T
25 T	25 F	25 F
26 W	26 S	26 S
27 T	<b>27 S</b>	<b>27 S</b>
28 F	28 M	28 M
29 S		29 T
<b>30 S</b>		30 W
31 M		31 T

# April

# May

# June

1 F	<b>1 S</b>	1 W
2 S	2 M	2 T
<b>3 S</b>	3 T	3 F
4 M	4 W	4 S
5 T	5 T	<b>5 S</b>
6 W	6 F	6 M
7 T	7 S	7 T
8 F	<b>8 S</b>	8 W
9 S	9 M	9 T
<b>10 S</b>	10 T	10 F
11 M	11 W	11 S
12 T	12 T	<b>12 S</b> Pentecost
13 W	13 F	13 M
14 T	14 S	14 T
15 F	<b>15 S</b>	15 W
16 S	16 M	16 T
<b>17 S</b>	17 T	17 F
18 M	18 W	18 S
19 T	19 T	<b>19 S</b>
20 W	20 F	20 M
21 T	21 S	21 T
22 F	<b>22 S</b>	22 W
23 S	23 M	23 T
<b>24 S</b> Easter	24 T	24 F
25 M	25 W	25 S
26 T	26 T	<b>26 S</b>
27 W	27 F	27 M
28 T	28 S	28 T
29 F	<b>29 S</b>	29 W
30 S	30 M	30 T
	31 T	

## July

## August

## September

1 F	1 M	1 T
2 S	2 T	2 F
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5 T	5 F	5 M
6 W	6 S	6 T
7 T	<b>7 S</b>	7 W
8 F	8 M	8 T
9 S	9 T	9 F
<b>10 S</b>	10 W	10 S
11 M	11 T	<b>11 S</b>
12 T	12 F	12 M
13 W	13 S	13 T
14 T	<b>14 S</b>	14 W
15 F	15 M	15 T
16 S	16 T	16 F
<b>17 S</b>	17 W	17 S
18 M	18 T	<b>18 S</b>
19 T	19 F	19 M
20 W	20 S	20 T
21 T	<b>21 S</b>	21 W
22 F	22 M	22 T
23 S	23 T	23 F
<b>24 S</b>	24 W	24 S
25 M	25 T	<b>25 S</b>
26 T	26 F	26 M
27 W	27 S	27 T
28 T	<b>28 S</b>	28 W
29 F	29 M	29 T
30 S	30 T	30 F
<b>31 S</b>	31 W	

# October

# November

# December

1 S

**2 S**

3 M

4 T

5 W

6 T

7 F

8 S

**9 S**

10 M

11 T

12 W

13 T

14 F

15 S

**16 S**

17 M

18 T

19 W

20 T

21 F

22 S

**23 S**

24 M

25 T

26 W

27 T

28 F

29 S

**30 S**

31 M

1 T

2 W

3 T

4 F

5 S

**6 S**

7 M

8 T

9 W

10 T

11 F

12 S

**13 S**

14 M

15 T

16 W

17 T

18 F

19 S

**20 S**

21 M

22 T

23 W

24 T

25 F

26 S

**27 S** Advent, Year B

28 M

29 T

30 W

1 T

2 F

3 S

**4 S**

5 M

6 T

7 W

8 T

9 F

10 S

**11 S**

12 M

13 T

14 W

15 T

16 F

17 S

**18 S**

19 M

20 T

21 W

22 T

23 F

24 S

**25 S**

26 M

27 T

28 W

29 T

30 F

31 S

# 2011

December 2010

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13	14	15	16	17	18	19							

<b>Monday</b> Lunes	<b>Tuesday</b> Martes	<b>Wednesday</b> Miercoles	<b>Thursday</b> Jueves
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>31</b>			

M T W T F S S  
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 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

M T W T F S S February  
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27  
 28

Friday		Saturday	Sunday	January	
Viernes		Sabado	Domingo		
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				30	
				31	





# 3 Monday

1Jn 3,22-4,6 / Ps 2  
Mt 4,12-17.23-25

Genevieve

1511: Agüeybaná, 'El Bravo', leads a rebellion of the Taino people against Spanish occupiers in Puerto Rico, the 'Cry of Coayuco'.  
1981: Diego Quic, Popular Indigenous leader, catechist, disappeared, Guatemala.  
1994: Antulio Parrilla Bonilla dies, bishop who fought for Puerto Rican independence and the cause of the persecuted, the "Las Casas" of Puerto Rico.

# 4 Tuesday

Rigoberto

1493: Columbus expedition begins return voyage with up to 25 kidnapped Indigenous people.  
1975: José Patricio Leon, "Pato", a Young Christian Student leader in Chile, is disappeared.  
2005: The Supreme Court authorizes the trial of Pinochet for Operation Condor.  
2010: The United Arab Emirates complete the *Burj Dubai*, the highest building in the world, 818 meters, 370 more than the *Taipei 101*.

# 5 Wednesday

1Jn 4,7-10 / Ps 71  
Mk 6,34-44

Telesfor and Emiliana  
Kaj Munk

1534: Guarocuya, "Enriquillo," Christian leader in La Española (Dominican Republic) rebels in defense of his people.  
1785: Queen Mary I orders the suppression of all Brazilian industry except that of clothing for slaves.  
2007: Axel Mencos, hero of the Guatemalan resistance and the steadfast church, dies.

1Jn 4,11-18 / Ps 71  
Mk 6,45-52

**Partial eclipse of the sun, visible in Europe, N of Africa and W of Asia.**

New Moon: 09h02m in Capricorn



Lined writing area for notes.













# 24 Monday

Heb 9,15,24-28 / Ps 97

Francis de Sales

Mk 3,22-30

1835: Blacks organize an urban revolt in Salvador, Brazil.  
1977: Five union lawyers were murdered in their Atocha Street office by neo-fascists in Madrid, Spain.

# 25 Tuesday

Acts 22,3-16 / Ps 116

Conversion of St. Paul

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

1917: USA buys Danish West Indies for \$25 million.

1919: League of Nations founded at Treaty of Versailles talks following World War I.

1524: The "Twelve Apostles of Mexico" leave Spain, Franciscans.

1554: Founding of São Paulo, Brazil.

# 26 Wednesday

2Tim 1,1-8 / Ps 95

Timothy, Titus and Silas

1500: Vicente Pinzón disembarks in North East Brazil - before Pedro Alvares Cabral.

1813: Juan Pablo Duarte, Dominican Republic's national hero, is born.

1914: José Gabriel, 'Cura Brochero', priest and prophet of Argentina's campesinos, dies.

2001: Earthquake in India: 50,000 victims.

Las quarter: 12h57m in Scorpio



Horizontal lines for writing notes.

Horizontal lines for writing notes.





# GOD: GAP OR GAP-FILLER?

PERE TORRAS

*Sant Feliu de Guixols, Catalunya, Spain*

“Nobody has ever seen God.” If this is true, can we even talk of “God”? Let’s imagine the following fable:

Once upon a time, some people were born and lived in a large space that was entirely enclosed on all sides, like an immense ball, and where there was everything necessary to live and to develop. There weren’t any doors and no light entered. Because of this, the people took it as a given that *their world* was the ENTIRE WORLD. They hadn’t developed their sense of sight, but they had developed their other senses.

One day, one of them reached the *wall-limit* of that space and touched something like a small window that she could open. She advised the group saying, *Touch here, there’s nothing!* Some, stretching their arms, confirmed that they truly were not touching anything. Someone said: *This is a gap, a hole in the wall, and it could be dangerous. Leave it alone.* But others thought that this emptiness could be an exit. Maybe an “exterior” existed; maybe *their world* wasn’t the only one that existed...

The *window* remained half-open and now light had entered. Because of this, after a long time, some people began to develop their sense of sight: they saw a type of “luminous and blurred stain” in the midst of the general darkness, and they began to talk about it.

Some, who could more or less see it, called it simply a *hallucination*.

With time, some began to better perceive this light: they saw the form that it had, but they didn’t know whether what they could see but not touch was part of the wall-limit, or whether it came from outside, if “outside” existed.

*Could it be that an exterior world existed?*—some asked.

*That’s impossible! Everything that is real can be touched.*

*Maybe the true world is outside, and we don’t have the senses to adequately perceive it!*—still others said.

That “vacuum” was the cause of huge debates, fights, and divisions. Many lamented and denounced

the great “deception” caused by the *four illuminated ones*. They said, “*We already have enough problems here without having to worry about whether other worlds exist.*” But others said, “*Haven’t you realized? Perhaps our world isn’t anything else than a prison. If this ‘exterior’ world exists, then everything is different for us!*” Some wanted to cover up the damned gap, some wanted to leave it open, and some wanted to make new gaps...

After more time passed, some people discovered that when someone passed by the “gap” it was possible to *see the person*. People and things, when they passed by what they called “light” in some way also became “luminous.” They didn’t know what “light” was, but the “light” allowed them to be seen and to see things.

The powerful ones among them wanted to become owners of the gap, and they even wanted to obligate everyone to pass in front of it in order to be able to control them better.

This “gap” caused so many problems! But, also, for some, so many possibilities!

We don’t know how the fable ended. You, dear reader, can imagine its *ending* or its *process* without end. **“God”: What do we mean by this word?**

The word “God” could be the name that we give to the “gap” that we experience in our lives. Even if we don’t think about it very much, we experience our life as *perforated*. From our side, we perceive an emptiness if we do not know that it is *full of a reality* that we cannot capture.

I know that I exist because I directly experience my existence. But this *experience* has two sides: I feel that I exist, but I also recognize that I could not exist. I am, but I am not the *cause* of myself. I feel that I am a being, but not an *absolute* being. Like the bird that flies, I feel myself *floating through existence*, but, at the same time, I feel that I do not sustain myself by myself. *Am I sustained?* As dishonest as I may be with myself, I feel that my existence speaks of a relationship with ANOTHER REALITY that sustains me. I am like the light of an electric lamp: it exists, but it will stop existing if it becomes disconnected.

## What is this OTHER REALITY?

I don't know. I only feel a gap in my existence. And it is precisely this gap that I feel in me which allows me not to feel *weighted down, closed, opaque, alone...* It is like a window that frees me from being imprisoned within myself. It is feeling that my *center* is *outside of myself*, like with lovers. It is to be in love: to feel that the center of one's own life is in the person one loves, outside of oneself. Then one's own life becomes communion, dialogue, and relationship...

In fact, each person who comes into our lives, if we accept them and "open ourselves" to them, creates in us something like an "emptiness" that permits us to embrace them. And here is where everything begins: in the PRESENCE OF THE OTHER.

How do I situate myself before the *presence of the other*? If I approach with an open and welcoming heart, a *gap* opens up in my life, and this becomes prolonged, dialoguing, and communicating... Also it becomes *creative*: I create myself like a *you* in front of the other, and I help the other to *create a you* before me. Conversely, if I approach the other with a *closed* heart, my life remains opaque, and the presence of the other generates in me a desire to dominate him/her or to use him to incorporate him *into my world* or, if not, to exclude him from everything.

Jean Paul Sartre said that "other people are hell" since their liberty demarcates the limits of our liberty. But this is exactly the opposite: one cannot be free without the presence of the other or others. It is their *presence* that creates in me a "gap", a "free space" where my liberty can be born.

Sartre "demonstrated" the non-existence of God by saying that if God existed, his Liberty would be so *absolute* that nobody could be free anymore. According to him, our small *liberties* "demonstrate" that there is no Absolute Liberty. Sartre was coherent in his manner of thinking. As he also was when he deduced the *radical solitude* of every human being.

But this reasoning contradicts our most direct experience. We live *living together* (convivir). Others are our horizon of possibilities. Our freedom does not end when the freedom of others begins. It's the opposite: only the presence of others can offer us *a space for liberty*, to "exist" (ex-sistere), to "live together".

Is it possible to move from others to the OTHER (God)? *Rationally*, no. This is because we sense oth-

ers, but we don't sense the OTHER. Conversely, *existentially*, in the measure in which we enter into a situation of dialogue and communion with others and with the world, we *intuit* that "perforated existence" is something we all share. When we fly in an airplane, if anyone has a fear of falling, it's useless to grip onto the seat, because the danger, in each case, is of *the floating entirety*. Our entire world is that which is sustained in existence despite the fact that it is *not sustained by itself*. Thus, *we are sustained*, disregarding our incapacity to know who sustains us. Existentially, the *opening to others* brings us to the OTHER, who is unknown.

Is it possible to be open to others and not take the next step towards the OTHER? *Rationally*, yes. It is possible to respect *others*, and even give one's life for them, without talking about "God" and negating all the real content of this word. Nevertheless, *existentially*, the authentic *opening* to others always goes *further* than their concrete reality. Truly respecting others includes the attitude of respecting them even if they are different. In the concrete reality of every *other* we respect *all others*. In every concrete other, we respect the unknown OTHER.

But it is also possible that someone may say they "believe in God" without really being *open to others*. This means that they have made a "God" in their measure, to legitimize or justify their *closure*. That is, an "idol". In the language of our fable, it would be a "gap-filling" God.

When a person says, "I don't believe in God," I feel tenderness towards her, because I imagine how heavy and opaque life must feel. And I would like to tell her, "Well, I do believe in God," and I feel it like an "emptiness" inside me which allows me to be *light, transparent, open, free, in dialogue...*

It is possible that my atheist companion will say that she also feels *light, transparent, open, free, in dialogue...* Then I know that both of us are experiencing something very similar, never mind the word "God." She rejects it as a "gap-filling" idol, and I experience it, embrace it, and enjoy it as a "gap" in my existence.

Thus, "God" is a word of changing use and content, according to the language and *deep attitude* of each one of us. How wise is the old commandment: You shall not take the name of God in vain!







# 3 Thursday

Heb 12,18-19.21-24 / Ps 47

Blas and Oscar

*Ansgar of Hamburg*

1795: Antonio José de Sucre, South American independence leader, born in Cumaná, Venezuela.

1929: Camilo Torres, Colombian priest and revolutionary, born.

New Moon: 02h31m in Aquarius



# 4 Friday

Heb 13,1-8 / Ps 26

Andrés Corsino

1794: Liberation of the slaves in Haiti. The first abolitionist law in Latin America.

1927: The Prestes Column takes refuge in Bolivia.

1979: Benjamín Didinué, Colombian indigenous leader, martyred for his defense of the land.

1979: Six workers killed and dozens injured in police attack on the Cromotex factory in Lima, Peru.

1981: The Massacre of Chimaltenango (Guatemala). 68 campesinos are killed.

1992: An attempted State coup in Venezuela.

# 5 Saturday

Heb 13,15-17.20-21 / Ps 22

Águeda

1977: The Somocist police destroy the contemplative community of Solentiname, a community committed to the Nicaraguan revolution.

1988: Francisco Domingo Ramos, labor leader, is assassinated on orders of large landowners in Pancas, Brazil.

2004: Rebels take over of the city of Gonaïves, Haiti triggering events leading to fall of Aristide government.



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isa 58,7-10 / Ps 111

1Cor 2,1-5 / Mt 5,13-16

Paul Miki

1694: Zumbi and companions are besieged in Palmares. Without gunpowder, they fled into the jungle.

1916: Rubén Darío, renowned Nicaraguan man of letters, dies.

1992: Dom Sergio Méndez Arceo, bishop of Cuernavaca, Mexico and Patriarch of Solidarity.



# 10 Thursday

Gen 2,18-25 / Ps 127

Scholastica

Mk 7,24-30

1763: Treaty of Paris ends the Seven Year War with France ceding Dominica, Grenada, the Grenadines, Tobago and Canada to England.

1986: Alberto Koenigsknecht, Peruvian bishop and advocate for the poor, dies in a suspicious car accident.

# 11 Friday

Gen 3,1-8 / Ps 31

Our Lady of Lourdes

Mk 7,31-37

1990: Nelson Mandela freed after 27 years in prison.

1998: The communities of Negras del Medio Atrato (Colombia) gain collective title to 695,000 Hectares of land.

2006: First woman president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet inaugurated.

### World Day of the Sick

First quarter: 07h18m in Taurus



# 12 Saturday

Gen 3,9-24 / Ps 89

Mk 8,1-10

Eulalia

1541: Pedro de Valdivia founds Santiago in Chile.

1542: Orellana reaches the Amazon.

1545: The conquistadores reach the mines of Potosi, where 8 million indigenous people will die.

1809: Abraham Lincoln born in Kentucky, USA.

1817: San Martin defeats the monarchists in Chacabuco.

1818: Independence of Chile.

1894: The Nicaraguan army occupies Bluefields and annexed the Mosquitia territory (Nicaragua).

2005: Dorothy Stang, advocate for the poor and the environment, murdered by land barons at Anapú, Brazil.

Multiple horizontal lines for writing notes.

# 13

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sir 15,16-21 / Ps 118

1Cor 2,6-10 / Mt 5,17-37

Benigno

Tibetan New Year.

1976: Francisco Soares, priest, martyred in the cause of justice for the poor in Argentina.

1982: James Miller, a LaSalle brother, is martyred for his commitment the indigenous church in Guatemala.

Multiple horizontal lines for writing notes.

# 14 Monday

Valentine, Cyril and Methodius  
 Gen 4,1-15.25 / Ps 49  
 MK 8,11-13  
 1992: Rick Julio Medrano, a religious brother, is martyred in service to the persecuted Guatemalan church

### Friendship Day



# 15 Tuesday

Claude  
 Gen 6,5-8;7,1-5.10 / Ps 28  
 Mk 8,14-21  
 1600: José de Acosta, missionary, historian and defender of indigenous culture, Peru.  
 1966: Camilo Torres, priest, martyr to the struggles for liberation of the Colombian people.  
 1981: Juan Alonso Hernández, priest and martyr among the Guatemalan campesinos.  
 1991: Ariel Granada, Colombian missionary, assassinated by guerrillas in Massangulu, Mozambique.  
 1992: María Elena Moyano, a social activist, martyred for the cause of justice and peace in Villa El Salvador, Peru.  
 2003: «First World Demonstration»: 15 million people in 600 cities against the war of the United States against Iraq.

# 16 Wednesday

Juliana y Onésimo  
 Gen 8,6-13.20-22 / Ps 115  
 Mk 8,22-26  
 1981: Albino Amarilla, campesino leader and Paraguayan catechist, killed by the army.  
 1985: Ali Primera, Venezuelan poet and singer for justice to the Latin American people.  
 1986: Mauricio Demierre, a Swiss international worker and several Nicaraguan campesino women are assassinated by US backed Contras.

# 17 Thursday

Gen 9,1-13 / Ps 101  
Mk 8,27-33

Servite Founders

1600: Giordano Bruno is burned alive by the Inquisition for his freedom of thinking and expression.

1909: Geronimo or Goyaaale a leader of the Apache resistance to U.S. and Mexican Government incursions on tribal lands dies.

1995: Darcy Ribeiro, an activist writer, anthropologist and Brazilian senator, dies.

1997: 1300 activists of MST march out of São Paulo for Brasilia, for land reform.

# 18 Friday

Simeon

1519: Hernán Cortés leaves Cuba for the conquest of Mexico.

1546: Martin Luther dies in Germany.

1853: Félix Varela, Cuban independence fighter, dies.

1984: Edgar Fernando García, Guatemalan social activist, disappeared.

Full Moon: 08h35m in Leo



# 19 Saturday

Alvaro and Conrad

1590: Bernadino de Sahugún, missionary and protector of indigenous cultures of Mexico, dies.

1861: Serfdom abolished in Russia.

1990: Students take over traditionally Afro-Mexican Tennessee State University demanding equal economic treatment.

Heb 11,1-7 / Ps 144 /  
Mt 9,2-13

# 20

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lev 19,1-2,17-18 / Ps 102  
1Cor 3,16-23 / Mt 5,38-48

Eleuthere, *Rasmus Jensen*

1524: The Mayan Memorial of Solola records the "destruction of the Quiches by the men of Castile."

1974: Domingo Lain, priest, martyred in the struggle for freedom in Colombia.

1978: Decree 1142 orders Colombia to take into account the language and culture of the indigenous peoples.

World Day for Social Justice (U.N.)





# WHAT RELIGIONS EXPRESS AND DOES NOT DIE WITH THEM

MARTA GRANÉS

*cetr.net, Barcelona, Spain*

It is an accepted fact that in all epochs people have had religion, and that throughout the course of history it has changed, not only by the imposition of some conqueror, but by its own need to adapt itself to new forms of life. It is a common phenomenon in human societies.

Anthropologists and historians of religion are in agreement that we can detect, in all peoples, religions that belong to three types of cultures: those of hunter-gatherer cultures, those of agricultural cultures, and those of pastoral cultures.

The first belongs to the epoch in which humans lived through hunting, approximately from when superior hominids appeared until the reduction in game made it necessary to resort to agriculture in order to survive, which occurred earlier in some places, starting from 5,000 B.C.E (and which continues until the present day in some places).

In both societies, religion was transmitted in mythological stories that had a double function: on the one hand to explain the nature of the world and how humans should act in it (this was the primary function of the myth: programming the collective); and, on the other hand, these stories also served to give a form to what was beyond the human world. Myths allowed the possibility of understanding, in a manner adequate for the survival of the group, the human as much as the sacred; they gave to human minds a vision that went along with a way of living. Myths organized the form of living and they were the guide for the construction of society. For example, the myths and rituals of hunters allowed them to see the world in a manner adequate for hunting, and thus they were more effective in guaranteeing collective survival. This mythology was forged little by little, by trial and error, until it arrived at its definitive format. We can say the same thing about agricultural peoples.

This mythology that gave a form to the human world and what escapes from human dimensions, the sacred, was believed to have come from heaven, from the ancestors, from the gods. With this, those myths and the rituals connected to them (religion), which are the slow creation of the people through thousands

of years, became untouchable, fixed, and therefore eternal. This was possible because the people did not have a consciousness of the long process of their creation. Our situation is different, now we know that mythologies are cultural products to assist the life of societies and also to orient them in their search for the sacred.

Academics are in agreement that this change of religion from living through hunting to living from agriculture meant a great rupture in the manner of seeing the world and the sacred. The change from one society to the other was relatively quick, while the change of mythology required more time. Living through hunting implied a certain way of seeing the world, of sensing it, and of acting in it. The world of the hunters had its form of organization, family, and education, it had its own symbolic body adequate for its culture, and it had its interpretation of the sacred, its rituals. All of this explained its world and the relationship of individuals with it. And suddenly it stopped having meaning, not adequate for the new reality connected to agriculture.

Abandoning hunting in order to become dedicated to cultivation meant a rupture of the world. It required drastic changes in interpersonal relations and in the manner of seeing reality, which also affected the manner of interpreting the sacred and, consequently, rituals. It is easy to imagine the great confusion this caused for these peoples--our ancestors--as they began to recognize that their inherited culture and the values transmitted to them by their ancestors, including their religion, were ceasing to have meaning and be oriented to what they should do in their lives.

We will provide a small description of the change lived in respect to the sacred in movement. In hunting societies, life came from killing and eating prey. If survival depended on them, it was necessary to say that life was present in them, that they were sacred. Everything in their world had a relationship with the survival of the group. Therefore, all reality was equally sacred. This was also demonstrated by the lack of hierarchy within the group organization.

But when our ancestors began to feed themselves

by growing crops, collective organization ceased being familial. The right to command was concentrated in one person while all others had to obey. As we have stated, myths are configured by the form of life of the group; because of this, the sacred in agricultural societies also had to be seen as concentrated in one entity, in a type of super-individual. Their religion changed. They stopped seeing the sacred as permeating all reality. Instead, they placed it outside of this world, in the sky, in heaven.

This change in respect to the sacred was total. The sacred was displaced to the sky and it was from there that terrestrial things would be ordered. The sacred became distant, far away, and alien to humans. Because of this, for the first time in history, it became necessary to depend on the help of intermediaries to interpret divine will. Agricultural societies organized themselves hierarchically in a pyramid of power; in its highest vertex the king was situated, whose power came directly from the sky, from heaven. From him, the entire pyramid extended. All participated in the sacred by obeying their hierarchical superiors. The rituals that accompanied the new mythology also had to change to be adequate to it.

Some people, ending the epoch of hunting, began to live by keeping herds of animals. For them, there was also a transformation in the manner of seeing reality, of coordinating roles between members, and of conceiving of the sacred. Their societies were tribally structured. Because of this, the sacred was connected with their ancestors and prophets. Because their survival depended on keeping and breeding their livestock, they saw death as a threat. Life was opposed to death. This conception was reflected in their mythology, their understanding of the sacred. The superior was interpreted as divided in two: a good divinity, which gave life, and a bad one, which caused death. The two were always in battle, in a confrontation that was not unleashed in heaven but upon the earth. Here also we can imagine what it meant for the sacred to pass from being in everything, like in the case of the hunters, to being incarnated in the struggle of two opposing principles in the heart of history.

This study brings us to discover that all manners of interpreting the sacred are conditioned by human forms of survival. They entirely form our vision of

reality. Religion does not escape this condition. Religions, as the sum of mythology and rituals, are the forms of interpreting the sacred in pre-industrialized societies. Religions are, therefore, tied to certain determined forms of pre-industrial living, and if these ways of living change, they will also make the forms of religions change.

Taking a look at our history, we can answer that religion has been a constant, although its forms have varied. This has allowed us to say that in humans there is the capacity to suspect that the reality that surrounds us and is within people contains a "something" beyond ourselves. Our ancestors interpreted this "something" according to the culture in which they happened to live. Diverse cultures have given this different forms, but what they all have in common is that they demonstrate humanity's own capacity to be able to take note of this dimension that is beyond all culture forms, but that is modeled by it.

All of this leads us to conclude that if the changes that we are living through are related to our own change in culture, they will also bring with them a change in our form of living, of seeing reality, and also of interpreting the sacred. Like our distant relatives had to, this new cultural situation will make us undergo a painful and inconvenient transformation that is nevertheless inevitable. But today we have an advantage over them: knowing that it is we ourselves who should deal with the vacuum in which we find ourselves at the end of pre-industrial culture; nobody will save us from outside. Now we know that religions are a human construction conditioned by the culture of the historical moment and that, because of this, when there is a grave change in the culture, there will be a change in religion.

The religious forms of the past were connected to myths and rituals, and these myths are becoming opaque, read from our culture which is less and less agricultural and pastoral in the pre-industrial manner, less hierarchical, and less authoritarian. It isn't that we have turned out worse than our ancestors, it is that our language and that of mythologies belong to different cultures. But we should take the precaution today of not ignoring that "spiritual dimension" that exceeds all human cultural expression, which our ancestors called God. Forgetting about this would mean trapping ourselves in pure animality.

# 2011

February

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

<b>Monday</b> <i>Lunes</i>		<b>Tuesday</b> <i>Martes</i>		<b>Wednesday</b> <i>Miercoles</i>		<b>Thursday</b> <i>Jueves</i>	
	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>9</b>		<b>10</b>		
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>17</b>		
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>		<b>23</b>		<b>24</b>		
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>		<b>30</b>		<b>31</b>		





# 3 Thursday

Sir 42,15-26 / Ps 32

Mk 10,46-52

Emeterio, Celedonio, Marino  
 1908: Birth of Juan Antonio Corretjer, Puerto Rican poet, founder of the Socialist League.  
 1982: Hipolite Cervantes Arceo, Mexican priest martyred for his solidarity with Guatemalan exiles.  
 1982: Emiliano Pérez Obando, judge and delegate of the word, martyr of the Nicaraguan revolution.  
 2000: The dictator Pinochet returns to Chile after 503 days of detention in London.  
 2005: The WTO condemns the U.S. cotton subsidies that harm free trade.

# 4 Friday

Sir 44,1,9-13 / Ps 149

Mk 11,11-26

Casimir  
 1962: The United States begins to operate a nuclear reactor in Antarctica.  
 1970: Antonio Martinez Lagares is assassinated by police in Puerto Rico.  
 1990: Nahamán Carmona, a street child, is beaten to death by the police in Guatemala.  
 2004: The Argentinean navy acknowledges for the first time that it carried out torture during the dictatorship.  
 New Moon: 20h46m in Pisces

# 5 Saturday

Sir 51,17-27 / Ps 18

Mk 11,27-33

Adrian  
 1766: Spanish governor assumes control over former the French territory of Louisiana.  
 1940: Soviet authorities ordered execution of more than 25,000 Polish POW's and elites in Katyn forest.  
 1996: 3,000 families effect the Landless Movement's largest occupation, Curionópolis, Brazil.

# 6

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
 Deut 11,18.26-28.32 / Ps 30  
 Rom 3,21-25a.28 / Mt 7,21-27

Olegario, Rosa de Viterbo  
 1817: The revolution at Pernambuco, Brazil.  
 1836 Mexican forces defeat pro-slavery secessionist force at the Battle of the Alamo.  
 1854: Slavery is abolished in Ecuador.  
 1996: Pascuala Rosado Cornejo, founder of the self-directed community of Huaycán, Peru, assassinated for standing up to terrorists.  
 2005: The Argentinean Supreme Court confirms the life sentence of Arancibia Clavel for his assassination of Chilean General Prats in 1974 as a crime against humanity.

7

# Monday

Tb 1,3;2,1b-8 / Ps 111

Perpetua and Felicity; *Thomas Aquinas* Mk 12,1-12  
 1524: Cakchiquel kings, Ahpop and Ahpop Qamahay were burned to death by Pedro de Alvarado during the Spanish conquest of Guatemala.  
 1994: Diocesan priest Joaquin Carregal, prophet of justice dies in Quilmes, Argentina  
 2009: Fujimori is sentenced to 25 years in prison.

8

# Tuesday

Tb 2,9-14 / Ps 111

John of God Mk 12,13-17  
 1782: Nearly 100 Munsee wrongly suspected of collaborating with British in Revolutionary War executed by Pennsylvanian militiamen at Gnadenhutten, Ohio.  
 1918: Spanish flu pandemic begins. 22 million people will die.

**International Women's Day**  
 Established in 1910 in memory of New York workers who died on March 8, 1857 while demanding better working conditions and the right to vote.

9

# Wednesday

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2,12-18 / Ps 50  
 2Cor 5,20-6,2 / Mt 6,1-6.16-18  
 1841: U. S. Supreme Court rules on the Amistad case that Africans who had seized control of their slave ship had been taken into slavery illegally.  
 1965: Rev. James J. Reeb, Unitarian minister and civil rights activist, martyred in Selma, Alabama.  
 1989: 500 families occupy a hacienda and are forced out by military police leaving 400 wounded and 22 detained, Brazil.

March







# 17 Thursday

Esth 14,1.3-5.12-14 / Ps 137

Patrick

Mt 7,7-12

1973: Alexandre Vanucchi, student and Christian activist, assassinated by Brazilian police.

1982: Jacobus Andreas Koster "Koos" and fellow journalists committed to the truth, are assassinated in El Salvador.

1990: María Mejía, Quiche campesino mother involved in Catholic Action is assassinated in Sacapulas, Guatemala.

# 18 Friday

Ezek 18,21-28 / Ps 129

Mt 5,20-26

Cyril of Jerusalem

1907: U.S. Marines land in Honduras.

1938: Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas decrees the nationalization of oil.

1981: Presentación Ponce, Delegate of the Word, martyred along with companions in Nicaragua.

1989: Neftali Liceta, priest, martyred along with Amparo Escobedo and companions among the poor in Peru.

# 19 Saturday

2Sam 7,4-5a.12-14a.16 / Ps 88

Joseph

Rom 4,13.16-18.22 / Mt 1,16.18-21.24a

1849: The Quemado Revolution, Brazil. More than 200 Blacks proclaim the Liberation of slaves.

1915: Uprising of the Quechuas and the Aymaras in Peru; led by Rumi Maka.

1980: First Afro-American Ministry Meeting, in Buenaventura, Colombia.

1982: Argentina's military landing on South Georgia Island triggers Falklands War with Great Britain.

1991: Feïsa Urrutia, a Carmelite nun working with the poor, assassinated in Cauca, Venezuela.

Full Moon: 18h10m in Virgo



Series of horizontal lines for writing or reflection.

# 20

Second Sunday of Lent  
Gen 12,1-4a / Ps 32  
2Tim 1,8b-10 / Mt 17,1-9

Serapión

1838: The government of Sergipe (Brazil) prohibits the "Africans" and those suffering contagious diseases from attending school.

1982: Rios Montt leads a State coup, Guatemala.

1995: Menche Ruiz, catechist, popular poet, missionary to base Christian communities in El Salvador, dies.

2003: U.S. lead invasion of Iraq begins without U.N. mandate.

Spring equinox in the North,  
Fall equinox in the South, at 23:21

Series of horizontal lines for writing or reflection.

# 21 Monday

Dan 9,4b-10 / Ps 78

Filemon and Nicholas  
Baha'i New Year  
World Forest Day

1806: Benito Juárez, born in Oaxaca, México.

1937: Ponce massacre, Puerto Rico.

1975: Carlos Dormiak, Salesian priest, assassinated for his commitment to Liberation, Argentina.

1977: Rodolfo Aquilar, a 29 year old parish priest, martyred in Mexico.

1987: Luz Marina Valencia, nun, martyr for justice among the campesinos of Mexico.

Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

# 22 Tuesday

Isa 1,10.16-20 / Ps 49

Bienvenido, Lea

1873: Spanish National Assembly passes law abolishing slavery in Puerto Rico.

1980: Luis Espinal, priest and journalist, martyred in the struggles of the Bolivian people.

1988: Rafael Hernández, campesino, martyr in the struggle for land, Mexico.

World Water Day

# 23 Wednesday

Jer 18,18-20 / Ps 30

Toribio de Mogrovejo

1606: Toribio de Mogrovejo, Archbishop of Lima, pastor to the Inca people, prophet in the colonial Church.

1976: Maria del Carmen Maggi, Argentine professor and martyr for liberating education.

2003: Rachel Corrie, human rights volunteer, killed by Israeli bulldozer while protesting the demolition of Palestinian homes.

2005: Chile admits to the assassination by the dictatorship of Carmelo Soria in 1976.

March

Lined writing area for notes.

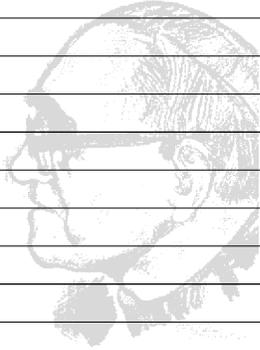


# 24 Thursday

Jer 17,5-10 / Ps 1  
Lk 16,19-31

1918: Canadian women gain the vote.  
1976: Argentine 'Dirty War' which killed 4,000 and disappeared 30,000, begins with a military coup.  
1980: Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, "Saint Romero of the Americas" is assassinated.  
2004: Kirchner converts the torture centre from the dictatorship into the Museum to the Memory of Terrorism of the Argentinean State: 4,000 assassinated and 30,000 disappeared.

Visit today the Romero page and his homilies:  
<http://servicioskoinonia.org/romero>



# 25 Friday

Isa 7,10-14;8,10 / Ps 39  
Heb 10,4-10 / Lk 1,26-38

Annunciation  
1807: Enactment of Slave Trade Act abolishes slavery in Great Britain and Ireland.  
1986: Donato Mendoza, Delegate of the Word, and companions murdered for their faithful work among Nicaragua's poor.

# 26 Saturday

Mic 7,14-15.18-20 / Ps 102  
Lk 15,1-3.11-32

Braulio  
1989: Maria Gómez, teacher and catechist, killed for her service to the Simiti people in Colombia.  
1991: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay sign the Treaty of Asunción, thus creating the Mercosur.  
1998: Onalicio Araujo Barrios and Valentin Serra, leaders of the landless movement, executed by large landowners in Parauapebas, Pará, Brazil.  
Last quarter: 12h07m in Capricorn



# 27

Third Sunday of Lent  
Ex 17,3-7 / Ps 94  
Rom 5,1-2.5-8 / Jn 4,5-42

Ruperto

1502: Columbus lands at Carani, Costa Rica.  
1814: Forces under General Andrew Jackson defeat Creek under Red Stick at Battle of Horseshoe Bend in final push to "clear" Alabama of its original peoples.  
1984: The Txukahamãe block a main highway demanding their lands in Xingú, Brasil.

# RELIGION: AN AMBIVALENT MEANING

PEDRO A. RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA

*Juiz de Fora, MG, Brazil*

Often, history shows religion in the service of the powerful, but it can also be seen in many struggles for liberation. Sometimes, it is on both sides of the conflict: one part supports the colonial metropolis, and the other supports national movements; in the name of the same God, capital and worker's struggles are blessed; the Bible itself legitimizes dictatorships and the popular resistance to them. Let us see what sociology says about all this.

## Religion as Language

As a set of rituals and beliefs, religion is the language that enables communication between the human and supernatural. Like any language, it is simultaneously a means of communication and thought. The interest of sociology in the study of religion lies precisely in the fact that it is a system of thought capable of making sense of all that exists or could exist. For religion, everything is inscribed in the mysterious cosmic order that only it can decipher. Like lovers say, "our love was written in the stars." Deciphering the meaning of life—"Who am I, where do I come from, where am I going"—is the proper field of religious language.

To develop its account of meaning, religion uses unique categories: sacred and profane, material and spiritual, eternal and temporal, heavenly and earthly, blessing and curse, and other similar pairs. They are the foundations of the accounts that will make sense of lived experience. The strength of a plausible and compelling account—that is, accepted as true—lies in its ability to guide behavior and define good and evil, truth and error. It can make people give their lives in witness or, conversely, kill those who oppose truth. But—and this is its weakness—religion only has any force to the extent that its accounts of meaning are followed. Hence the need to reinvent those accounts to address modes of existence in constant change. Religion that limits itself to merely repeating ancient stories loses credibility, becomes unable to influence people, and ends up losing out to other religions more relevant to the present moment.

But the meaning of life is far from being simply a psychological need. When humans ask themselves "who am I, where do I come from, where am I going?," they do not only seek an individual answer, but a meaning for their existence as part of a society. And this is where the sociological importance of religion is rooted: to the extent that the account of meaning applies to attributes determined by social condition—riches, power, prestige—these attributes come to be considered as the result of a divine design that should be accepted with resignation. In this sense, religion is a structuring force of society, and, applied to social relations, it transforms the "it is like this" into "it should be this way," or "it cannot be this way."

To the extent that religious accounts are disseminated to members of a society, they shape behavior through habits appropriate for maintaining the status quo. In doing so, religion plays a social and political function of legitimizing by enshrining the relationships of power between groups, genders, classes, or ethnicities. The history of our America is replete with examples of how religion was used to maintain the order established by the colonizers: whoever dared oppose the institutions and established order would be against the will of God, interpreted by the hierarchy, of course.

## Religious Work

Anyone who only sees this side of religion and does not perceive that, like all historical reality, there is another side is deceived. Religion is not an automatic reflex, more or less mystical, of social structures or economic interests of a group, as claimed by vulgar materialism, but the result of religious work. This concept, developed by P. Bourdieu in 1971, has opened our eyes to the complexity of religion from the sociological point of view. Whenever someone, to make or express a belief, gives a sacred meaning to a thing or event and it becomes a ritual or a belief of a group, however small, that person performs religious work. Religion should be understood sociologically as a result of religious work that is reproduced over time.

It should be noted that this does not negate the possibility that religious work—which is essentially human—can be the fruit of revelation or divine inspiration, but if we explored this, we would be leaving the field of sociology to enter a discussion of faith. Jesus of Nazareth, for example, conducted religious work by proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was already present in human history. His followers, in reproducing this announcement, also perform religious work. Other prophets and priests, in teaching other doctrines, also do religious work. And it is not sociology's role to say which of them is the result of inspiration or which is the truest.

By being an account of meaning, the fruit of a religious work, religion is conditioned by the social place of its producer. Proclaiming the Kingdom of God living among peasants and artisans of Galilee is not the same as being a priest in the temple of Jerusalem ... Or, using a current example, two religious sisters of the same congregation probably announce the Gospel very differently if one lives in a slum and the other in a school that caters to rich students. That conditioning should not be seen as deterministic, but it should not be underestimated: all religious work is conditioned by the social environment in which it is done.

### **Religion Faced with Conflicting Interests**

In any society, there are conflicts of interest because not everything that is good for one of its parts is good for its others. Because of this, for one group to become dominant, it has to convince others that its interests coincide with the general interest: the colonizer presents himself as one coming to civilize backwards civilizations; the large landowner says that he offers work to the unemployed; the man justifies his power by saying he is the protector of the same woman that he makes fragile...The strategy is to convince the dominated groups that the established order is also good for them so that they do not rebel.

In this strategy, religion can be very useful for the dominating side. In the end, the rich are not satisfied with being rich; they want to feel that they deserve their wealth. They want religion to confirm that they are rich because God blessed them, because their parents were observant, or because they were chosen by God to govern the rest of the world. They also want religion to tell the poor they will be rewarded for

their terrestrial suffering, provided they do not rebel. Whoever does this kind of religious work and produces a convincing account of meaning receives all the benefits of the rulers: prestige, honors, major gifts, and everything needed for a life without financial worries.

On the dominated side, things are very different, because the interest of the oppressed is, above all, that they find liberation. The religious account that resonates with them is the one that is based on the hope of liberation. But who is going to do this kind of religious work? Unlike the rulers, the ruled do not have the economic resources to hire people to develop this account in a systematic, professional, and erudite way. In general, the oppressed can only count on their own members or people who, although from the dominant groups, have made an option for the poor, as a social class option, that is, they put themselves at the service of others. Therefore, the accounts generated from the dominated side general come about in the form of religious self-production: people without specialized theoretical training but highly sensitive towards threats to life, who weave tales of truly revolutionary meaning because they delegitimize the established order, demystify its sacredness, and uncover its hypocrisy. When these popular accounts find theoretical support from intellectuals who have been converted to the cause of the oppressed, this social force is changed so much that it is capable of altering these social structures of domination.

The revolutionary potential of religious narrative created by the side that is socially dominated frightens the socially dominant forces, who do everything possible to silence it. The folklorization of popular religions, contempt for indigenous and African religions, and persecution of liberation theology and interreligious dialogue, are the religious face of a social conflict which has at its root opposing class interests.

In conclusion, sociology helps us identify the place where religious accounts of meaning either work in favor of those who dominate or those who seek liberation: it is the social position of those who do religious work. The same language that legitimates domination can legitimate rebellion; everything depends on who is elaborating the accounts and where they are doing it. But sociology has to abstain from judging who creates the truest account. This is revealed in practice: "By its fruits the tree shall be known." 

# 2011

March

M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	28	29	30	31			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20							

Monday Lunes	Tuesday Martes	Wednesday Miercoles	Thursday Jueves
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>



# 28 Monday

2Kings 5,1-15a / Ps 41  
Lk 4,24-30

Sixtus  
1750: Francisco de Miranda, Spanish-American revolutionary is born in Caracas, Venezuela.  
1985: Héctor Gómez Calito, defender of human rights, captured, tortured and brutally assassinated in Guatemala.  
1988: 14 indigenous Tikunas are assassinated and 23 wounded by the forestry industrialist Oscar Castelo Branco and 20 gunmen. Meeting in Benjamin Constant, Brasil, they were waiting for the help of FUNAI in the face of threats.

# 29 Tuesday

Dan 3,25.34-43 / Ps 24  
Mt 18,21-35

Beatriz de Silva  
*Juan Nielsen Hauge*  
1857: Sepoy Mutiny or War of Independence breaks out against British colonial rule in India.  
1904: Birth of Consuelo Lee Corretjer, revolutionary, poet and teacher, leader of the Puerto Rican Independence movement.  
1967: Oil is brought to the surface for the first time in the Ecuadorian Amazon.  
1985: Brothers Rafael and Eduardo Vergara Toledo, militant Christians, martyred in resistance to the dictatorship in Chile.

# 30 Wednesday

Deut 4,1.5-9 / Ps 147  
Mt 5,17-19

Gladys, Juan Clímaco  
1492: The Edict of Expulsion of the Jews issued by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain.  
1870: Afro-American men win the vote in the United States: ratification of the 15th amendment.  
1985: José Manuel Parada, sociologist, Santiago Natino, art student and Mauel Guerrero, labour leader are assassinated in Santiago, Chile.

March

Lined writing area for the month of March, consisting of multiple horizontal lines for daily entries.



# 31 Thursday

Jer 7,23-28 / Ps 94  
Lk 11.14-23

Benjamin,

*Amos, John Dunne*

1767: Expulsion of the Jesuits from Latin America.

1866: Chile, Bolivia and Peru take arms against Spanish aggression.

1987: Roseli Correa da Silva, campesina, run down by a landowner's truck in Natalino, Brazil.

# 1 Friday

Hos 14,2-10 / Ps 80  
Mk 12,28b-34

Hugh

April 1

1680: Lisbon abolishes the slavery of Indigenous peoples in Brazil, influenced by Antonio Vieira.

1923: The first feminist congress is celebrated in Latin America, in Cuba.

1964: Military coup against João Goulart. Thus begins 21 years of military dictatorship in Brazil.

1980: The great strike of metalworkers in São Paulo and the interior begins.

1982: Ernesto Pili Parra is martyred in the cause of peace and justice in Colombia.

1999: Nunavut, a new Canadian territory is formed to protect Inuit culture.

# 2 Saturday

Hos 6,1-6 / Ps 50  
Lk 18,9-14

Francis of Paola

1550: The Spanish Crown orders Spanish to be taught to the Indigenous peoples.

1982: The Argentinean army occupies the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands in an attempt to regain control of the archipelago from the British who occupied it in 1833.

1993: 8 European countries undertake a joint strike against unemployment and the threat to social victories.

2005: Pope John Paul II dies.

# 3

Fourth Sunday of Lent  
1Sam 16,1b.6-7.10-13a / Ps 22  
Eph 5,8-14 / Jn 9,1-41

Ricardo, Sixto

1948: U.S. President Truman signs the Marshall Plan for the post-war reconstruction of Europe.

1976: Victor Boichenko, Protestant pastor, disappeared in Argentina.

1986: Brazil approved its Plan for Information Technology. It will protect the national industry for several years.

1992: Institutional State coup by Fujimori, Peru.

New Moon: 14h32m in Aries





# 7 Thursday

Ex 32,7-14 / Ps 105  
Jn 5,31-47

Juan Bta. de La Salle  
1868: Thomas D'Arcy McGee, one of the Canadian Fathers of Confederation is assassinated.

**World Health Day**

# 8 Friday

Wis 2,1a.12-22 / Ps 33  
Jn 7,1-2.10.25-30

Dionisio  
Feast of «Vesakh», Birth of Buddha (566 B.C.E.).  
1513: Juan Ponce de León claims Florida for Spain.  
1827: Birth of Ramón Emeterio Betances, a revolutionary who developed the idea of the Cry of Lares, a Puerto Rican insurrection against Spanish rule.  
1977: Carlos Bustos, an Argentinean priest, is assassinated for his support of the poor in Buenos Aires.

**World Romani (Gypsy) Day**  
Established by the First World Romani Congress celebrated in London on this day in 1971

# 9 Saturday

Jer 11,18-20 / Ps 7  
Jn 7,40-53

Casilda, M<sup>a</sup> Cleofás  
*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*  
1920: The US Marines land in Guatemala to protect U.S. citizens.  
1948: Jorge Eliécer Gaitán is assassinated in Bogotá, Colombia, sparking the bloody repression of the 'Bogotazo'.  
1952: The Bolivian National Revolution begins a period of fundamental political and economic reform.  
1945: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pastor in the Lutheran Confessing Church opposed to Hitler, is executed today.

# 10

Fifth Sunday of Lent  
Ezek 37,12-14 / Ps 129  
Rom 8,8-11 / Jn 11,1-45

Ezechiel

*Miguel Agricola*

1919: Emiliano Zapata, peasant warrior hero of the Mexican Revolution, dies in a military ambush.  
1985: Daniel Hubert Guillard, parish priest, murdered by the army in Cali, Colombia  
1987: Martiniano Martínez, Terencio Vázquez and Abdón Julián, of the Baptist Church, martyrs to freedom of conscience in Oaxaca, Mexico.



# 14 Thursday

Gen 17,3-9 / Ps 104

Telmo

Jn 8,51-59

1981: In Morazán, El Salvador, 150 children, 600 elderly people and 700 women die at the hands of the military in the largest massacre recorded in recent Salvadoran history.

1986: Sister Adelaide Molinari is martyred in the struggle of the marginalized, Marabá, Brazil.

# 15 Friday

Jer 20,10-13 / Ps 17

Jn 10,31-42

Benedict Joseph Labré

1961: The Bay of Pigs invasión, Cuba.

1983: Indigenous campesino martyrs of Joyabaj, El Quiché, Guatemala.

1989: Madeleine Lagadec, a French nurse, is tortured and killed along with Salvadorans María Cristina Hernández, nurse, Celia Díaz, teacher. Carlos Gómez and Gustavo Isla Casares an Argentinean doctor were injured.

1992: Aldemar Rodríguez, catechist and his companions are martyred in the cause of youth solidarity in Cali, Colombia.

1993: José Barbero, priest, prophet and servant to the poorest brothers of Bolivia.

# 16 Saturday

Ezek 37,21-28 / Int. Jer 31

Jn 11,45-47

Engracia

1919: Mohandas Gandhi calls for a non-violent protest of "prayer and fasting" in response to the Amritsar Massacre.

1952: The revolution triumphs: campesinos and miners achieve land reform in Bolivia.

1977: The Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, the Persecuted, the Disappeared and Exiles of Mexico (EUREKA) is established.

2002: Carlos Escobar, Paraguayan Judie, orders the capture and extradition of dictator Alfredo Stroessner, who had taken refuge in Brasilia. He is accused of the death in 1979 of a leader of the teachers union.

2007: 32 die in the Virginia Tech massacre, the worse rampage in modern American history.

# 17

Palm Sunday

Isa 50,4-7 / Ps 21

Phil 2,6-11 / Mt 26,14-27

Aniceto

1695: † Juana Inés de la Cruz, Mexican poet.

1803: Toussaint L'Ouverture, Haitian liberation hero, dies in a French prison.

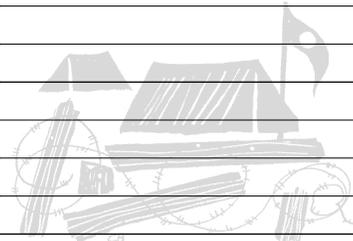
1990: Tiberio Fernández and his companions are martyred in Trujillo, Colombia for their defense of human rights.

1996: The Massacre of Eldorado do Carajás, Pará, Brazil. The State military police kill 23 persons.

1998: César Humberto López, of Frater-Paz, is assassinated in San Salvador.

**International Campesino Day**

This is the «Labor Day» of campesinos.



# 18 Monday

Isa 42,1-7 / Ps 26  
Jn 12,1-11

Perfecto, Galdino

1537: Francisco Marroquín, first bishop ordained in the New World, founder of the first schools and hospitals, pastor in Guatemala.

1955: The Conference of Bandung, Indonesia, where the Non-Aligned Movement is founded.

1955: Albert Einstein, Nobel laureate, dies.

1998: Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, Colombian lawyer who fought for human rights and denounced paramilitaries, is assassinated.

Full Moon: 04h44m in Libra



# 19 Tuesday

León, Ema

*Olavus Petri*

1925: U.S. Marines land at La Ceiba, Honduras.

1980: Juana Tum, mother of Rigoberta Menchú, and her son Patrocino are martyred in the struggle for land and justice in Quiché, Guatemala.

2005: Adolfo Scilingo, condemned in Spain to 640 years of prison for his participation in the "death flights" during the Argentinean dictatorship.

Pan-American Indian Day



# 20 Wednesday

Isa 49,1-6 / Ps 70  
Jn 13,21-33.36-38

Sulpicio

1586: Rose of Lima is born in Lima, Peru.

1871: The Brazilian Franciscans free the slaves in all their convents.

1898: Spanish American War begins. U.S. forces invade Cuba, Guam, the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

1980: Indigenous leaders martyred in Veracruz, Mexico.

2010: Reynaldo Bignone is condemned to 25 years in prison for crimes against humanity during the dictatorship in Argentina.

Isa 50,4-9 / Sl 68  
Mt 26,14-25

April

Lined writing area for notes.



# 21 Thursday

Ex 12,1-8,11-14 / Ps 115  
1Cor 11,23-26 / Jn 13,1-15

Anselmo  
Mohamed is born. Day of Forgiveness for the World.  
The birth of Rama, Sikh Religion.  
1792: Joaquín da Silva Xavier, «Tiradentes» (Teeth Puller), precursor of Brazilian Independence, decapitated.  
1960: Brasilia is established as the capital of Brazil.  
1965: Pedro Albizu Campos, Puerto Rican independence leader, dies.  
1971: F. Duvalier dies, Haiti.  
1989: Juan Sisay, popular artist, martyred for his faith at Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala.  
1997: Gaudino dos Santos, Pataxó Indian, burned to death in Brasilia by several youth.

# 22 Friday

Isa 52,13-53,12 / Ps 30  
Sotero, Cayo, Agapito Heb 4,14-16;5,7-9 / Jn 18,1-19,42

1500: Pedro Alvares Cabral lands in Brazil, beginning of the invasion of the South.  
1519: Cortés lands in Veracruz with 600 soldiers, 16 horses and some pieces of artillery.  
1914: U.S. Marines seize the customs house in Veracruz, Mexico.  
1970: Earth Day first celebrated.  
1982: Félix Tecu Jerónimo, Achí campesino, catechist and delegate of the Word, Guatemala.  
1997: The army attacks the Japanese embassy in Lima killing 14 militants of the MRTA occupying it.  
2009: The remains of Bishop Angelelli are exhumed to confirm the status of his death as a martyr.

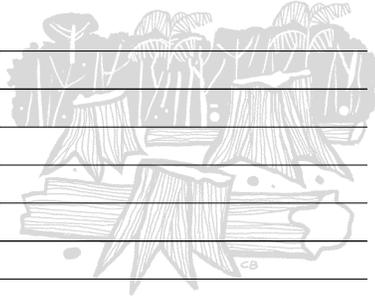
**Mother Earth Day (UN)**

# 23 Saturday

Gen 1,1-2,2 / Gen 22,1-18 / Ex 14,15-15,1  
Isa 54,5-14 / Isa 55,1-11 / Bar 3,9-15,32-4,4  
Ezek 36,16-28 / Rom 6,3-11 / Mt 28,1-10

George, Toyohico Kagawa  
1971: Indigenous peoples rise up against nuclear testing that contaminates the island of Anchitks, Alaska.  
1993: César Chávez, Mexican-American labor activist, dies.

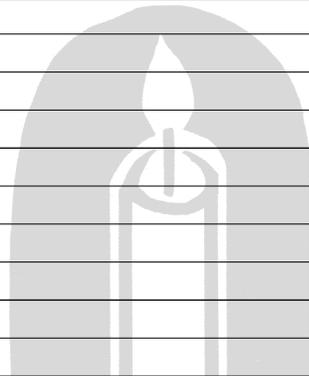
**World Book and Copyright Day**  
Since on this day in 1616 Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare all died.



# 24

**EASTER Sunday**  
Acts 10,34a,37-43 / Ps 117  
Col 3,1-4 / Jn 20,1-9

Fidel  
1915/17: Death and deportation of almost one and a half million Armenians  
1965: 40,000 U.S. soldiers invade the Dominican Republic.  
1985: Laurita Lopez, a catechist, is martyred for her faith in El Salvador.  
2010: Paul Shaefer, head of the "Colonia Dignidad" in the south of Chile during the dictatorship, dies in prison.



# THE TWO BOOKS OF GOD

CARLOS MESTERS

São Paulo SP, Brazil

*In the classroom, the teacher asked: "What is the most important book that God wrote?" Almost in chorus the children replied: "The Bible!" Is that the correct response?*

## I. God's two books

Saint Augustine used to say: God wrote two books. The first book is not the Bible, but rather creation, nature, life. It is through the Book of Life that God wants to talk with us. God created things by speaking. He said, "Light!" And the light began to exist. Everything that exists is the expression of a divine word. Every human being is a walking word of God. Are we aware of that? Many people look at nature and don't think of God. At this point we don't pay attention to the fact that we are living in the midst of a book of God and that we are a living page in that divine book. Augustine says that it was sin, or rather, our mania for wanting to dominate everything and to think that we are the masters of everything that has led us to lose the capacity for contemplation. At this point we don't succeed in discovering how God is speaking through the Book of Life.

For that reason—Augustine says—God wrote a "second book:" the Bible. It wasn't written to substitute for the Book of Life. On the contrary. It was written to help us better understand the Book of Life and to discover in it the signs of God's loving presence. Augustine also said that the Bible allows us to return to a contemplative view; it helps us figure out the world and makes the universe become once again the revelation of God. It makes the Universe return to being what it is: "the First Book of God."

How was the Bible written? How did God do it? The text of the Bible didn't just fall into place by itself from heaven. Across several centuries it slowly came into being as the result of a drawn-out process of interpreting life, history, and nature. Motivated by the desire to encounter God, people gradually discovered the signs of divine presence in life and passed them on to future generations. In the end, the people ended up writing down their discoveries in a book. That book is the Bible. The Bible presents the fruit of a reading that the Hebrew people had of their life and history. The Second Book of God, as Augustine liked to say, helped them to discover how God spoke in the First Book....

All this happened among the People of God whose heritage we have received as Christians. But we are not the only ones who feel in our hearts the search for

God. The same thing happened and continues to happen among the peoples of Asia and Africa, among the Indigenous peoples here in Latin America, among the peoples of Europe. All peoples of all cultures and religions throughout history have been discovering the traces of God in the Book of their Lives. Like the Hebrew people, they were all searching for ways to express their beliefs and convictions in rituals and doctrines, in stories and rules, in books and temples, in celebrations and prayers, in images and symbols for God, so that they wouldn't lose the richness of this wisdom accumulated across the centuries.

There is no question here of people thinking their religion is better than that of others, nor of a people wanting to convert anyone to their religion. No! In the year 2000, in Jerusalem, there was a gathering of prayer for peace in which three major representatives of the Jews, Christians and Muslims participated. The Grand Rabbi of the Jews was there along with the Pope and the delegate of the supreme imam of the Muslims. The three represented more than three billion human beings! Each of them said a few words about the meaning of the encounter. John Paul II said something very simple and quite important: We are here not to convert others to our religion, but rather to learn from one another how to praise God, how to serve our neighbor and how to defend Peace together and so that faith will never be used to legitimize wars or massacres.

## II. The Great Challenge

Throughout the history of humanity, there has never been a time where there were so many changes at so many different levels and in such a short time as during these last hundred years. Science is revealing new things about the Universe in the First Book of God, things that neither our ancestors nor Saint Augustine could have imagined or suspected. For that reason, the concept we have today of the Universe is radically different, for example, from that of the period when the description of Creation in the book of Genesis took form.

In former times, we thought the Earth was the center of the Universe. Today we have discovered through science that the Earth is no more than a grain of sand in the middle of immense mountains, a drop of water in the middle of an ocean. The sun is nothing more than a little star lost in the periphery of our galaxy. Today, it appears what is helping us most to discover the things of God in

the Book of Nature is no longer the Bible, as Augustine taught, but rather scientific investigations. For that reason, many ask: Well then, what should we do with the Bible and its obsolete cosmivision? How can it help us interpret this immense Universe that science is laying out before us? Many people can no longer read the Bible and believe in what it says and teaches. Every time they read a section of the Bible, the uncomfortable question arises: Is it really like that?

Here it is worth returning to a saying of Clement of Alexandria in the fourth century. He said that “God saved the Jews in a Jewish way, the Greeks in a Greek way, and the Barbarians in a Barbarian way.” And we could add: the Brazilians in a Brazilian way and the Latinos in a Latino way and so on. Just like the Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians—each in their own time and culture, through the persistence of their faith and in the midst of many crises—were able to discover signs of the loving presence of God in their lives, so also are we challenged today to discover the same divine presence in the new situation that history and science have placed before us.

Just as science, during the last hundred years, has helped us read the Book of Nature better, so we should use science to read and interpret the Bible. We cannot take the stories of the Bible about the origin of the world literally as if all that happened exactly the way it is written. Fundamentalism is the enemy of truth. We have to try to discover the intention, the guiding thread, the faith convictions that are expressed there. Paul said, “The letter kills, the Spirit is what gives life to the letter.”

And not only that. There is more and here lies the great challenge. Beyond the Biblical text, beyond doctrines, dogmas, traditional images of God, including the lovely and revolutionary conclusions of science today, there is in the people an obstinate faith that is always being reborn, even when it is suffocated by a science that sometimes pretends to be infallible, or by a dogmatism that often thinks it is the owner of the truth. It’s a question of a mystical intuition, prior to whatever we have in science or in religion. It is a silent voice, one that is fragile, without words, that rises up from the depths of the collective unconsciousness of humanity and says: God exists, is with us, hears us; we depend on God. “In God we live and move and have our being. We are God’s children” (Acts 17, 28). And Augustine replied, “You made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

All religions try to provide a response to this profound desire of the human heart that has reasons that reason itself does not know. Today more than ever, with each new generation, those same questions return: Why

do we exist? Who made us? What is the meaning of our life? Science and faith should help in the search for a response. This is the great challenge or mission of the two Books of God.

### **III. The Hope That Animates Us**

The people of the Bible succeeded in discovering the presence of God in life and in nature. They said, “The heavens cry out the glory of God” (Psalm 19). They admired the grandeur of the Creator and they sang of the beauty of Creation in Psalms like 8, 19, 46, 104, 136, 139, and 148.

These psalms give us an idea of what faith in the creative power of God meant for the oppressed people of the exile. For, in reading the Book of Life, it was not enough to get information about what happened in the past, at the origins of the world. It was above all a matter of knowing who God was, who was there standing with them in the exile, in the depths of the pit, in that obscure place without light, in that discouragement without a future... The rediscovery of the creative presence of God in their lives was like a resurrection of the people that lit up their lives and nature itself.

That was and continues to be the help that the Bible, the Second Book of God, can, wants, and ought to provide so that we can better understand the First Book of God, the Book of Life. And this help depends not only on scientific investigation but also and above all on the interior renewal of our faith and the shared witness to the Good News of God that Jesus brought us. Much more than the Jews, the Greeks and the Barbarians, today we have abundant reasons for saying, “Lord, our God, your presence breaks forth throughout the Earth. The entire Universe sings your glory!” More than ever we are invited to take up the Second Book of God so that through it (1) we rediscover the loving and creative presence of God in all that exists, and (2) we rediscover in the incredible discoveries of science, the revelation of God in the Book of Life.

If they are true to themselves, science and faith lead us to be humble, not to pretend that our religion is better than other religions. They help deepen our Christian way of experiencing God in life and in nature and help us share it with others who think differently from us.

In that way we are mutually enriched. In this sharing we just might come to have the same experience that Jesus had when he met someone from another culture and religion: “I assure you I have not found such great faith in Israel” (Luke 7, 9). Jesus learned from a pagan.

*Let’s go back to the teacher’s question: What is the most important book that God wrote for us?*

# 2011

April

M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	25	26	27	28	29	30	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17							

<b>Monday</b> <i>Lunes</i>	<b>Tuesday</b> <i>Martes</i>	<b>Wednesday</b> <i>Miercoles</i>	<b>Thursday</b> <i>Jueves</i>
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>		



# 25 Monday

Acts 2,14,22-23 / Ps 15

Mark  
1667: Pedro de Betancourt, apostle to the poor of Guatemala, dies.

1974: Carnation Revolution restores democracy to Portugal.  
1975: The Indigenous Association of the Argentinean Republic (AIRA) is established.

Last quarter: 02h47m in Aquarius



# 26 Tuesday

Acts 2,36-41 / Ps 32

Anacleto, Marcelino, Isidoro.  
1995: Quim Vallmajó, Spanish missionary, assassinated in Rwanda.

1998: Bishop Juan José Gerardi is assassinated after publication of the church report 'Guatemala: Never Again' on massive human rights abuses.

# 27 Wednesday

Acts 3,1-10 / Ps 104

Zita, Montserrat  
1977: Rodolfo Escamilla, a Mexican priest, is murdered by a death squad targeting social activists.

1994: First democratic general election in South Africa.

April

Lined writing area for the month of April, consisting of multiple horizontal lines for notes.



Additional lined writing area at the bottom of the page.



# 2

## Monday

Acts 4,23-31 / Ps 2

Jn 3,1-8

Athanasius

Day of the Honduran Martyrs (First Sunday of May)

1979: Ten year-old Luis Alfonso Velásquez is murdered by the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua.

1997: Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and liberationist author of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," dies.

1981: The Indigenous Nations Union is founded in Brazil.

1994: Sebastián Larrosa, campesino student, martyr to solidarity among the poor, Paraguay.

# 3

## Tuesday

1Cor 15,1-8 / Ps 18

Jn 14,6-14

Philip and James

1500: Fray Henrique de Coimbra, first European missionary to touch Brazilian soil.

1963: The police force in Birmingham, Alabama violently repress civil rights protesters.

1991: Felipe Huete, delegate of the Word, and four companions are martyred during the agrarian reform in El Astillero, Honduras.

**World Press Freedom (U.N.)**

New Moon: 06h51m in Taurus

# 4

## Wednesday

Acts 5,17-26 / Ps 33

Jn 3,16-21

Ciriaco, *Mónica*

1493: Pope Alexander VI issues a papal bull "Inter caetera" dividing the new world between Spanish and Portuguese crowns.

1521: † Pedro de Córdoba, author of the first catechism in America.

1547: † Cristóbal de Pedraza, bishop of Honduras, «Father of the Indigenous peoples».

1970: Four students die when the Ohio National Guard opens fire on an anti-Vietnam war protest at Kent State University.

2010: Martínez de Hoz, ideological superminister of the dictatorship, is arrested at the age of 84, Buenos Aires







# Monday

Acts 6,8-15 / Ps 18

Jn 6,22-29

Pacomio, Gregorio Ostiense

1502: Columbus sails from Cadiz, Spain on his fourth and final voyage to the Caribbean.

1982: Luis Vallejos, Archbishop of El Cuzco, Peru, committed to the 'preferential option for the poor' dies in a mysterious 'accident' after receiving death threats.

1994: Nelson Mandela takes office as President of South Africa after the first multiracial elections in the history of the country. He was S. Africa's longest serving living political prisoner.



# Tuesday

Acts 7,51-8,1a / Ps 30

Jn 6,30-35

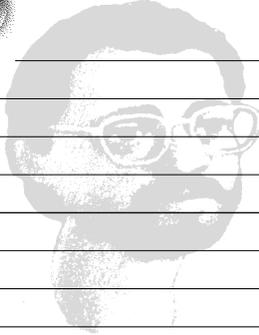
Juan de Ávila, Antonino

1795: José Leonardo Chirino, Afro-American, leads the Coro insurrection of Indigenous and Black peoples, Venezuela.

1985: Ime García, priest, and Gustavo Chamorro, activist, are martyred for their commitment to justice and human development in Guanabana, Colombia.

1986: **Josimo Morais Tavares**, priest and land reform advocate, murdered by a large landowner in Imperatriz, Brazil.

First quarter: 20h33m in Leo



# Wednesday

Acts 8,1b-8 / Ps 65

Jn 6,35-40

Anastasius

1974: Carlos Mugica, priest in the 'villas miserias' of Argentina, dies in their defense. [www.carlosmugica.com.ar](http://www.carlosmugica.com.ar)

1977: Alfonso Navarro, priest, and Luis Torres, altar server, martyrs in El Salvador.





# 16 Monday

Acts 11,1-18 / Ps 41

John Nepomucene, Ubaldo

Jn 10,1-10

1818: King João II welcomes Swiss settlers fleeing hunger in their homeland to Brazil.

1981: Edgar Castillo, a journalist, is assassinated in Guatemala.

# 17 Tuesday

Acts 11,19-26 / Ps 86

Pascal Baylon

Jn 10,22-30

1961: USA begins a commercial blockade against Cuba in reaction to the agrarian reform instituted by the Castro government.

1980: Attack by Sendero Luminoso on a polling station in the town of Chuschi, Peru, marks the beginning of two decades of violence and repression.

# 18 Wednesday

Acts 12,24-13,5 / Ps 66

Rafaela M<sup>a</sup> Porras

Jn 12,44-50

1525: Founding of Trujillo (Honduras).

1781: José Gabriel Condoranki, Tupac Amaru II, leader of an indigenous rebellion in Peru and Bolivia, is executed.

1895: Augusto C. Sandino, Nicaraguan patriot, is born.

1950: The National Black Women's Council meets in Rio de Janeiro.

**World Telecommunication Day**  
A call to eliminate the enormous imbalance in the production of messages and programs.



Full Moon: 11h09m in Scorpio

A large section of the page containing multiple horizontal lines for writing, organized into three columns corresponding to the days of the week.

May



# 19 Thursday

Acts 13,13-25 / Ps 88

Peter Celestine

Jn 13,16-20

1895: José Martí, Cuban national hero, dies in the struggle for independence.

1995: Jaime Nevaes dies, bishop of Neuquén, prophetic voice of the Argentinean Church.

1997: Manoel Luis da Silva, landless farmer, is assassinated at São Miguel de Taipu, Brazil.

# 20 Friday

Acts 13,26-33 / Ps 2

Bernardine of Sienna

Jn 14,1-6

1506: Christopher Columbus dies in Valladolid (Spain).

1976: Exiled Uruguayan politicians Hector Gutiérrez and Zelmor Michellini are murdered in Argentina as part of the U.S. supported Operation Condor.

1981: Pedro Aguilar Santos, priest, martyr to the cause of the poor, Guatemala.

1993: Destitution of the President of Venezuela, Carlos Andrés Pérez.

1998: Francisco de Assis Araujo, chief of the Xukuru, is assassinated at Pesqueira, Pernambuco, Brazil.

# 21 Saturday

Acts 13,44-52 / Ps 97

Felicia y Gisela, *John Eliot*

Jn 14,7-14

1897: Gregorio Luperón, independence hero of the Dominican Republic, dies in Puerto Plata.

1981: Pedro Aguilar Santos, priest, martyr, Guatemala.

1991: Irene McCormack, missionary, and companions, are martyred in the cause of peace in Peru.

**World Cultural Diversity Day (UN)**

# 22

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 6,1-7 / Ps 32

1Pet 2,4-9 / Jn 14,1-12

Joaquina Vedruna, Rita de Casia

1937: Government massacre of members of a messianic community at Caldeirão, Brazil.

1942: Mexico declares war on Axis powers.

1965: Requested by the United States. Brazil sends 280 soldiers to support a State Coup in Santo Domingo.

### International Day for Biodiversity

22% of mammal species are in danger of extinction as are 23 % of amphibians and 25% of reptiles. Between 1970 and 2005, globally, biodiversity was reduced by 30%.

# 23 Monday

Acts 14,5-18 / Ps 113

Desiderio, *Ludwig Nommensen*  
1977: Elisabeth Käseman, German Lutheran activist, is martyred in the cause of the poor in Buenos Aires, Argentina  
1987: Luis Gutiérrez, priest, dies in Colombia.  
2008: The constitutive treaty of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) brings together 12 countries of S. America.

# 24 Tuesday

Acts 14,19-28 / Ps 144

Vincent of Lerins  
1822: Battle of Pichincha, Independence of Ecuador.  
1986: Ambrosio Mogorón, a Spanish nurse, and his campesino companions are martyred in the cause of solidarity in San José de Bocay, Nicaragua.  
2005: Edickson Roberto Lemus, campesino organizer, assassinated El Progreso, Honduras.  
Last quarter: 18h52m in Pisces

# 25 Wednesday

Acts 15,1-6 / Ps 121

Vicenta López Vicuña  
Gregory VII  
1810: The May Revolution marks the beginning of self-government in Argentina.  
1987: Bernard López Arroyave, a priest, is martyred by landowners and Colombian military.

**Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories**



**May**

Lined writing area for notes, consisting of multiple horizontal lines across the page.





# EULOGY TO CRISTINA DOWNING

ERNESTO CARDENAL

Managua, Nicaragua

Cristina, my mother's cousin  
was 15 in those days  
    with a delicate waist  
    and thin legs I recall  
    and I was 7 years old  
    it was the period  
    of Doña Carmela Noguera  
    wrote Joaquín Pasos  
        (Doña Carmela, remembered for  
        evenings at the school  
        where Cristina shone  
        as a student)  
and it was the period of Greta Garbo  
Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, Chaplin  
    the bride of the vanguard poets  
    she didn't remain a 15 year-old  
    nor I a child  
        the last years  
        inside four walls  
        I remembered nothing  
        Not even who I was

Babe Ruth, the one known for the home runs  
that was when I was a child  
    perhaps you don't know who he was  
he died a long time ago  
Dickinson used to say:  
If I am no longer living  
give to the one with a red tie  
a crumb on my behalf  
    Merton died  
The stars will die without heat  
cold like their surroundings  
and Eliot: "everyone falls into the blackness"  
    The black holes also disappear  
In my poetry workshop  
of children with cancer  
a child wrote  
about children who have lost hope  
waiting their turn  
    All of us in the cosmos  
    wait our turn

Orphans in the mechanized world  
At the mercy of accidents and chance  
    The Ford I get into  
    can be that of death  
What is life?  
    made of particles

    elementary particles  
    that are not alive?  
"the world is as it is"  
we all say  
quantum mechanics has proven  
that it is not the way it is  
or computers would not work  
    Just as we grow older  
    we ought to un-grow-older  
    there is no symmetry  
    this asymmetry of time  
    where did it come from?  
where did we come from?  
children of time  
in the midst of a perishable beauty  
wishing for a lasting beauty?

If there is a God we are immortal  
    and if there isn't then we aren't  
    there is no other  
        no other alternative  
        to being either eternal  
        or eternally not being  
eternity or nothing; there is nothing else  
only the bit of time when we are alive  
only those days already past  
and there will never be anything else  
nothing at all, ever  
not being for all eternity

    One day consciousness  
    turned toward itself  
    an awareness of itself  
    and unfortunately  
        of its death  
The only animal that knows it is going to die  
    Had to be conscious  
    that it knew the universe  
    And in knowing the universe  
    knew that we would die  
The appearance of awareness  
was another biological existence  
    Not only knowing but knowing oneself  
    not only knowing but knowing that one knows  
The certainty of death  
as fruit of that advance  
The animals know  
but not about themselves  
to know oneself

Translated by Richard RENSHAW

was to know that we die  
The awareness a danger to the species  
To be able to survive the certainty of death  
and in spite of that to not have been extinguished

Hunter-gatherer  
In the black jungle  
without doctors  
the slightest uneasiness  
terrorized

and among lions  
defenseless and nude  
a walking meal  
picking the strawberries  
looking all around  
fearful of death  
looking at the beautiful stars  
without understanding them  
what might they be?

The Hunter-gatherers  
aware of being aware  
aware of death

the wounded stag died  
and the killer knew  
that he also would die

Up there among the branches  
there was no death

the monkey was in the present  
intensely  
without any past  
or future

There is no death for children  
if only we were always children!

when I was four years old  
I killed a parakeet with a coconut  
and cried out for what I had done  
(that's the way I knew about death)

In the black jungle  
where anything can happen  
death is the only  
certainty we have

Ever since humanity has existed there have been religions  
(superstitions if you want)  
or perhaps there was faith?

So we are not extinguished  
knowing that we die

There is a God or the universe is absurd  
And if there isn't we die forever  
In this sense transcendence would be  
an adaptation of evolution in the mind

or a mechanism for the defense of our species  
in the face of the paralyzing consequence of the consciousness  
of death

That's how we survive  
Religions or superstitions  
there was always faith  
in immortality

The day will come  
when there will be no astronomy  
and the heavens will be empty  
the galaxies will be separated  
and they will remain alone  
without any other in sight  
and in each isolated galaxy  
the stars will die out  
and when the last one flickers out  
everything will be darkness  
(this is not science fiction)  
That's the way it is Cristina Downing  
In this cosmos there is no salvation

Except

a biological prodigy  
- the Incarnation -  
A biological evolution  
that ended up as God

We are a single Body  
that of the one risen  
from among the dead

Humanity is one  
organically one  
if anyone is resurrected  
we are all resurrected

"If he has not risen, we are screwed" (1 Corinthians 15, 17)

Evolution has a direction  
moving towards the unity of the universe:  
the Love belonging to a humanity without loneliness  
incompatible with total death

Everything is set and for that reason we say:  
"So that the Scriptures might be fulfilled"  
It was not prophesized because it would happen  
but it happened because it was prophesized

Everyone rises  
those who are one  
in the past future present

Cristina Downing

P r e s e n t !

Or perhaps it will be like being born once again:  
a new life in a new universe

The Scriptures say  
he had to die  
in order to rise again



M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	July
				1	2	3	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17								

Friday			Saturday			Sunday			JUNE		
3 <i>Viernes</i>			4 <i>Sabado</i>			5 <i>Domingo</i>			1		
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# 30 Monday

Acts 16,11-15 / Ps 149

Fernando, Joan of Arc  
1431: 19 year old Joan of Arc is burned at the stake by a pro-English tribunal.  
1961: Dominican dictator, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, is assassinated.  
1994: Maria Cervellona Correa, Franciscan sister and defender of the Mby'a people of Paraguay, dies.

# 31 Tuesday

Zeph 3,14-18 / Int. Isa 12,2-6

Visitation of Mary  
1986: First meeting of Afro-American pastoral workers in Duque de Caxias and São João de Meriti, Brazil  
1990: Clotario Blest dies: first president of the Chilean Labor Federation (CUT), Christian labor prophet.

**World Day without Tobacco**

# 1 Wednesday

Acts 17,15,22-18,1 / Ps 148

Justin  
1989: Sergio Restrepo, Jesuit priest, is martyred in his fight for the liberation of peasants of Tierralta, Colombia.  
1991: João de Aquino, union president of Nueva Iguaçu, Brazil, is assassinated.  
2009: General Motors announces the largest suspension of payments in the industrial history of the USA with 122,550 million in debts.

**Partial eclipse of the sun, visible in East Asia and North America**  
New Moon: 21h03m in Gemini



May

Lined writing area for notes.



# 2 Thursday

Acts 18,1-8 / Ps 97

Jn 16,16-20

Pedro y Marcelino

1537: Pope Paul III issues a papal bull condemning slavery.

1987: Sebastien Morales, evangelical deacon, martyred for faith and justice in Guatemala.

# 3 Friday

Acts 18,9-18 / Ps 46

Jn 16,20-23a

Charles Luanga

John XXIII

1548: Juan de Zumárraga, bishop of Mexico, protector of the Indigenous peoples.

1621: The Dutch West Indies Company gains a mercantile trade charter to aid in colonizing Americas.

1758: The Commission on Limits meets with the Yanomami people of Venezuela.

1885: St. Charles Luanga and companions, Ugandan martyrs, patrons of African youth.

1963: Pope John XXIII dies.

# 4 Saturday

Acts 8,23-28 / Ps 46

Jn 16,23b-28

Francisco Caracciolo

1559: El Oidor Fernando Santillán informa de las massacres of Indigenous peoples in Chile.

1980: José María Gran, missionary, and Domingo Batz, sacristan, are martyred in El Quiché, Guatemala.

1989: Chinese government violently suppresses Tiananmen Square pro-democracy demonstrators resulting in thousands of casualties.

**International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression**

# 5

The Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1,1-11 / Ps 46

Eph 1,17-23 / Mt 28,16-20

Boniface

1573: Execution of Tanamaco, Venezuelan cacique.

1968: Robert F. Kennedy shot in Los Angeles, California.

1981: The first case in history of SIDA is discovered in Los Angeles, USA.

1988: Agustín Ramirez and Javier Sotelo, workers, are martyred in the fight for the marginalized in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

2000: The Court of Santiago removes Pinochet's immunity. He is accused of 109 crimes in the Chilean tribunals and sought internationally.

**World Environment Day**



9

Thursday

Acts 22,30;23,6-11 / Ps 15

Efrén, Columbano, Aidan, Bede Jn 17,20-26
1597: José de Anchieta, from the Canary Islands, evangelizer of Brazil, "Principal Father" of the Guaraní.
1971: Héctor Gallego, Colombian priest, disappeared in Santa Fe de Veraguas, Panama.
1979: Juan Morán, Mexican priest, martyred in defense of the indigenous Mazahuas people.
1981: Toribia Flores de Cutipa, campesino leader, victim of repression in Peru.
Last quarter: 02h11m in Virgo

10

Friday

Acts 25,13-21 / Ps 102

Crípulo y Mauricio Jn 21,15-19
1521: The Indigenous people destroy the mission of Cumaná (Venezuela) built by Las Casas.
1835: A death penalty without appeal is ordered for any slave that kills or causes trouble for the owner, Brazil.
1898: U.S. forces land on Cuba during Spanish-American War.
1993: Norman Pérez Bello, activist, is martyred for his faith and his option for the poor.

11

Saturday

Acts 11,21b-26;13,1-3 / Ps 97

Barnabas Mt 10,7-13
1964: Nelson Mandela is sentenced to life in a South African prison.
1980: Ismael Enrique Pineda, Caritas organizer, and companions are disappeared in El Salvador.



Multiple horizontal lines for writing or notes.

June

12

Pentecost
Acts 2,1-11 / Ps 103
1Cor 12,3b-7.12-13 / Jn 20,19-23

Gaspar, Juan de Sahagún
1514: The the first time the "requerimientos" are read (to Cacique Catarapa) by Juan Ayora, on the coast of Santa Marta.
1963: Medgar Evers, civil rights activist, assassinated in Jackson, Mississippi.
1981: Joaquin Nevés Norté, lawyer for the Naviraí Rural Workers Union in Paraná, Brazil, is assassinated.
1935: The war over the Paraguayan Chaco ends.

Multiple horizontal lines for writing or notes.

123

# 13 Monday

2Cor 6,1-10 / Ps 97

Anthony of Padua

Mt 5,38-42

1645: The Pernambucan Insurrection begins with the aim of expelling Dutch rule from Brazil.

1980: Walter Rodney, political activist and author of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, is assassinated in Guyana.

2000: Argentine President Fernando de la Rúa apologizes for his country's role in harboring Nazis after World War II.

2003: The Supreme Court of Mexico orders the extradition to Spain of Ricardo Cavallo, a torturer during the Argentinean dictatorship.

# 14 Tuesday

2Cor 8,1-9 / Ps 145

Eliseo, *Basil the Great*,

Mt 5,43-48

*Gregory Nazienzen, Gregory of Nyssa*

1905: Sailors mutiny aboard the Russian battleship *Potemkin* demanding political reforms.

1977: Mauricio Silva, Uruguayan priest working with street sweepers in Buenos Aires, is kidnapped.

1980: Cosme Spessoto, Italian priest, pastor, martyr in El Salvador. 30 years.

1983: Vicente Hordanza, missionary priest at the service of the campesinos, Peru.

2005: The Supreme Court of Argentina declares unconstitutional the laws of "Due Obedience" and of "Full Stop."

# 15 Wednesday

2Cor 9,6-11 / Ps 111

M<sup>o</sup> Micaela, Vito

Mt 6,1-6.16-18

1215: Magna Carta sealed by King John of England, affirms primacy of rule of law.

1932: Bolivia and Paraguay begin the war over the Chaco region.

1952: Víctor Sanabria, Archbishop of San José de Costa Rica, defender of social justice.

1987: Operation Albania: 12 people are assassinated in Santiago, Chile, by security forces.

2005: The Supreme Court of Mexico declares not-binding the crime of ex-President Echeverría for genocide due to the massacre of students in 1971.

**Total eclipse of the moon, visible in Europe, at 20h13m**

Full Moon: 20h13m in Sagittarius





# 20 Monday

Gen 12,1-9 / Ps 32

Silverio

Day of the African Refugee.

1820: Manuel Belgrano dies, Father of Argentina.

1973: Right-wing terrorists open fire on Peronist demonstrators killing 13, near the Ezeiza Airport in Buenos Aires.

1979: Rafael Palacios, priest, is martyred for his work with Salvadoran Christian base communities.

1995: Greenpeace wins the struggle to stop Shell and Esso from sinking the petroleum platform, Brent Spar, into the ocean, thus avoiding the sinking of 200 others as well.

World Refugee Day (UN)

# 21 Tuesday

Gen 13,5-18 / Ps 14

Louis Gonzaga

Onésimo Nesib

1964: Civil rights activists; James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman are murdered by racists in Philadelphia, Mississippi.

1980: 27 union leaders from the National Workers' Central in Guatemala are disappeared. American military advisors participate.

1984: Sergio Ortiz, seminarian, is martyred during the persecution of the Church in Guatemala.

Andean New Year

Summer solstice in the North,  
Winter solstice in the South, at 11:28

# 22 Wednesday

Gen 15,1-12.17-18 / Ps 104

John Fisher, Thomas More

1534: Benalcázar enters and sacks Quito.

1965: Arthur MacKinnon, a Canadian Scarborough missionary, is assassinated by the military at Monte Plata, Dominican Republic for his defense of the poor.

1966: Manuel Larrain, bishop of Talca, Chile and president of the Latin American bishop's organization, dies.



# 23 Thursday

Gen 16,1-12,15-16 / Sl 105  
Mt 7,21-29

Zenón, Marcial

1524: The "Twelve Apostles of Spain," Franciscans, arrive on the coast of Mexico.  
1936: Birth of Carlos Fonseca, Nicaragua.  
1967: Miners and their families die in the massacre of San Juan in Siglo XX, Bolivia.  
1985: Terrorist bomb destroys Air India Flight 182 bound from Canada to India. It is the largest mass murder in Canadian history.

Last quarter: 11h48m in Aries



# 24 Friday

Isa 49,1-6 / Ps 138  
Acts 13,22-26 / Lk 1,57-66.80

Birth of John the Baptist

1541: Mixton War, Indigenous rebellion against the Spanish sweeps western Mexico.  
1821: Simon Bolivar leads troops in a decisive Battle of Carabobo for the independence of Venezuela.  
1823: The Federation of the United Provinces of Central America is established but lasts only a short time.

# 25 Saturday

Gen 18,1-15 / Int. Lk 1  
Mt 8,5-17

William, Maximus

*Confession of Ausburg, Philip Melancton*

1524: Talks between priests and Aztec wise men with the "Twelve Apostles of Mexico."  
1767: Mexican Indigenous riot against Spanish crown as their Jesuits missionaries are ordered to leave.  
1975: Martyrs of Olancho: Colombian Ivan Betancourt and Miguel "Casimiro", priests, and seven Honduran peasant companions.

# 26

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ  
Deut 8,2-3,14b-16a / Ps 147  
1Cor 10,16-17 / Jn 6,51-58

Pelayo

1541: Violent death of Pizarro.  
1822: Encounter between San Martin and Bolivar in Guayaquil.  
1945: United Nations Charter signed in San Francisco, California.  
1987: Creation of the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Mexico.

Internat'l Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

International Day in Support of Torture Victims

# THE «GOD SPOT» IN THE BRAIN

## THE BIOLOGICAL BASIS OF SPIRITUALITY

**LEONARDO BOFF**

*Petrópolis, RJ, Brazil*

In all places today we see a great religious effervescence. After being defamed, persecuted, and condemned to disappearance by modern ideologies which negate God and transcendence, from the Enlightenment and culminating in Marxism, religion has resisted it all and today it returns vigorously. Not with ambiguities, which must be criticized. But the phenomenon is indisputable. It seems that human beings are tired of material goods, exalted by propaganda, and also of the excess of rationality, which dominates all of our culture and our professions.

It has been very well said that the human being is possessed of two hungers: for bread, which is satiable, and for beauty, for transcendence, and for the sacred, which is insatiable. It is in this second hunger where religion and all spiritual paths situate themselves. They have emerged in history and come time and again in order to attend to this insatiable hunger.

Today, the spiritual and religious dimension has reinforced itself considerably, departing from the world of the sciences of life. Religion is not something restricted to religious institutions, nor does it result in something optional. Religions do not have a monopoly. The spiritual, including the mystical, has a biological basis. This is why they are present in all human beings. Whether negated or affirmed, they are always there, because they pertain to our constitution in what makes us human. It is this which the scientists have called the "God Spot" in the brain.

It is something permanent, that is always active when we are looking for the meaning of life, when we have an experience of love, of solidarity, of profound peace and communion with everything. It is what makes us enter into prayerful dialogue with God.

The religions of the world are forms of expressing, through rituals, behavior, and doctrines, this "God Spot." All have this "thing" in common. But the expressions vary by culture. Taking seriously this "God Spot" in the brain allows us to see the unitary foundation of all religions more than their legitimate differences.

This finding allows us to value all this wave of mysticism and religiosity that is permeating our culture and inundating mass media like radio and television.

Religion offers us instruments so that we can make our lives more spiritual, going beyond what the established religions and churches can offer us. Let's look at the principle facts of this new scientific vision.

It is known that an advanced frontier of sciences today is the study of the brain and its multiple intelligences. It has arrived at relevant results to understand the phenomenon. The studies highlight three types of intelligence. The first is intellectual, the famous IQ, or Intelligence Quotient, which was given so much importance during the 20th Century. This is analytical intelligence, with which we elaborate concepts and do science. With it we organize the world, states, companies, all types of bureaucracies, and we solve objective problems.

The second intelligence is emotional, popularized especially by the Harvard professor, psychologist, and neuroscientist David Goleman, with his well-known book *Emotional Intelligence*, (EQ=Emotional Quotient).

He empirically demonstrated what was the conviction of a long line of thinkers, from Plato through Saint Augustine and Saint Bonaventure, culminating in Freud: the foundation of the human being is not reason (logos) but emotion (pathos). We are, fundamentally, beings of passion, empathy, compassion, and love. In fact, we only move ourselves when we combine IQ with EQ.

The third is spiritual intelligence. Its recognition, with scientific characteristics, derives from very recent investigations, from 1990 on, conducted by neurologists, neurophysiologists, neurolinguists, and experts in magnetic imaging of the brain (who study the magnetic and electronic fields of the brain). According to them, there exists in us--in an empirically verifiable manner--another type of intelligence called spiritual (SQ=Spiritual Quotient). Through this intelligence, we capture the greater contexts of our lives, creatively break limits, perceive unities, and feel inserted in the All, becoming attuned to values, the questions of the meaning of life, and the topics related to God and transcendence.

This conscience has its biological base in neurons. It has been proven that all neurons implicated in a

conscious experience oscillate at 40-Hz. When the temporal lobes of the brain are exposed to a stimulus that increases this frequency, this unleashes a spiritual experience of exaltation, of immense joy and happiness, like someone who is in front of a Presence...

Scientists have observed that when religious themes, God, or the values that deal with the greater meaning of things, not superficially but with a sincere and profound commitment, are broached, a stimulation is produced that goes beyond the normal 40-Hz.

Because of this, neurobiologists like Persinger and Ramachandran and quantum physicists like Danah Zohar have baptized this region of the temporal lobes the "God Spot" (see the book by Zohar, SQ: Connecting with Our Spiritual Intelligence, Bloomsbury USA 2000). Others prefer to speak of the "mystical mind." The existence of this "God Spot" represents an evolutionary advantage of our homo sapiens species. It is the unique depository of this neurological quality through which we capture the presence of God in the Universe.

It does not signify that God is only in this spot in the brain...God encompasses all of reality. But the "God Spot" is an internal organ through which we recognize God's presence in everything and in us.

Thus evolution took place in such a way that it produced in us many organs--eyes to see, the nose to smell, ears to hear, the sense of touch to feel, the mouth to eat and speak--and with all these organs we internalize the universe within ourselves. It equally created this internal capacity which gives us access to God.

If it is like this, in terms of an evaluative process we could say: the universe has evolved, in thousands of millions of years, in order to produce in the human mind the instrument through which it is possible to capture the Presence of God who has always been in the Universe, although not perceptible because it lacked an adequate conscience. Spirituality pertains to being a human being, and the religions do not have a monopoly on it. Rather, religions are like historical translations of the "God Spot."

But it is not enough to say that the "God Spot" is in the brain. Like everything that is alive, it has to be fed and activated continually. We do this, above all, by returning towards ourselves and dialoguing with our Center and the Profound that is within us. This dialogue brings us to listen to messages that conscience sends us, messages of solidarity, love, comprehension, pardon, and care for everything. This attitude generates serenity

and peace and confers a sense of purpose for existence. This is an irradiation of the activated "God Spot."

Our culture does not facilitate this deepening towards the interior. All is directed outward, occupying our minds and distracting us so we don't even encounter ourselves.

The nature of the "God Spot" is to open up dimensions so they are constantly wider, make us see the greater contexts of our life, and permit us to discover the conductive thread that unites and binds everything together. Only in this way do they have meaning and cease to be a random sequence of superficial feelings and sensations.

The "God Spot" nourishes our resistance to doing evil and strengthens us in being able to accomplish the good and implement values, especially those that imply openness to the other, protection of life, above all to the most vulnerable, compassion, pardon, and unconditional love.

Finally, we should incorporate a prayerful meditative attitude: Or rather, we should place ourselves before God not as someone who is on the border of a terrifying abyss, but as if we are in the company of a kind father or mother, feeling ourselves embraced like children who know they are in the palm of the hand of God. Then we can speak with confidence, give thanks for so many graces, beg for light for our searches, or simply turn ourselves over to Him/Her without words, in a silence filled with God's presence.

I would like to say that I myself have developed a way, based on the tradition of the Christians of the 2nd Century of the North of Egypt, combined with methods of Zen Buddhism. I have called this the "way of simplicity." It tries to open ourselves up the Light of the Most High, that comes upon our heads, penetrates all of our body, activating all of the points of concentrated energy that Easterners call "chakras," penetrating each pore of our being, transfiguring, alleviating, healing, and opening us up to the Beatific Light that is the Holy Spirit, like it is called in the liturgical hymn of Pentecost (Meditación de la Luz: el camino de la simplicidad, Dabar 2010). The effect of this activation of the "God Spot" is a profound peace that can only come from God, who integrates Godself with us, who synthesizes with our heart, who opens us to others and to God Godself.

Today more than ever we need this spirituality in order to find a real happiness in a time full of contradictions, conflicts, and threats to human life and the life of the Earth, our Common Home.

# 2011

June

M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12	27	28	29	30			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19							

<b>Monday</b> Lunes	<b>Tuesday</b> Martes	<b>Wednesday</b> Miercoles	<b>Thursday</b> Jueves
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>





# 30 Thursday

Gen 22,1-19 / Ps 114

Protomartyrs of Roma  
*John Olaf Wallin*

Day of the Guatemalan Martyrs (previously, Day of the Army)

1520: "Sad Night," defeat of the conquistadores in Mexico.

1927: A.C. Sandino issues his 'Political Manifest' in Nicaragua.

1975: Dionisio Frias, a peasant, is martyred in the struggle for land in the Dominican Republic.

1978: Hermógenes López, founder of Rural Catholic Action, martyr to the campesinos, Guatemala.

2008: Manuel Contreras, ex- police chief of the during the dictatorship is condemned to two life sentences for the assassination in 1974 of the former chief commander of the Chilean Army, Carlos Prats and his wife, in Buenos Aires. Seven other agents of the DINA were also condemned.

# 1 Friday

Deut 7,6-11 / Ps 102

Casto, Secundino, Aarón

*Catherine Winkworth, John Mason Neale*

Canadian National Holiday

1974: Juan Domingo Perón, three times president of Argentina, dies.

1981: Tulio Maruzzo, Italian priest and Luis Navarrete, catechist, are martyred in Guatemala.

1990: Mariano Delauney, teacher, is martyred in the cause of liberation education in Haiti.

2002: The International Criminal Court becomes operational in spite of US opposition.

**Partial eclipse of the sun,  
visible in S of the Indian Ocean.**

New Moon: 08h54m in Cancer



# 2 Saturday

Isa 61,9-11 / Int. 1Sam 2

Vidal, Marcial

1617: Rebellion of the Tupinambas (Brazil).

1823: Defeat of loyalists to the Portuguese crown in the province of Bahia leads to Brazilian monarchy.

1917: White rioters burned entire black sections of East St. Louis, Illinois shooting the inhabitants as they try to escape. 48 die.

1925: African revolutionary, Lumumba, is born.

1991: First legal Conference of the African National Congress, South Africa, alter 30 years.

# 3

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zech 9,9-10 / Ps 144

Rom 8,9.11-13 / Mt 11,25-30

Thomas the Apostle

1848: Denmark frees the slaves in their West Indian colony.

1951: The Afonso Arinos law is approved in Brazil. Discrimination because of race, color and religion is condemned as a contravention.

1978: Pablo Marcano García and Nydia Cuevas occupy the Consulate of Chile in San Juan to denounce the absurdity of celebrating the independence of the United States while denying the same to Puerto Rico.

1987: Tomás Zavaleta, a Salvadoran Franciscan, is martyred in Nicaragua.



# 7

## Thursday

Gen 44,18-21.23b-29;45,1-5 / Ps 104

Fermin

Mt 10,7-15

1976: Arturo Bernal, campesino leader of the Agrarian Leagues, dies of torture, Paraguay.

1991: Carlos Bonilla, a martyr for the right to work, dies in Citalepetl, Mexico.

2005: Coordinated terrorist bombings on London's transit system kill 52 and injure hundreds.

# 8

## Friday

Gen 46,1-7.28-30 / Ps 36

Mt 10,16-23

Eugenio, Adriano, Priscila

1538: Violent death of Almagro.

1954: Carlos Castillo Armas takes over presidency of Guatemala after U.S. backed coup.

1991: Martin Ayala, night guard for the Council of Marginal Communities, murdered by a Salvadoran death squad.

Last quarter: 06h29m in Libra



# 9

## Saturday

Gen 49,29-32; 50,15-26a / Ps 104

Mt 10,24-33

Rosario de Chiquiquirá

1793: Upper Canada legislature passes an act prohibiting slavery.

1816: At the Congress of Tucumán the United Provinces of the La Plata River declare their independence from Spain. National Holiday, Argentina.

1821: San Martin proclaims the independence of Peru.

1880: Joaquín Nabuco founds the Brazilian Society against Slavery that engaged broadly in activities in public places and clubs.

1920: Pedro Lersa, Recife, struggled for the rights of workers. Taken prisoner, he died there.

# 10

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
 Is 55,10-11 / Ps 64  
 Rom 8,18-23 / Mt 13,1-23

Christopher

1509: Birth of Calvin, in France.

1973: Independence of the Bahamas.

1980: Faustino Villanueva, Spanish priest, martyr in the service of the Indigenous people, Guatemala.

1988: Joseph Lafontant, lawyer, martyred in defense of human rights in Haiti.

1993: Rafael Maroto Pérez, priest and tireless fighter for justice and liberty in Chile, dies.

2002: A seven-million-year-old skull is discovered in Chad; oldest known hominoid.

# 11

## Monday

Ex 1,8-14,22 / Ps 123

Mt 10,34-11,1

Benedict

1968: Founding of the American Indian Movement.

1977: Carlos Ponce de Leon, bishop of San Nicolas, Argentina, is martyred for the cause of justice.

1995: Bosnian-Serb forces take-over of Srebrenica leads to the murder of more than eight thousands inhabitants.

World Population Day

# 12

## Tuesday

Ex 2,1-15a / Ps 68

Mt 11,20-24

John Gualbert

1821: Bolívar creates the Republic of Great Colombia.

1904: Pablo Neruda, Chilean Nobel Literature laureate, is born.

1917: General strike and insurrection in São Paulo.

1976: Aurelio Rueda, priest, is martyred for his work on behalf of slum dwellers in Colombia.

# 13

## Wednesday

Ex 3,1-6,9-12 / Ps 102

Mt 11,25-27

Henry

1900: Juana Fernández Solar, St. Teresa de Jesús de los Andes, is born, a Chilean Carmelite.

1982: Fernando Hoyos, a Jesuit missionary, and his 15 year-old altar server are killed in a military ambush in Guatemala.

1991: Riccy Mabel Martinez raped and assassinated by the military, symbol of the struggle of the people of Honduras against military impunity.

2007: The end of legal impunity in Argentina: the Supreme Court declares the amnesty of the repressors void.



July



# 14 Thursday

Ex 3,13-20 / Ps 104

Francisco Solano, Camilo de LeLis  
 1616: Francisco Solano, Franciscan missionary, apostle to the Indigenous peoples of Peru.  
 1630: Hernandarias publishes the first norms for the defense of the Indigenous people in Paraguay.  
 1789: The French Revolution begins with the storming of the Bastille Prison.  
 1969: The "Football War" breaks out between El Salvador and Honduras over the expulsion of Salvadoran settlers from Honduras.

# 15 Friday

Ex 11,10-12.14 / Ps 115

Bonaventure, Vladimir  
 1972: Héctor Jurado, a Methodist pastor, is tortured and murdered in Uruguay.  
 1976: Rodolfo Lunkenbein, missionary, and Lorenzo Simão martyred for the rights of the indigenous in Brazil.  
 1981: Misael Ramírez, campesino, community animator and martyr to justice, Colombia.  
 1991: Julio Quevedo Quezada, catechist, El Quiché, assassinated by the State, Guatemala.

# 16 Saturday

Ex 12,37-42 / Ps 135

Carmen  
 1750: José Gumilla, missionary, defender of the Indigenous people, Venezuela.  
 1769: Founding of mission of San Diego de Alcalá marks expansion of Spanish colonization into California.  
 1976: Carmelo Soria, a Spanish diplomat who granted asylum to opponents of the Pinochet regime, found assassinated in Santiago, Chile.  
 1982: The homeless occupy 580 houses in Santo André, São Paulo, Brazil.  
 2000: Elsa M. Chaney (\*1930) dies, outstanding American feminist with studies on women in Latin America.

**International Day of the Family (U.N.)**

Full Moon: 06h39m in Capricorn



# 17

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wis 12,13.16-19 / Ps 85

Rom 8,26-27 / Mt 13,24-43

Alejo, *Bartolomé de las Casas*

1566: Bartolomé de Las Casas dies at 82, prophet, defender of the cause of Indigenous peoples.  
 1898: U.S. troops seize Santiago, Cuba, during the Spanish American War.  
 1976: Sugar refinery workers martyred at Ledesma, Argentina.  
 1980: Bloody military coup in Bolivia led by Luis García Meza.

# 18 Monday

Ex 14,5-18 / Int. Ex 15

Arnulfo, Federico

Mt 12,38-42

1872: The great Indigenous Zapoteca, Benito Juárez, dies.  
 1976: Carlos de Dios Murias and Gabriel Longueville, priests, kidnapped and killed, martyrs to justice in La Rioja, Argentina.  
 1982: Over 250 campesinos from around the community of Plan de Sánchez are massacred by military as part of the Guatemalan government's scorched earth policy.  
 1992: Peruvian military death squad disappears professor Hugo Muñoz Sánchez and nine students from a university in Lima.

# 19 Tuesday

Ex 14,21-15,1 / Int. Ex 15

Justa y Rufina, Arsenio

Mt 12,46-50

1824: Iturbide, emperor of Mexico, is executed by a firing squad.  
 1848: Father Marcelino Domeco Jarauta is shot in Guanajuato for his refusal to cease his resistance to the U.S. invaders after the peace accord giving away 40% of Mexican territory was signed.  
 1979: The Sandinista Revolution succeeds in overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua.

# 20 Wednesday

Ex 16,1-5,9-15 / Ps 77

Elias

Mt 13,1-9

1500: A royal document orders the liberation of all Indigenous persons sold as slaves in the Peninsula. They are to be returned to The Indies.  
 1810: Independence of Colombia. National Holiday.  
 1848: Declaration at women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York demands women's legal equality with men and the right to vote.  
 1923: Doroteo Arango, «Pancho Villa», Mexican General and revolutionary, is assassinated.  
 1924: 200 Tobas and supporters demonstrating for a just wage are machine gunned at Napalpi, Argentina.  
 1969: In the person of Commander Neil Armstrong, a human being steps onto the moon for the first time.  
 1981: Massacre of Coyá, Guatemala: three hundred women, elderly persons and children, are killed.

July



# 21 Thursday

Ex 19,1-2.9-11.16-20b / Int. Dan 3

Lawrence of Brindisi  
1980: Wilson de Souza Pinheiro, trade unionist and peasant activist, assassinated in Brasília AC, Brazil.  
1984: Sergio Alejandro Ortiz, seminarian, dies in Guatemala.  
1987: Alejandro Labaca, Vicar of Aguatico, and Inés Arango, missionary, die in the Ecuadorian jungle.

# 22 Friday

Mary Magdalene

1980: Jorge Oscar Adur, priest and former president of JEC youth organization, is kidnapped by Argentine military.  
2002: Bartolomeu Morais da Silva, organizer of land occupations by the poor, is tortured and killed in Brazil.

# 23 Saturday

Ex 24,3-8 / Ps 49

Bridget  
1978: Mario Mujía Córdoba, «Guigui», worker, teacher, pastoral agent, martyr to the cause of workers in Guatemala.  
1983: Pedro Angel Santos, catechist, is martyred in solidarity with the Salvadoran people.  
1987: Over a hundred peasant supporters of land reform are massacred by a paramilitary force of landowners and junta in Jean-Rabel, Haiti.  
1993: 8 street children are assassinated by a death squad while they sleep in the square in front of the church of the Candelaria in Rio de Janeiro.  
Last quarter: 05h02m in Taurus



# 24

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1Kings 3,5,7-12 / Ps 118  
Rom 8,28-30 / Mt 13,44-52

Cristina, Sharbel Makhluף  
1783: Simón Bolívar is born in Caracas, Venezuela.  
1985: Ezequiel Ramin, Colombian missionary, is martyred at Cacoal, Brazil for defending squatters.



# 28 Thursday

Ex 40,16-21.34-38 / Ps 83

Innocent, John Sebastian Bach,

Mt 13,47-53

Heinrich Schütz, George Frederic Handel

1821: Independence of Peru, National Holiday

1980: Seventy peasants massacred by the military in San Juan Cotzal, Guatemala.

1981: Stanley Rother, an American priest, is murdered in Santiago de Atitlán because of his dedication to the poor.

1986: International workers, Yvan Leyvraz (Swiss), Bernd Koberstein (German) and Joël Fieux (French) are assassinated by the Contras in Zompopera, Nicaragua.

# 29 Friday

1Jn 4,7-16 / Ps 33

Martha

Jn 11,19-27

Mary, Martha and Lazarus of Bethania, Olaf

# 30 Saturday

Lev 25,1.8-17 / Ps 66

Mt 14,1-12

Peter Chrysólogus

1502: Columbus reaches Honduras.

1811: Miguel Hidalgo, priest and hero of the Mexican independence struggle, is executed.

1958: Frank Pais, student leader and opponent of the Batista dictatorship in Cuba, is shot by police.

New Moon: 18h40m in Leo



# 31

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isa 55,1-3 / Ps 144

Rom 8.35.37-39 / Mt 14,13-21

Ignatius of Loyola

1981: Omar Torrijos, general and political leader who negotiated the return of sovereignty over the Canal Zone to Panama, dies in a suspicious plane crash.

2002: Pope John Paul II canonized Nahuatl peasant Juan Diego, to whom tradition says Mary, Mother of Jesus, appeared in Mexico.

# THEISM, A USEFUL BUT NOT ABSOLUTE MODEL TO 'IMAGINE' GOD

JOSÉ MARÍA VIGIL  
Panamá, Panamá

## SEEING

### A long but not eternal history of the idea of "God"

Anthropologists insist that homo sapiens has been *homo religiosus* since the beginning. This primate began to become "human" when it began to experience the need to understand the meaning of life, and began to perceive a spiritual, sacred, and mysterious dimension...

We used to think that this religious dimension meant that there was a necessary relationship with a "God," but now we know it hasn't always been like this. Now we have facts that during all of the Neolithic period (70,000 to 10,000 b.c.e.) our ancestors worshiped the *Great Mother Goddess*, confusingly identified with Nature. The idea of "god" is later, from the age of the agrarian revolution (about 10,000 years ago). The warrior god, masculine, who inhabits the sky and makes tribal alliances...is a recent idea about the divine, which is generalized and was primarily put forward in the "agrarian" religion.

The Greek concept of God ("theos") would later mark the West: it is "theism," a form of conceiving of religiosity centering everything in the figure of "god." The gods live in a world above ours, and they are powerful, but they have human passions. The Greek philosophers would criticize this too human image of the gods. Also Christianity would purify its image of God, that would continue to be, despite everything, extremely anthropomorphic: God loves, creates, repents, intervenes, pardons, redeems, saves, has a plan...like us, that, finally, ends up meaning we are created *in his image and likeness*. This all-powerful God, Creator, First Cause, Lord, Judge...remained in the center of the Western religious cosmivision, like the North Star of the religious firmament around which everything spun. It was not permissible to doubt God: Doubt was a sin, against faith. To believe or not believe in God: this was the decisive question.

### Science and modernity clash with God

But since the 17th century, the advance of science has gone along with the diminishment of "God" in everything which had before then had been attributed to Him. Grotius said: everything functions autonomously, *etsi Deus non daretur*, as if God didn't exist. Science discovered the "laws of nature;" the fairies and spirits

were no longer necessary, the miracles disappeared, to the point of becoming unbelievable. Bultmann will say: it is not possible to be modern and believe in the world of traditional spirits.

Not only science, also social psychology transforms us: the adult human being does not feel at ease with a paternalistic gap-filler God (Torras, 66). Bonhoeffer will say: "God has retired, he has called us to live without him, in a lay holiness."

If in the 18th century atheism began, in the 20th century, it was multiplied twelve fold: It was the "religious" option that increased the most. The "a-theists," those "without-Gods" who are not people of bad will who want to fight against God, but people to whom God doesn't seem credible, or even intelligible, have increased in number. The classic idea of "God" began to be questioned.

### New approaches to the question

The Western Christianity of the 18th and 19th centuries interpreted atheism as anti-clericalism, and, in part, this was right. But later it would be recognized that in another significant way the critical atheists were right: "We Christians have obscured more than revealed the face of God" (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 19). We have defended bad images of God, and now there are many of us Christians who recognize that "neither do I believe in that God that the atheists refuse to believe in" (Arias, 42).

But today we are taking even one more step: the concept of "God" itself, although purified by bad images, is a limited concept, and not universally accepted. Further: there are those who believe that certain concepts of God are even harmful because they transmit deeply mistaken ideas to Humanity. Baltodano (p. 210) believes it is urgent to change the image of God in his country, because the common image there is harmful. The question is new and very serious, "what status should we give to the concept of 'God'?"

## JUDGING

### The idea of "God" has its problems

We begin by recognizing the following:  
-the "objectivization" of God: it is a "being", very distinct, but a concrete being, an "individual" who lives in the heavens, up there, far away...The immense major

ity of believers believe him to be like this, literally;

-He is a "person": he loves, pardons, orders, has a plan...just like us...Isn't this an anthropomorphism?

-he is omnipotent, Universal Lord and Judge, rewarder and punisher... a projection of the agrarian system?

-he exercises and retains the ultimate responsibility for the course of history (doesn't this remove us of our responsibility?)

-he is the Creator: absolutely "transcendent," completely different from the cosmos...A radical dualism that puts the Absolute on one side, and the cosmic reality, drained of all value, on the other?

-he has traditionally been a "tribal" God, of my country or my religion, who has "chosen us" and protects us against others, he has revealed the truth to us and gives us a universal mission over others...(?)

Considered carefully, all of this isn't anything but one form of imagining God, but a form that for a long time has become unacceptable to an increasing number of people...who feel that they believe in God, but not in this kind of god, not in theos, who wouldn't be anything more than an agrarian form of imagining-conceiving of Divinity...God has to be something deeper than what this traditional faith has imagined as God.

### **Establishing a distinction**

It's one thing to believe in the Mystery of God, in Divinity—ultimate, inexpressible Reality—and its another thing to believe that this Mystery adopts the concrete form of god ("theos") (a being, up there, all powerful...).

### **Believing in ultimate Reality, without the image of God**

Ultimate Reality cannot be so simple as this image of God-Theos...We cannot confuse what in reality is ultimate Reality with our idea of God. Theism is a "model," a concrete form of imagining/conceiving of the divine, a conceptual instrument, a help, something not absolutely essential.

It is a cultural instrument (Marina 222) that has shown itself to be extremely useful, friendly even; but this is not a "description" of ultimate Reality, which we cannot "imagine."

It is a human creation. Because of this it has gone through changes and is continuing to change: now it clearly seems evident, but humanity existed for a long time without it.

Today it brings many people up short: they aren't able to accept this form of imaging ultimate Reality. They feel that "theism", imagining ultimate Reality as "god" is not the only way of relating to it, nor is it the

best, nor is it even always good.

There is no need to disqualify "theism" which, for many people is helpful, even necessary. This is trying to recognize that it is only an instrument, and that other people may need another model that isn't theistic. Believing or not believing in "god" no longer is the question; what is decisive now is the spiritual experience of everyone person.

### **ACTING**

Whoever feels good in their traditional theistic form can keep on with it; nobody should be harassed.

Nevertheless, many people and communities would do well to take up this issue; it isn't good to be unaware of something just due to laziness.

In general, we lack *new images, new metaphors* for God; the traditional ones are being spent, and no longer work for many people (page 228).

Today, an increasing number of people are discovering that theism is incompatible with their actual perception of the world, and that outside of theism, paradoxically, they reconcile themselves with the divine dimension of reality, with the *Divine Reality*, a new name they are more respectful of than God.

Theologians are constantly and clearly moving towards a *post-theist* Christianity, although there is still a lot to be done to adequately develop this intuition. One could be Christian and not be theist, not believe in "god-theos" but in divine Reality, in Divinity.

One can—and one should—reread religions beyond theism (some are not theistic). Just as the model of "god" isn't indispensable, neither is the classic theistic form of religions. We can move beyond theism, but not beyond Ultimate Reality. Many people are already making a post-theistic reinterpretation of Christianity, in practice and in theory, and it's useful to familiarize ourselves with this. (Spong 216).

The spiritual experience of the human being is permanent, and it continues to deepen, but the images and explications that we have given to ourselves to understand and express them have varied, and they will vary, in conformity with our knowledge.

The traditional argument over the existence of God (to believe or not believe in God...) is a discussion that doesn't make sense anymore...the theistic model is not absolute; it is so traditional that to many it seems indispensable, but it really isn't. The alternative to theism is not atheism, but rather post-theism, or simply, non-theism. Both forms are compatible with the spiritual experience of the human being.









# Thursday

Num 20,1-13 / Ps 94  
Mt 16,13-23

John Vianney

1849: Anita Garibaldi, Brazilian heroine and fighter for liberty in Brazil, Uruguay and Italy, dies in a retreat from Rome.

1976: **Enrique Angelelli**, bishop of La Rioja, Argentina, prophet and martyr to the poor.

1979: Alirio Napoleón Macías, Salvadoran priest, is machine-gunned while celebrating Mass.

2006: Julio Simón is condemned as a State terrorist: the first case following the abrogation of the laws of "Full Stop" and "Due Obedience" in Argentina.



# Friday

Deut 4,32-40 / Ps 76  
Mt 16,24-28

1499: Alonso de Ojeda arrives at La Guajira, Colombia.

2000: Carmen Sánchez Coronel, a teacher's union representative, and six others are murdered at a military barracks in Sardinata, Colombia.



# Saturday

Dan 7,9-10.13-14 / Ps 96  
2Pet 1,16-19 / Mt 17,1-9

Transfiguration

1325: Founding of Tenochtitlan (Mexico, DF).

1538: Founding of Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia.

1524: Battle of Junín.

1825: Independence of Bolivia, National Holiday.

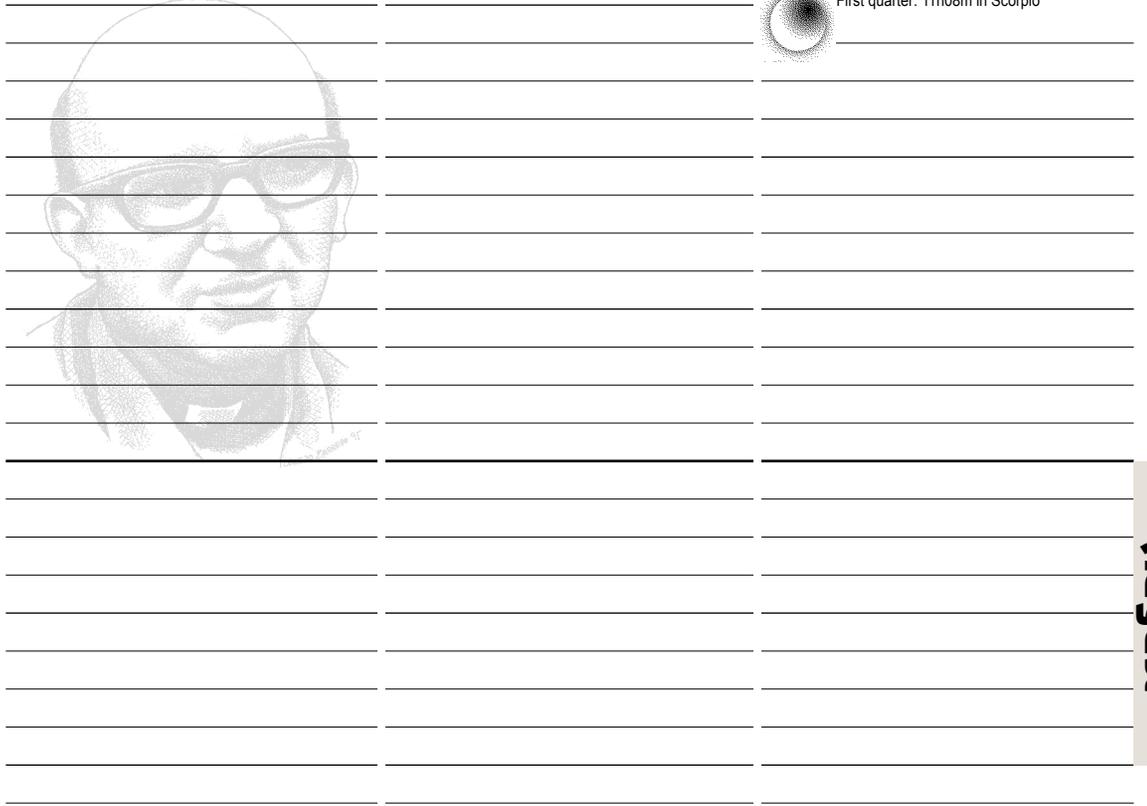
1945: The United States drops an atomic bomb on the civilian population of Hiroshima, Japan.

1961: Kennedy creates the Alliance for Progress.

1962: Independence of Jamaica, National Holiday.

2000: Argentinean Jorge Olivera is arrested in Italy and charged with the disappearance of a young French woman during the Argentinean military dictatorship.

First quarter: 11h08m in Scorpio



Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
1Kings 19,9a.11-13a / Ps 84  
Rom 9,1-5 / Mt 14,22-33

Sixtus and Cayetan

1819: With the victory of Boyacá, Bolívar opens the way to the Liberation of Nueva Granada (Colombia).

1985: Christopher Williams, evangelical pastor, is martyred for faith and solidarity in El Salvador.

2002: In continuing repression of Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico, José López Santiz, is assassinated in front of his two small sons.

8

# Monday

Deut 10,12-22 / Ps 147

Mt 17,22-27

Dominic of Guzman

1873: Birth of Emiliano Zapata, campesino leader of the Mexican Revolution. His call for land reform inspired other social struggles globally.

1994: Manuel Cepeda Vargas, a Unión Patriótica senator, is assassinated in on-going civil strife in Bogotá, Colombia.

1997: General strike in Argentina, 90% participation.

2000: The Supreme Court of Chile removes parliamentary immunity from ex-dictator Pinochet.

9

# Tuesday

Deut 31,1-8 / Int. Deut 32

Mt 18,1-5.10.12-14

Fabio, Román

1945: The U.S.A. drops an atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

1984: Eduardo Alfredo Pimentel, Christian activist for human rights and against the Argentinean dictatorship.

1989: Daniel Espitia Madera, Colombian campesinos leader, assassinated.

1991: Miguel Tomaszek and Zbigniew Strzalkowski, Franciscan missionaries in Peru, murdered by Sendero Luminoso.

1995: Military police kill ten landless workers and brutally arrest 192 others in Corumbiara, Rondônia, Brazil.

2007: The BNP Paribas bank blocks three investment funds: the world economic crisis beings.

UN Indigenous Peoples' Day

10

# Wednesday

Deut 34,1-12 / Ps 65

Mt 18,15-20

Lawrence

1809: First cry for independence in continental Latin America, that of Ecuador, National Holiday.

1974: Tito de Alencar, a Dominican priest, commits suicide as a result of being tortured in Brazil.

1977: Jesús Alberto Páez Vargas, leader of the communal land movement, kidnapped and disappeared, Peru.

2000: Union leader, Rubén Darío Guerrero Cuentas, kidnapped, tortured and murdered by paramilitaries in Guacamayal, Colombia.

August



# 11 Thursday

Josh 3,7-10a.11.13-17 / Ps 113A

Clare of Assisi  
1898: U.S. forces occupy Mayagüez, Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War.  
1972: Last U.S. ground combat force pulled from South Vietnam.  
1992: The march of 3,000 landless peoples begins in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.  
1997: The "Asian Crisis" begins and affects finances throughout the world.

**Ramadan begins**

# 12 Friday

Josh 24, 1-13 / Ps 135

Julian  
1546: Francisco de Vitoria dies in Salamanca.  
1952: On orders from Joseph Stalin, 13 of the most prominent Jewish writers in the Soviet Union are murdered.  
1972: After a failed escape attempt, 16 political prisoners from Rawson, Argentina are executed at the Argentine naval base at Trelew.  
1976: 17 Latin American bishops, 36 priests, religious and laity are arrested by the police in Riobamba, Ecuador.  
1981: IBM launches the marketing of personal Computers, a revolution in human life.  
1983: Margarita Maria Alves, president of the Rural Union of Alagoa Grande, Brazil, martyr to the earth.

**UN International Youth Day**

# 13 Saturday

Josh 24, 4-29 / Ps 15

Polycarp, Hippolyto  
1926: Fidel Castro is born near Mayari, Cuba.  
1961: Construction of the Berlin wall.  
1999: Colombian journalist and political satirist, Jaime Garzón Forero, is murdered by right-wing paramilitaries.  
Full Moon: 18h57m in Aquarius



# 14

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isa 56, 1.6-7 / Ps 66

Rom 11, 13-15.29-32 / Mt 15, 21-28

Maximilian Kolbe

1816: Francisco de Miranda, Venezuelan Father of the Nation, precursor of independence, dies in prison.  
1984: Campesinos martyred at Aucayacu, Ayacucho, Peru.  
1985: Campesino martyrs of Accomarca, department of Ayacucho, Peru.  
2000: Robert Canarte, union activist, is found dead after being kidnapped two weeks earlier by paramilitaries in Galicia, Colombia.









# RELIGION, GENDER AND VIOLENCE

ELSA TAMEZ

*San José, Costa Rica*

There is a gender disequilibrium in the representation of God. It presents itself in masculine categories, sometimes patriarchal, sometimes not. This disequilibrium impacts women in a concrete way. It affirms the transcendence of God as a divinity without gender, but in its concrete manifestation, this God assumes the characteristics of a masculine God. Patriarchal reality creates a lag within universal theological discourse and practices which exclude women. It says that all, men and women, are created in the image of God, but many times the divine manifestation as masculine creates dogmas which promote inequality, as, for example, the tangential fact “Jesus is male” creates a dogma which excludes women from ordained ministry. Nevertheless, the tangential fact that he was Jewish is not an obstacle for ordaining non-Jewish males. It is a fact that the dominant images of God, the discursive structures, and the imagery of God, is masculine and patriarchal.

If this disequilibrium results in the exclusion of women, the images of God as the holder of control and power do so even more. If the preponderant image of God is that of male and father, it is because society itself bases itself on and revolves around this patriarchal axis. Discourses about God express themselves in human language and language brings the cultural marks of those who express them. The images of God generally reflect the experiences of those who evoke them.

Thus, the problem is not necessarily rooted in the images of God, but because the majority of images reinforce power and control over others. God as father, judge, boss, king of kings and lord of lords invigorate the behavior of exerting power and control of some over others. Power and control are the key words that help us to understand the images of God that are complicit in violence, and not only against women.

But it is not only these anthropomorphic images that can be accomplices of violence. Feminist theologians from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the First World share their suspicion of concepts or images of an all-powerful, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, perfect, immutable God. This is the classical form—

the Western form—in which God is perceived, starting from the catechism. Women see and feel in this conception the foundation of power and control of God over humans, of some beings over others, of men over women, of humanity over nature, of the rich over the poor, of whites over blacks and indigenous peoples.

The fundamental problem, therefore, is patriarchy and its hierarchical character. This means that masculinity is centrally situated as “the principle of social, cultural, and religious organization.” The fundamental problem with this principle of social organization which provokes exclusion, we repeat, is not that it is male but that it is absolutely hierarchical. Why do men abuse? According to a document of the US bishops, it is not because of a psychiatric disorder. The document says that “men who abuse women have convinced themselves that they have a right to do so...and many abusive men maintain that the woman is inferior...believe that to be a man means dominating and controlling women.”

Here lies the fundamental problem: “the male is assumed as a superior entity and the woman as inferior.” This phrase, repeated ad nauseum, until worn out, does not have an impact: men say, “Again, always the same, there is no novelty in the discourse of women.” And, nevertheless, this simple belief considered to be truth, assumed consciously or unconsciously, breathed in all environments, is responsible for murders, for the permissiveness and impunity granted by all of society with its institutions, its epistemology, its religion, and theology. All of us, men and women, are touched closely because we know that all the educational institutions...and the Church, the Bible, and theology, are patriarchal.

In front of these images, we need to work on biblical reflection and theological creativity. If a fundamental concept of God is one of love and mercy; if one sees God as the principle of mercy, as the theologian Jon Sobrino says, this principle will bring us to paths other than those of power and control. There are two dialogues in the Bible that impact and sensitize me to see God as a friend. In the Gospel of John, Jesus rejects the title of Lord and prefers to be called

Translation by Rebecca Chabot

friend. In the Letter of St. James, the author praises the royal law of love of neighbor and remembers that God called Abraham a friend when his belief or faith was counted as justice (James 2:23). Of course, we are not going to reject images of the all-powerful when they spontaneously arise from our hearts and we express them in doxological form out of pure love; as when we say it to one we love, my king or my queen, without implying any subjugation.

Latin American theology, in having the poor as its point of reference, has made an advance in seeing sensitive dimensions of God, such as compassion and mercy for those who suffer. Nevertheless, we men and women of this theology have stayed with patriarchal categories and images. It is maybe for this reason that our biblical-theological discourses are ineffective when faced with the murder of women. We are before a problem that is epistemologically thick. Brazilian theologian Ivone Gebara has already, since the beginnings of the 90s, manifested a concern about patriarchal theological epistemology in these same liberation theologies we have constructed. "Is it going to destroy others in order to rescue the poor in the name of the God of the poor?" Gebara has asked, alluding to certain simplistic discourses about the liberation of peoples. One of the problems with this paradigm, she argues, is its dualistic perception, its lack of interrelationality, its analytical rationality as exclusive and privileged, its linearity in discourse and time, in not seeing things in a more complicated and holistic form.

In the last 30 years, female theologians have contributed to theological thought by creating feminine images of God. This has been good, like a kiss to the heart which needs the tender hands of a loving and sensitive God. It is already common to address God as Mother and Father, trying to remove the patriarchal tint of seeing God as only Father. Nevertheless, for all that has been said before, it is not sufficient. Faced with this image, we have to question the gendered relationship between these two images: is this Mother image on the same level of equality with God as Father? Because, as we said at the start, the fundamental problem which gives free reign to murder, irrespective of differences, is the consideration of one—the father—as superior to the other—the mother, the daughter, the employee.

It is appropriate to emphasize that this is not unique to Western Christian culture. In other patriarchal societies, like the Aztec, we find something similar. In Nahuatl, for example, we find many goddesses, but the majority occupy a lower level, below the Gods. Coatlicue was sweeping the temple when a feather fell from heaven and made her pregnant. This fact creates a great violence: she, because of the dishonor—without guilt—is expelled; Huitzipochtly, her son, the God of War, avenges himself in a bloody form against his sister, the leader, and all the other brothers and sisters. The earth is created from the murder of Coatlicue. Cuatlcoatl, another goddess, collaborates in the creation of humanity by grinding bones on the metate so that her consort, Queztalcoatl can create humanity. Tlatecutly is an irrepressible, fearsome goddess and because of this she is thrown out by two gods in order to create the heavens and the earth. This lets loose a cycle of violence. Tlatecutly cried in the nights and the priests, out of pity for her, offered human sacrifices. Other myths in other cultures go in similar paths. With this I want to indicate that there is a very profound theological strand in patriarchal civilizations which is necessary to untangle in order to combat these roots which sustain violence against women.

Creating feminine images of God is an important step in the equalizing of genders, and each time it helps to diminish violence against women it makes us a little more human and kind, but it is not a guarantee of a relationship of gender equality. In order to put the brakes on violence, at least three things are necessary: creating inclusive images, ending the superiority-inferiority paradigm, and promoting respect of the other.

If the fundamental problem is patriarchal ideology, then we must depatriarchalize society. This depatriarchalization begins when the superiority-inferiority paradigm is destroyed and at the same time it becomes assumed as true, as something natural, that we women and men are all equal, though different. Equals in what counts in being human, with the same rights for each citizen, but different in gender and comportment. These things are fundamental. Affirming equality is not sufficient; it is necessary to let go of believing that to be woman is to be other. In other words, it is necessary to respect human otherness. 

# 2011

August

M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	29	30	31				
15	16	17	18	19	20	21							

Monday <i>Lunes</i>	Tuesday <i>Martes</i>	Wednesday <i>Miercoles</i>	Thursday <i>Jueves</i>
			1
5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29



# 29 Monday

Jer 1,17-19 / Ps 70

Martyrdom of John the Baptist  
1533: Baptism and execution of Inca Atahualpa by Spanish conquistadors in Peru.

1563: The Royal Tribunal of Quito is created.

1986: In spite of the prohibition of the Cardinal of Rio de Janeiro, the Third Meeting of Black Religious and Priests takes place in that city.

2000: Insurance worker's union leader, Moises Sanjuan, is assassinated by forces believed linked to Colombian military in Cucuta.

New Moon: 03h04m in Virgo



# 30 Tuesday

1Thess 5,1-6.9-11 / Ps 26

Félix, Esteban Zudaire  
1985: 300 FBI agents invade Puerto Rico and arrest more than a dozen activists struggling for independence.

1993: A death squad and police execute 21 people in the Rio de Janeiro slum of "do Vigário Geral" in Brazil.

1999: East Timor votes for independence in a UN supervised referendum.

**International Day of the Disappeared  
(Amnesty International and FEDEFAM)**

# 31 Wednesday

Col 1,1-8 / Ps 51

Raymond Nonatu  
1925: The U.S. Marines end 10 years of occupation of Haiti.

1962: Independence of Trinidad and Tobago.

1988: Leónidas Proaño, bishop to the Indigenous peoples, dies in Riobamba, Ecuador.

2002: Adolfo de Jesús Munera López, former Coca-Cola worker, murdered by paramilitaries in Barranquilla, Colombia.









# Thursday

Mic 5,1-4a / Ps 12  
Mt 1,1-16.18-23

Nativity of Mary

1522: Magellan's ship, the Juan Sebastián Elcan, completes the first trip round the World.

1941: The Nazi siege of Leningrad begins. A million civilian and Red Army defenders die.

1943: Julius Fučík, Czechoslovakian resistance leader, tortured and executed by the Nazis.

1974: Ford offers Nixon a "full and absolute pardon for all the crimes he might have committed when he occupied the Presidency."

International Literacy Day



# Friday

1Tim 1,1-2.12-14 / Ps 15  
Lk 6,39-42

Peter Claver

1654: Pedro Claver, apostle to black slaves, dies in Cartagena, Colombia.

1613: Uprising of Lari Qaxa, Bolivia (Aymaras and Quichuas confront the Spanish).

1990: Hildegard Feldman, a nun, and Ramon Rojas, a catechist are martyred for their service to Colombian peasants.

Jewish New Year: 5771

End of Ramadan



# Saturday

1Tim 1,15-17 / Ps 112  
Lk 6,43-49

Nicholas of Tolentino

1897: Sheriff's deputies open fire on unarmed immigrant miners at a peaceful demonstration near Hazleton, Pennsylvania. More than 19 die.

1924: U.S. Marines occupy various cities in Honduras to support the presidential candidate.

1984: Policarpo Chem, catechist and co-operative leader, kidnapped and tortured by government forces in Verapaz, Guatemala.



Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Sir 27,33-28,9 / Ps 102  
Rom 14,7-9 / Mt 18,21-35

Proto y Jacinto

1973: State coup in Chile against President Allende.

1981: Sebastiana Mendoza, Indigenous catechist, martyr to solidarity, Guatemala.

1988: Martyrs of the Church of San Juan Bosco, in Puerto Principe, Haiti.

1990: Myrna Mack, anthropologist and human rights advocate, is assassinated in Guatemala.

2001: Attack on the Twin Towers, New York.

2008: Massacre of farmers in El Porvenir, Pando, Bolivia, to the orders of industrialists and landowners, with the connivencia of the Prefect Leopoldo Fernandez, today in prison.



# 15 Thursday

Heb 5,7-9 / Ps 30  
Jn 19,25-27

Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows  
 1810: The «Cry of Pain» in Mexico.  
 1821: Independence of Central America, National Holiday in all the countries of Central America.  
 1842: Francisco de Morazán, Central American labor leader, is executed by a firing squad in San José, Costa Rica,  
 1973: Arturo Hillerns, medical doctor, martyr in his service to the poor of Chile.  
 1973: Victor Jara, Chilean folk singer, and political activist, tortured and shot by military in Santiago, Chile.  
 1974: Antonio Llidó, Spanish priest, disappears in Pinochet's prisons in Chile.  
 1981: Pedro Pío Cortés, Indigenous Achi, Celebrator of the Word, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala.

# 16 Friday

1Tim 6,2c-12 / Ps 48  
Lk 8,1-3

Cornelius and Cyprian  
 1501: The king authorizes the governor of the Caribbean islands to import African slaves.  
 1821: Mexican independence, National Holiday.  
 1931: Founding of the "Frente Negro Brasileiro" in São Paulo. It will later be closed down by Getúlio Vargas.  
 1955: Civic-military insurrection that deposes Constitutional President Peron  
 1983: Guadalupe Carney sj, is assassinated by the Honduran army.

**World Ozone Day (U.N.)**

# 17 Saturday

1Tim 6,13-16 / Ps 99  
Lk 8,4-15

Robert Bellarmine  
 1981: John David Troyer, a Mennonite missionary, martyred for justice in Guatemala.  
 1983: Carlos Alirio and Fabián Buitrago, Giraldo Ramirez and Marcos Marin, campesinos, catechists, are assassinated at Cocomá, Colombia.  
 1983: Julián Bac, Delegate of the Word, and Guadalupe Lara, catechist, martyrs in Guatemala.

# 18

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Isa 55,6-9 / Ps 144  
Phil 1,20c-24.27a / Mt 20,1-16

Joseph of Cupertino  
Dag Hammarskjöld

1810: Independence of Chile, National holiday.  
 1969: The «Rosariazo»: Citizens force the police to retreat, in Rosario, Argentina.  
 1973: Miguel Woodward Iriberry, a priest from Valparaiso, Chile, is assassinated by the Pinochet dictatorship.  
 1998: Miguel Angel Quiroga, a priest, is murdered at a paramilitary base in Chocó, Colombia.

# 19 Monday

Ezra 1,1-6 / Ps 125

Januarius

1973: Juan Alsina, Omar Venturelli, and Etienne Pesle, priests, victims of the Pinochet police.

1983: Independence of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

1985: Earthquake in Mexico City.

1986: Charlot Jacqueline and companions, martyrs to liberating education, Haiti.

1994: The United States lands in Haiti to return Jean Bertrand Aristide.

2001: Yolanda Cerón, Director of Pastoral Ministry for the Diocese of Tumaco, Colombia, assassinated.

# 20 Tuesday

Ezra 6,7-8.12b.14-20 / Ps 121

Andrew Kim, Fausta

1519: Hernando de Magallanes sets sail from Sanlúcar.

1976: In Washington, Orlando Letellier, the former Chancellor of the popular regime of Allende, is assassinated.

1977: The Indigenous peoples of Latin America raise their voices for the first time in the Palace of the Nations in Geneva.

1978: Francisco Luis Espinosa, priest, and companions are martyred at Estelí, Nicaragua.

1979: Apolinar Serrano, José Lopez, Félix Garcia Grande and Patricia Puertas, campesino labor leaders, are martyred in El Salvador.

Last quarter: 13h38m in Gemini



# 21 Wednesday

Eph 4,1-7.11-13 / Ps 18

Matthew

1956: Dictator Anastasio Somoza dies at the hands of Rigoberto López Pérez, Nicaragua.

1904: Chef Joseph, Nez Perce humanitarian and resistance leader, dies in exile in Washington state.

1973: Gerardo Poblete Fernández, Salesian priest, assassinated in Iquique, Chile by the Pinochet regime.

1981: Independence of Belize.

International Peace Day (U.N.)



# 22 Thursday

Hag 1,1-8 / Ps 149  
Lk 9,7-9

Maurice  
1977: Eugenio Lyra Silva, lawyer, martyred for justice in Santa Maria da Vitoria, Brazil.  
1862: Slaves in the United States are legally freed.  
2000: Omar Noguera, member of the municipal employees union in Cali, Colombia, dies of wounds received in attacks targeting trade unionists.

# 23 Friday

Hag 2,15b-2,9 / Ps 42  
Lk 9,18-22

Lino y Tecla  
1850: José Artigas, a national hero of Uruguayan independence, dies in exile.  
1868: «Cry of Lares»: Ramón Betances begins the emancipation movement from slavery in Puerto Rico.  
1905: Francisco de Paula Víctor dies; considered a saint by the Brazilian Afro-American community.  
1973: Pablo Neruda dies.  
1989: Henry Bello Ovalle, activist, martyred for his solidarity with Colombia's youth.  
1993: Sergio Rodríguez, worker and university employee, martyr to the struggle for justice, Venezuela.  
2008: "Day of the Overshoot": we start spending 30% more resources than are available on the planet.

# 24 Saturday

Zech 2,5-9.14-15a / Int. Jer 31  
Lk 9,43b-45

Peter Nolasco  
1533: Caupolicán, leader of the Mapuche, executed by Spanish conquistadors.  
1810: The Bishop of Michoacán excommunicates Miguel Hidalgo, pastor of Dolores, for calling for Independence.  
1976: Marlene Kegler, student, martyr of faith and service among university students of La Plata, Argentina.  
1976: Independence of Trinidad y Tobago.

Spring equinox in the South,  
Fall equinox in the North, at 03:09

# 25

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Ezek 18,25-28 / Ps 24  
Phil 2,1-11 / Mt 21-28-32

Cleofás  
*Sergio de Radonezh*  
1513: Vasco Núñez de Balboa crosses the Isthmus of Panama and reaches the Pacific Ocean.  
1849: Lucas da Feira, fugitive slave and chief of the resisting Sertanejos of Brazil, is hanged.  
1963: Pro-USA military coup in the Dominican Republic. Bosh, an admirer of the Cuban revolution, is deposed.

# BUT, IS THERE OR ISN'T THERE ANOTHER WORLD UP THERE?

ONE WAY OF THINKING... THAT HAS TO BE RETHOUGHT!

JOSÉ MARÍA VIGIL

## To SEE: We see a world divided in two floors

For thousands of years humans have thought of and imagined the world to be divided into two parts: This world, which we see, and the other, the divine, heaven, the world of above, where God is, the mysterious spirits...

On the street, in science, in economy...we ignore that "other world": only count the real world. But, at the personal life, when confronted by the great mysteries of life, above all in the religious realm, we look up there.

As children, most of us were educated, in the idea of the existence of those two worlds; our mothers, the religious stories we were told, perhaps the Catechism classes, the cultural environment taught us that and we accepted it as a given truth.

Then we have become adults, we have studied, we have to functioned in this real world... and we ask ourselves, Does the above world exist or not? Is that "of faith"? Or is "of science" that does not exist?

## What is the world above?

Up to the sixteen century, practically in the cultures of all former peoples, was the idea that this world depends entirely on the superior world, invisible, unreachable, where all the celestial forces are living, such as God, or the goddesses, the spirits, supernatural forces that have dominion over and threaten this world.

In the Christian vision it is translated into the idea that God lives in heaven, Celestial Lord, seated on God's throne from where the universe is governed. God is accompanied by the angels and saints, in a celestial cortege in the style of the ancient monarchs. The above world is superior in everything: in strengths, in life, in knowledge, in happiness. Once in a while, that world sends some communication, some "revelation" so we can know something about God's world, especially about what we should do in order to please God (God's law).

We earn heaven with our prayers and sacrifices, which can save us from danger and suffering that otherwise, would be inevitable. The above world, God's world, rather the future world, the definitive world is where we all go after death.

It seems like in human nature there is something that postulates the existence of the second level, because otherwise, the force of that belief cannot be explained, the constant presence during the millenniums

in almost every culture and religion (it is not a Christian theme, but from the Neolithic religions in general). What does that mean?

## To JUDGE

First: From where does this way of seeing come?

The belief in two different worlds cannot come from religion, because today we know that religion does not teach physics, nor cosmology, nor astrophysics...Religion cannot provide us with a "map" of reality, with one or two floors... Science in its part, since it began to develop in the XVI century, has been insisting on the contrary: There are not two worlds. Then, who said so? From where does this come?

The major part of the common cosmivision of the people of the occident comes from the Greek philosophers (centuries before Christianity). Plato is the most influential one, in his Timeo, that establishes the division between the visible and the invisible, between body and soul. The soul has its world in the stars, and from there they have fallen into the body, which belongs to earth and is contaminated with evil deeds and mortality. If in this life the soul controls the body, it will return to the above world. Christianity has amalgamated the Hebrew, Greek and Babylonian ideas in a debate that has lasted for centuries and has given us a finished picture of the cosmivision that we have inherited.

## What is this?

At the beginning it has to do with "myths". All cultures have ancient forms of modern myths. A myth does not mean that something is false, or simple folk tales. Those were useful instruments to imagine or interpret reality for the lack of science and other means of knowledge that could have not been perceived in another way. All humans ask themselves, where am I? What is this world about? Where did it come from? Every culture has felt obliged to respond to their people that this world came from nothing, or that it germinated from the earth, or that it was created by a god, who organized it this way or another. The answers to these fundamental questions, could have only been answered through this genius narrations (the myths), that provide a common cosmivision to cultures, to many countries and peoples.

That genus idea that there is a world above that we depend on, is coherent with many cultures and religions that assume that description of the cosmos.

But, what does it mean to describe the global reality of a world structured in two floors (or levels) with the same concrete relations of dominium/dependency between them?

**It is an "axiom"**

In physics and in other sciences, an "axiom" is a certain basic affirmation that cannot be demonstrated (it is out of reach for us), but they appear plausible to us and we cannot proceed without them. For example, Euclides' Axiom: through an exterior point to a straight line, passes one and only one parallel. It does not matter to me if two or 25 lines pass through it, but if we do not establish that only one goes through it, we would not be able to construct "Euclidian" geometry, the normal. Lobatchevsky proved that he could pass two parallels through a point, and the geometry that he built, not Euclidian, is totally distinct than the normal one (and it is also useful).

Human beings learn soon that this world is not only for the eyes that can see and the hands that can touch, what can be weighed, be measured or can be eaten, if not that there are many spiritual forces that seem to control it. Our ancestors tried to understand it. What are those realities that seem to control us? Where are they? How do they act? Myths drew a "map" that placed them in the world above.

Myths accomplished a very significant role (science was not able to give a hand yet). Myths planted the foundation of the culture of every nation; the archetypes were installed in the collective subconscious, the fundamental axioms...everything that would allow each country and people to be able to live in the same imaginary collective world.

Can we belief today in two worlds?

We are witnesses to the breaking of a millenary tradition. The actual rupture indicates that it is not possible to continue with some axioms. Science has exposed their lies: there is not another world above, or outside of our world. The new generations cannot even imagine that. In the real world we all have forgotten that already. But in religious life many people keep a dualistic vision: they continue to think that there is another world above that intervenes in our world and which we can count on...

Whoever wants to continue to believe in the world of above will not feel lonely: Al traditions of cultures and religions, and of the Christianity in concrete, have been built over the Platonic Axiom, and it is still expressed in a dualistic language. On the contrary, who would like

to unify at the personal level, what they know about science and religion , and live conscious that it is "in a unique world", not in two, would need to make a great effort, because we are a generation of cultural change. The old is dying, and the new have not been born yet.

**To ACT: Can we stop believing in the above world?**

The conservative vision thinks that to believe in the world above is an essential part of faith, sine qua non. But there are many believers who are modern and open who are experimenting with the possibility that we can be religious and Christian people without believing in two worlds, feeling themselves in only one world, this one!

We know that Jesus seemed to speak about two worlds, as when he affirmed that the sun turns around the earth or that the grain of wheat "dies" in order to give life (in a beautiful metaphor but a biological fallacy). Jesus did not meet Galileo, but he received the ideas of Plato. But we do not doubt that today Jesus would have left Plato for Galileo, and he would have challenged us for not living in a more unifying world that the new cosmology and quantum physics have discovered for us.

We can be Christian or any other religion and not believe in two worlds. This does not imply that only "inert matter" exists"... if not the transcendental dimension (that what the primitive people identified as second floor), it is not disregarded, outside, but rather it is present in the same reality. It is like their hearts. What they called God is the soul of the world, the same divine world, not a "lord" sitting above in his throne...

Rethink the theme of the two worlds, and make your decision, because if not, there is somebody that already thought it out for you (Plato in this case, not Jesus) and his thinking has been given to us as unquestionable. There is no reason why we need to live alienated by a foreign way of thinking. It has to be possible to be Christian and to be adult, and to live and think in terms of the real world. At least those who are willing to do it can do so!

Obviously, this is very complex, and we are only suggesting (not demonstrating) that there is a new way of becoming a person that is emerging, without an squizophrenic mind between reality and the religious cosmovision. This new vision demands the reinterpretation of many classical religious affirmations. Our Agenda seeks to help whoever wants to explore it (cfr. P.234). We recommend: Radford Ruther, Rosemary, Gaia and God, Demac, Mexico 1993.

# 2011

September

M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	26	27	28	29	30		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18							

Monday Lunes	Tuesday Martes	Wednesday Miercoles	Thursday Jueves
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>31</b>			



# 26 Monday

Zech 8,1-8 / Ps 101

Cosmos and Damian

Lk 9,46-50

1944: Brazilian troops wrest control from the Nazis of the Serchio valley on the central front of the Gothic Line in Italy after 10 days of fighting.

1974: Lázario Condo and Cristóbal Pajuña, Christian leaders of their communities fight for agrarian reform, are assassinated in Riobamba, Ecuador.

**Bible Day, in various countries of America**

# 27 Tuesday

Zech 8,20-23 / Ps 86

Vincent de Paul

Day of Enriquillo, Quisqueyano Indigenous, who resisted the Spanish conquest in the Dominican Republic.

1979: Guido León dos Santos, a hero of the working class, is a victim of political repression in Minas Gerais, Brazil.

1990: Sister Agustina Rivas, Good Shepherd Religious, martyr in La Florida, Peru.

2002: Mexican military court charges three army officers with the killings of 143 people during the "dirty war" of the 1970's.

New Moon: 11h08m in Libra



# 28 Wednesday

Neh 2,1-8 / Ps 136

Wenceslaus and Lawrence Ruiz

Lk 9,57-62

551 B.C.E.: Birth of Confucius in China.

1569: Casiodoro de Reina delivers his translation of the Bible to the printer.

1868: Attempt by ex-slaves to defend a white supporter results in a massacre of up to 300 blacks at Opelousas, Louisiana.

1871: Brazilian law of the "Free Belly" separates Black infants from their slave parents: the first "abandoned minors."

1885: Brazilian law of the "Sixty year-old," throws Blacks over 60 into the street.

1990: Pedro Martinez and Jorge Euceda, activist journalists, are martyred for the truth in El Salvador.





# 3

## Monday

Jon 1,1-2,1-11 / Int. Jon 2,3-8

Francis Borgia

Lk 10,25-37 Francis of Assisi

1838: Black Hawk, leader and warrior of the Sauk tribe dies after a life of resistance to encroachment of the United States on Indigenous lands.

*Theodore Fliedner*  
1226: Death of Francis of Assisi, patron saint of Catholic Action and the environment.

1980: Maria Magdalena Enriquez, Baptist and press secretary of the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, is martyred for her defense of the poor.

1555: The provincial council of Mexico forbids priesthood to Indigenous people.

1990: Reunification of Germany.

1976: Omar Venturelli is martyred for his work among the poor in Temuco, Chile.

2007: The widow and five sons of Pinochet go to prison for appropriation of public funds.

**World Amnesty Day**

**World Habitat Day** (first Monday of October)

First quarter: 03h15m in Capricorn



# 4

## Tuesday

Jon 3,1-10 / Ps 129

Lk 10,38-42

# 5

## Wednesday

Jon 4,1-11 / Ps 85

Lk 11,1-4

Plácido y Mauro

1984: Illegal U.S. aid to Nicaraguan Contras confirmed when Nicaraguan government shoots down a cargo plane and captures a survivor.

1995: The Guatemalan army massacres 11 peasants from the "Aurora 8th of October" community to discourage the return of refugees who had fled to Mexico.





# 10 Monday

Rom 1,1-7 / Ps 97  
Lk 11,29-32

Tomás de Villanueva  
1868: The Grito de Yara proclaims Cuba's independence at Carlos Céspedes plantation at La Demajagua.  
1987: First Encounter of Blacks of South and Southeast Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro.  
1970: Pierre Laporte, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Labor of Quebec is kidnapped by the FLQ.  
2007: Life imprisonment for Christian Von Wernich, chaplain to torturers Argentina.

# 11 Tuesday

Rom 1,16-25 / Ps 18  
Lk 11,37-41

Soledad Torres Acosta  
1531: Ulrich Zwingli dies in Switzerland.  
1629: Luis de Bolaños, Franciscan, precursor of the reductions, apostle to the Guarani.  
1810: Francisco Javier Lizana, Archbishop of Mexico, confirms the excommunication against Hidalgo and his followers for calling for the independence of Mexico.  
1976: Marta Gonzalez de Baronetto and companions are martyred for their service to the people of Córdoba, Argentina.  
1983: Benito Hernández and indigenous companions are martyred in the struggle for land, in Hidalgo, Mexico.

# 12 Wednesday

Rom 2,1-11 / Sl 61  
Lk 11,42-46

Pilar, Serafín  
Cry of the excluded in various countries of L.A.  
1492: At 2AM, Columbus sees the Guanahani Island, which he will call San Salvador (today, Watling).  
1909: The pedagogue, Francesco Ferrer I Guardia faces a firing squad in Barcelona.  
1925: 600 US Marines land in Panama.  
1958: First contact with the Ayoreos Indigenous people, Paraguay.  
1976: Juan Bosco Penido Burnier, a Jesuit missionary, is martyred for his charity in Ribeirão Bonito, Brazil.  
1983: Marco Antonio Orozco, an Evangelical pastor, is martyred in the cause of the poor in Guatemala.  
Full Moon: 02h06m in Aries



Horizontal lines for writing notes.

October







# 20 Thursday

Rom 6,19-23 / Ps 1  
Lk 12,49-53

Laura

1548: Founding of the city of La Paz.

1883: End of the border war between Chile and Peru.

1944: Ubico, dictator, is thrown out in Guatemala by a popular insurrection.

1975: Raymond Hermann, an American priest serving the Quechua of Bolivia, is martyred.

1978: Oliverio Castañeda de Leon, student leader and symbol of the struggle for liberty in Guatemala, is killed.

### United Nations Disarmament Week

Last quarter: 03h30m in Cancer



# 21 Friday

Rom 7,18-25a / Ps 118  
Lk 12,54-59

Ursula, Celina, Viator

1971: Chilean Pablo Neruda is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

1973: Gerardo Poblete, Salesian priest and a martyr for peace and justice in Chile, is tortured, then murdered.

# 22 Saturday

Rom 8,1-11 / Ps 23  
Lk 13,1-9

María Salomé

1976: Ernesto Lahourcade, Argentine trade unionist, is martyred for justice.

1981: Eduardo Capiáu, Belgian Religious, martyr to solidarity in Guatemala.

1987: Nevardo Fernández is martyred in the struggle for indigenous rights in Colombia.

2009: Víctor Gálvez, catechist, human rights promoter, is assassinated for his resistance to transnational mining and electrical companies. Malacatán, San Marcos, Guatemala.

# 23

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ex 22,20-26 / Ps 17

1Thess 1,5c-10 / Mt 22,34-40

Juan Capistrano

Santiago de Jerusalén

1956: Hungarian uprising against Soviet rule begins with peaceful demonstrations.

1986: Vilmar José de Castro, pastoral worker and land rights activist is assassinated in Caçú, Goiás, Brazil, by the UDR of the landowners.

1987: Joao "Ventinha", a peasant farmer, is killed by three gunmen at Jacundá, Brazil.

# 24 Monday

Rom 8,12-17 / Ps 67  
Lk 13,10-17

Anthony Mary Claret

1945: The United Nations is founded.

1977: Juan Caballero, Puerto Rican union leader, is assassinated by a death squad.

2005: Rosa Parks "Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement" dies in Detroit, Michigan.

**World Development Information Day**

**United Nations Day**

Anniversary of the Signing of the U.N. Charter, 1945.

# 25 Tuesday

Rom,18-25 / Ps 125  
Lk 13,18-21

Crisanto, Gaudencio

1887: A sector of the Brazilian Army, in solidarity with the people, refuses to destroy the Black stockades.

1974: Antonio Llidó, Spanish priest, disappeared, Chile.

1975: Vladimir Herzog, journalist, assassinated by the military dictatorship in São Paulo.

1983: The US invades Granada.

1987: Carlos Pérez y Salvador Ninco, Indigenous; Luz Estela and Nevardo Fernandez, workers, Colombia.

1988: Alejandro Rey and Jacinto Quiroga, pastoral workers, martyrs to the faith, Colombia.

1989: Jorge Párraga, evangelical pastor, and his companions are martyred for the cause of the poor of Peru.

2002: Death of Richard Shaull, Presbyterian liberation theologian and missionary in Brazil and Colombia.

# 26 Wednesday

Rom 8,26-30 / Ps 12  
Lk 13,22-30

Felicísimo, Evaristo

*Felipe Nicolai, Johann Heemann, Paul Gerhard*

1981: Ramón Valladares, Salvadoran human rights activist, is assassinated.

1987: Hubert Luis Guillard, a Belgian priest is assassinated by an army patrol in Cali, Colombia.

1987: Herbert Anaya, Sawyer, martyr to Human Rights, El Salvador.

New Moon: 19h56m in Scorpio





# RELIGIONS AND REVOLUTION

FÉLIX SAUTIÉ MEDEROS

*La Habana, Cuba*

Translated by Néstor Medina

I will never be able to forget what a Latin American church official expressed during his visit to a youth group from Nicaragua who, at the end of the 1970s, studied in the Island of Youth, Cuba. Despite the time that has passed since, I remember the phrase in its basic elements: “one can be like the rivers that destroy everything in their path when their banks flood over, or gentle as the lakes. Revolutions are like the rivers and I wish you were like the lakes.”

His phrase was the continuation of a previous analysis with participation from other Cuban clerics which was done before taking us to the school where the Nicaraguan youth awaited for us together with their professors and chaperones. It was like a passionate encounter between church people and revolution people. What is interesting was we both had the same Christian origin, but from the social standpoint we took different directions: rivers and lakes. About 20 years had passed since the triumph of the revolution, and as the rivers, many things from the class system before 1959 had been swept away.

To understand the lessons this half a century of religion and revolution offers, it is necessary to review the concrete facts. In the first place, I cannot forget when, in January of 1959, the bearded rebels came down from the mountains with amulets, crucifixes, and other religious symbols of the Christian faith, many of which are found at the National Sanctuary of Our Lady of Caridad del Cobre.

One initial lesson is that Christianity and revolution can converge fully when we put the option for the poor at the center, and the Gospel is placed over institutional interests. Incompatibilities emerge because of class reasons, interests, and excesses that have nothing to do with spirituality, because distributive equity and social justice are diaphanously proclaimed in the Gospel. “To betray the poor is to betray Christ,” was the first slogan used by Christian revolutionaries. But then there was a reaction against

the Law of Agrarian Reform of May 18, 1959, which was the first measure in favor of the dispossessed, and which Cuban bishops welcomed in a letter sent to Fidel on August 1959. But the interests of the wealthy were threatened by this law, and even more by the urban reform of October 14, 1960, which proposed that the people inhabiting the land could become its owners. Since then, the problems started. The Second Vatican Council had not yet been celebrated (1962-1964), and its renovating spirit did not blow in Cuba. The result provoked division between the believers, in favor and against the Revolution.

At the same time, also in 1959, the National Catholic Congress was celebrated, which came to a close at Revolution Square, in a massive ceremony in which Cuban bishops found themselves at the presidential building with the leaders of the Revolution. Since then, there was a long period in which the rivers acted with their positive things and some side effects not so positive. Years later, this encounter happened again, on January 1998, when Pope John Paul II made his historic visit to Cuba.

Already in 1959, it was necessary to either side with the revolution or with the counterrevolution of the affected classes, or to abstain from participating. A string of confrontations and encounters began to develop and culminated in the policy of scientific atheism, which was the cause of many excesses, and which culminated with the Constitution of 1976 in which Cuba was declared an atheist State. There were confrontations: the nationalization of Catholic and religious colleges in general (May of 1961); the expulsion of priests out of Cuba (September 1961); the emigration of many Protestant pastors; the procession of the Virgen de la Caridad in La Habana, when many disturbances took place, and which motivated the prohibition of processions in the entire country; the first pastoral letters from the Catholic bishops of Cuba that expressed their criticism of the government’s

existing policies; discrimination against believers in occupying certain trusted positions and studying specific careers in university. Even the religions of African origin had to seek refuge into the anonymity of homes. Catholic and Protestant temples began to empty. In 1993, Cuban Catholic bishops published the pastoral letter titled "Love Hopes All Things," where they favored a deep dialogue because of the economic, political, and social deterioration. The letter was not received well by the authorities.

In the midst of these adversities some things began to get better with the arrival to Cuba of Monseñor César Zacchi as representative from the Vatican (1962-1974). He was introduced in a very positive way into Cuban society, and accomplished the first easing of relations between the Church and the State. The theology of liberation from Latin America and specific theologians like Don Pedro Casaldàliga also began to have influence around 1985; the publication of the book by Frei Betto with the title *Fidel and Religion* (1985) resonated the world over; the celebration of the Cuban National Ecclesial Encounter (CNEE) of the Catholic Church in 1986 took people out from the inside of temples, and little by little oriented itself toward the outside through house missions, prayer homes, and other initiatives; Fidel's visit to Brazil in March 1990, and his meeting with the base Christian communities, a similar visit of Fidel to the Caribbean, and his subsequent meeting with Protestant religious leaders (April 2, 1990), and separately, sometime later, with the Catholic bishops were important events for the normalization between the Church and the State. Years later, during the Fourth Congress of Cuba's Communist Party (October 1991), the proposal of reforming the Constitution to establish Cuba as a non-confessional lay State was taken up and subsequently approved in a referendum in 1992. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Socialist bloc and the Soviet Union caused an economic melt-down in Cuba—which has been called the "Special Period"—in which religious beliefs and faith, contained within people, began to be exteriorized and temples began to fill little by little. The State became more flexible concerning these matters.

This process of rapprochement, with its highs and lows, had important moments with the visit of Fidel to the Vatican on November 19, 1996, when issues

concerning the normalization of relations were examined, and the already mentioned visit to Cuba by John Paul II (January 1998) that was organized in coordination between the Church and the State. The Pope's presence created a delineation (before and after the Pope's visit), leaving us a legacy that for a long time will be acting positively in the process of normalization of the relations between the State and the Catholic Church, including the other religions. As a result of this event, the Protestant churches gained the courage to organize a number of local celebrations (May 1999). Religions and Revolution took a positive direction of reencounter; the basic concepts of the theology of liberation have been and are essential in this new convergence.

Cuba was dreamed in the heart of the San Carlos Seminary by priests like José Agustín Caballero and Félix Varela, who forged a number of disciples who took on the task of turning it into a reality by the end of the 19th century, in the joint struggle with enslaved African blacks. The *Virgen de la Caridad*, who appeared in the waters of Bahía de Nipe in 1612, was the first Cuban symbol, even before we had the conscience of our own identity, insignia, and flag. There is no Cuban believer or non-believer who does not respect the *Virgen de la Caridad*, Ochum for the Pantheon of the African religions.

To conclude, I can say that, in my view, where there should have a succession of uninterrupted encounters by way of adopting the preferential option for the poor, the interests of class and dogmatism interfered. On the other hand, as a response to the alienation and the aggression to which it was exposed from its first moments, the Cuban revolutionary process produced a radicalization expressed in the form of Sovietization, with all that is positive that was achieved in the material sphere and in political survival. But in its consequences of extreme atheism, a gap was created between revolution and religion, with concomitant mistrust and confrontations that time alone and the coming of historical events have been able to overcome little by little, although many problems remain. Rivers and lakes will converge if they manage to maintain an evangelical and revolutionary alliance for the future of peace, social justice, distributive equity, and the conservation of the planet.

# 2011

October

M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	31						

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday	
Lunes		Martes		Miercoles		Jueves	
	1		2		3		
7	8	9	10				
14	15	16	17				
21	22	23	24				
28	29	30					



# 31 Monday

Rom 11,29-36 / Ps 68

Reformation Day

Lk 14,12-14

All Saints

1553: Alonso Illescas founds the first Latin American black community not to have experienced slavery at Esmeraldas, Ecuador.

1973: José Matías Nanco, Evangelical pastor and his companions, martyrs to solidarity, Chile.

1989: Members of the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers Unions (FENASTRAS) are martyred in San Salvador, El Salvador.

# 1 Tuesday

Rev 7,2-4,9-14 / Ps 23

1Jn 3,1-3 / Mt 5,1-12a

1974: Florinda Soriano, "Doña Tingó", leader of the Federation of Christian Agrarian Leagues, martyred for the people of the Dominican Republic.

1979: All Saints Massacre at La Paz, Bolivia.

1981: Independence of Antigua and Barbados.

2004: The Chilean Army accepts responsibility for crimes during the dictatorship of Pinochet.

# 2 Wednesday

Job 19,1,23-27a / Ps 24

Phil 3,20-21 / Mk 15,33-39;16,1-6

All Souls

1965: Norman Morrison, a Quaker, self-immolated in front of the Pentagon to protest United States involvement in Vietnam.

1989: Rape and torture of Sister Diana Ortiz provokes allegations of U.S. complicity in the Guatemalan civil war.

First quarter: 16h38m in Aquarius



World Savings Day

Lined writing area for notes or reflections.









# 14 Monday

1Macc 1,10-15.41-43.54-57.62-64 / Ps 118

Diego de Alcalá Lk 18,35-43  
1817: Policarpa 'La Pola' Salavarieta, heroine of Colombian independence, is executed by the Spanish.  
1960: National strike of 400,000 railroad, port and ship workers, Brazil.  
1984: Cesar C. Climaco, a Philippine politician and prominent critic of the Marcos dictatorship, is assassinated in Zamboanga City, Philippines.

# 15 Tuesday

2Macc 6,18-31 / Ps 3

Albert the Great Lk 19,1-10  
1562: Juan del Valle, Bishop of Popayán, Colombia, pilgrim in the Indigenous cause.  
1781: Julián 'Tupac Katari' Apasa, leader of indigenous uprising in Bolivia, is executed by the colonial army.  
1889: Brazil is declared a Republic.  
1904: US Marines land in Ancón, Panama.  
1987: Fernando Vélez, lawyer and human rights activist, is martyred in Colombia.

# 16 Wednesday

2Macc 7,1.20-31 / Ps 16

Margaret, Gertrude Lk 19,11-28  
Day of Sacrifice in Islam.  
1982: Founding of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI).  
1885: Louis Riel, Canadian Métis leader, is executed after a failed rebellion.  
1989: Ignacio Ellacuría, his Jesuit companions and two female domestic employees of the University of Central America in El Salvador are massacred by the military.

International Day for Tolerance (UN)

Blank lined writing area for notes.



# 17 Thursday

1Macc 2,15-29 / Ps 49

Elizabeth of Hungary

Lk 19,41-44

1858: Death of Robert Owen, social reformer considered father of the cooperative movement.

1985: Luis Che, Celebrant of the Word, martyred for his faith, in Guatemala.v

# 18 Friday

1Macc 4,36-37.53-59 / Int. 1Chr 29

Elsa

Lk 19,45-48

1970: Gil Tablada is assassinated for his opposition to land grabs in La Cruz, Costa Rica.

1999: Iñigo Eguiluz Telleriá, a Basque volunteer, and José Luis Maso, a priest, are assassinated by paramilitaries at Quibdó, Colombia.

2000: Alcira Del Carmen Herrera Pérez, wife of a labor leader killed in 1996, is taken from her home in Uraba Antioqueño, Colombia and shot.

Last quarter: 15h09m in Leo



# 19 Saturday

1Macc 6,1-13 / Ps 9

Lk 20,27-40

Abdias, Crispín

1681: Roque González, witness to the faith in the Paraguayan Church, and his companion Jesuits Juan and Alfonso, martyrs.

1915: Joe Hill, American labor activist, executed after a controversial trial.

1980: Santos Jiménez Martínez and Jerónimo 'Don Chomo', Protestant pastors, are martyred in Guatemala.

2000: Fujimori, while in Japan, presents his demission as president of Peru by fax.

Multiple horizontal lines for writing or reflection.

# 20

Christ the King

Ezek 34,11-12.15-17 / Ps 22  
1Cor 15,20-26.28 / Mt 25,31-46

Felix of Valois, Octavio

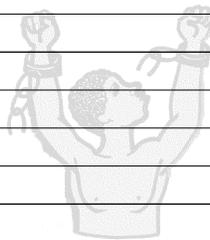
1542: The New Laws regularize the encomiendas in the New Indies.

1695: Zumbi de los Palmares, leader of slave resistance in Brazil, is martyred, National Day for Black Consciousness in Brazil.

1976: Guillermo Woods, missionary priest, former US combatant in Vietnam, martyr, Guatemala.

1978: Ricardo Talavera is assassinated in Managua, Nicaragua by the National Guard.

2000: Enrique Arancibia, former agent of the Chilean DINA, is condemned for the attempts on the life of General Pratts in Buenos Aires on Sept. 30, 1984.



Universal Children's Day



# 24 Thursday

Dan 6,2-28 / Int. Dan 3

Andrew Dung-Lac

Lk 21,20-28

1590: Agustín de La Coruña, Bishop of Popayán, exiled and imprisoned for defending Indigenous people.

1807: Joseph 'Thayendanegea' Brant, Mohawk war chief and tireless negotiator for the Six Nations, dies in Ontario.

1957: Diego Rivera, Mexican muralist and husband of Frida Kahlo, dies in Mexico.

1980: The Russell Tribunal studies 14 cases of violation of human Rights against Indigenous peoples.

# 25 Friday

Dan 7,2-14 / Int Dan 3

Catherine of Alexandria

Lk 21,29-33

*Isaac Watts*

1808: A law is signed that concedes land to non-Black foreigners who come to Brazil.

1960: Maria Teresa, Minerva and Patria Mirabal, social justice activists and opponents of the Trujillo dictatorship are assassinated along with Rufino de la Cruz.

1975: Independence of Surinam, National Holiday.

1983: Marçal da Sousa, a Tupá'i leader, martyred in the struggle for Indigenous land rights in Brazil.

# 26 Saturday

Dan 7,15-27 / Int. Dan 3

John Berchmans

Lk 21,34-36

1883: Sojourner Truth, escaped slave, abolitionist and women's rights advocate, dies.

1984: Campesinos of Chapi and Lucmahuayco, Peru are martyred.

**International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**

New Moon: 06h09m in Sagittarius



# 27

First Sunday of Advent / Cycle B

Is 63,16b-17.19b;64,2b-7 / Sl 79

1Cor 1,3-9 / Mc 1,33-37

Virgil

1977: Fernando Lozano Menéndez, Peruvian university student, dies while being interrogated by the military.

1978: George Moscone, Mayor of San Francisco and Harvey Milk, a gay rights advocate and politician, are assassinated.

1980: Juan Chacón and companions, leaders of the FDR, martyrs in El Salvador.

1992: Attempted State coup in Venezuela.

# THE REINVENTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

## AN INDISPENSABLE ORGANIZATION

**MIGUEL D'ESCOTO**, *President of the UN General Assembly 2008-2009*

**LEONARDO BOFF**, *former Ethics professor at Rio de Janeiro University*

We declare that the United Nations is an indispensable organization for the salvation of the world, although we are fully aware of the very limited success it has had during all of its existence. Notwithstanding this, institutions should not be evaluated on the basis of “good” things that they may have done. All institutions should be evaluated based on how well they have lived up to their reason for existing in the first place. In reality, some objectively good things may, from an institutional perspective, be failures, and they can give us the deceptive illusion that all is going well.

The United Nations was created with just one purpose: stop what was feared to be an irreversible cycle of violent conflicts like the first two World Wars in the first half of the 20th Century. It was thought that it was necessary to agree to a code of civilized conduct between nations and to create a judicial organism to resolve controversies without having to resort to war.

It was also thought that, in addition to respecting the rule of law in international relations, it was essential to deactivate a time bomb that—sooner rather than later—could explode into another World War even bloodier than the two previous wars: the hunger and poverty that already existed 64 years ago. These were the reasons that brought about the adoption of the UN Charter of San Francisco and the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions—the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank—which, in truth, instead of helping to overcome poverty in the world, have helped to entrench it even more.

It is important to note that, at the time of its creation, the United Nations was not aware of the environmental question and the grave threats that would challenge all peoples in the future. With reason, it sought the Common Good of all societies. Today, with the awareness we now have, it should be enriched with the Common Good of the Earth and Humanity.

Analyzing the United Nations from these two essential objectives, we can only answer that, lamentably, it has not achieved its purposes. This is evident by the sad fact that an obligation as important as the declaration of the State of Palestine continues unfulfilled and aggressions, genocides, and invasions—like the current

ones against Iraq and Afghanistan—continue killing hundreds of thousands of people, generally innocent, with total and absolute impunity.

The immense majority of the inhabitants of the Earth consider the United Nations to be a debilitated institution, ineffective and even unnecessary. The most powerful country of the Earth, scarcely interested in the ecological future of Mother Earth, has helped to demoralize the Organization by not respecting its decisions and by acting like its owner and manipulating the Security Council to its liking.

Nevertheless, although we recognize all these criticisms are valid, we do not hesitate to declare that the solution does not lie in abandoning the United Nations. It is our Organization. It was created in the name of “we the peoples,” and these peoples consider the privilege that a few powerful countries wield in using their veto power abusive and antidemocratic, as they, in this way, block consideration of fundamental questions for the world.

We can and should change all of this if we want the United Nations to be at the service of Peace and Life and the principle of equal sovereignty of all Member States to be respected within it; without privileges of any type for anyone; where decisions that affect all are taken by all and not only by a small group that uses the unjust privilege of the veto; an organization in which all are equally obligated to refrain from committing crimes against the dignity of Mother Earth and Humanity and to attend to the consequences of violations, independently of whether or not they are part of the pertinent treaties or protocols. Not being part of a treaty is not equivalent to having license to commit the type of crimes that the treaty seeks to avoid.

To save the United Nations, it is necessary to reflect a bit on how a deviation so dramatic in the foundational purposes could have occurred. It is impossible to deny that the powerful countries are reluctant to submit to a higher authority. Because of this, they do not believe in the rule of law in international relations. Unfortunately, the law of the jungle, that is to say, of the strongest—continues to dominate. We refuse to accept any country's claims to exceptionalism. Mother Earth

does not recognize any “Manifest Destiny,” because all of the peoples are her beloved sons and daughters and all—with equal dignity and rights—inhabit the same Common Home.

Throughout the years, procedural norms have been introduced in the UN with the sole objective of limiting the power of the General Assembly, the neurological center of the entire system of the United Nations, and reducing the President of the General Assembly to a merely ceremonial figure, despite the fact that, according to the Charter, the President is the highest official of the Organization as Head of State, and the Secretary General is only the head of the immense bureaucracy, often subjected to insupportable pressures by the wealthy countries.

But all of this can change. The power of the General Assembly, the Group of 192, can be rescued and, in great part, it was rescued during the 63rd Session. This rescue of the power of the General Assembly, that is to say, the democratization of the UN, is possible and should continue

To contribute to this rescue of the power of “we the peoples” within the United Nations, we have proposed to work on the following:

I. A Universal Declaration on the Common Good of the Earth and Humanity as an essential document for the reinvention of the UN and a complement to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are aware of the excessive anthropocentrism, greed, and egoism of the dominant culture which will make the adoption of the said Declaration difficult, but we will achieve it.

II. A Charter of the Organization responding to the exigencies of the 21st Century, which can guarantee our survival by promoting the Common Good of the Earth and Humanity.

III. The creation of a Tribunal of Notables coming from the five regions that make up the United Nations, in order to hear accusations of crimes against the Common Good of the Earth and Humanity, submitted by members of the Organization. Its function will be similar to the actual International Court of Justice with the difference being that the verdicts cannot be ignored, like the United States ignored the case won by Nicaragua against it at The Hague.

We take this opportunity to present our proposal for the Universal Declaration. Later, we will present the other two. 

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# 2011

November

M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20							

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Lunes	Martes	Miercoles	Jueves
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19	20	21	22
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# 1 Thursday

Isa 26,1-6 / Ps 117  
Mt 7,21.24-27

Eloy

1981: Diego Uribe, a Colombian priest, is martyred in the struggle for the liberation of his people.  
2000: Vicente Fox is sworn in as Mexico's President ending 71 years of one party, PRI, domination.  
2000: Chilean Judge Guzmán orders house imprisonment and a trial for Pinochet.

# 2 Friday

Isa 29,17-24 / Ps 26  
Mt 9,27-31

Viviana

1823: Declaration of the Munroe Doctrine: "America for the Americans."  
1956: The Granma lands in Cuba.  
1980: Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Maryknoll Sisters, Dorothy Kazel, Ursuline, and Jean Donovan, a lay person are raped and murdered by the Salvadoran military death squad.  
1990: Peasants of Atitlán, Guatemala, are martyred.

**Intenational Anti-Slavery Day (U.N.)**

Full Moon: 09h52m in Pisces

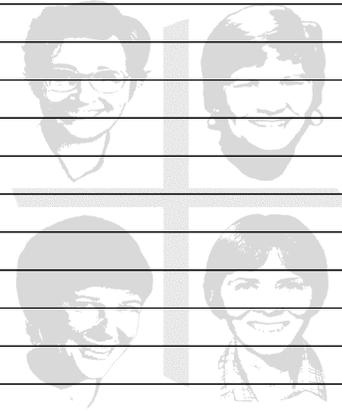


# 3 Saturday

Isa 30,19-21.23-26 / Ps 146  
Mt 9,35-10,1.6-8

Francis Xavier

1502: Moctezuma is enthroned as Lord of Tenochtitlán.  
1987: Victor Raúl Acuña, priest, dies in Peru.  
2002: Ivan Illich, priest, philosopher and sociologist of liberation, dies.



# 4

Second Sunday of Advent  
Isa 40,1-5.9-11 / Ps 84  
2Pet 3,8-14 / Mk 1,1-8

John Damascene, Bárbara

1677: Portuguese forces under Fernán Carrillo attack the slave resistance settlement of Quilombo de Palmares, Brazil.

1969: Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, Black Panther leaders, are shot to death in their sleep by 14 Chicago police officers.

# 5

## Monday

Isa 35,1-10 / Ps 84

Sabas

Lk 5,17-26

1492: Columbus arrives in Hispaniola on his voyage to the Americas.

1810: Miguel Hidalgo makes public the Proclamation of Restitution of Indigenous lands to Indigenous peoples, thus ending the system of encomiendas, arrenamientos and haciendas in Mexico.

1824: The Brazilian Constitution, through a complementary law, forbids schooling for lepers and Blacks.

1893: Farabundo Martí, Salvadoran revolutionary, is born.

2000: Two former Argentinean generals during the dictatorship, Suárez Masón and Santiago Riveros, are condemned to life imprisonment by an Italian court.

**International Volunteer Day**

# 6

## Tuesday

Isa 40,1-11 / Ps 95

Mt 18,12-14

Nicholas of Bari

*Nicholas of Mira*

1534: Founding of Quito.

1928: Over a thousand striking United Fruit Company banana workers are killed in Colombian military crack down.

1969: Death of João Cândido, the «Black Admiral», hero of the Revolt of Chibata in 1910.

1982: Guatemalan government forces wipe out the village of Dos Erres. Over 300 die.

# 7

## Wednesday

Isa 40,25-31 / Ps 102

Mt 11,28-30

Ambrose

1975: The military government of Indonesia invades East Timor, killing 60,000 people in two months.

1981: Lucio Aguirre and Elpidio Cruz, Honduran Ministers of the Word, are martyred because of their solidarity with Salvadoran refugees.





# Thursday

Gen 3,9-15.20 / Ps 97

Immaculate Conception Eph 1,3-6,11-12 / Lk 1,26-38  
 1542: Las Casas finishes his "Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies."  
 1965: The Second Vatican Council ends.  
 1976: Ana Garófalo, Methodist, martyr to the cause of the poor, Buenos Aires, Argentina.  
 1977: Alicia Domont and Leonie Duquet, Religious, are martyred for their solidarity with the disappeared in Argentina.  
 1997: Samuel Hermán Calderón, a priest who worked with campesinos in Oriente, Colombia, is assassinated by paramilitaries.  
 2004: 12 countries establish the South American Community of Nations: 361 million inhabitants.



# Friday

Isa 48,17-19 / Ps 1

Leocadia, Valerio Mt 11,16-19  
 1569: Birth of Martin de Porres, patron saint of social justice, in Peru.  
 1824: Antonio Sucre leads independence forces to victory in the final battle against the Spanish at Ayacucho, Peru.



# Saturday

Sir 48,1-4.9-11 / Ps 79

Eulalia de Mérida Mt 17,10-13  
 1898: Spain is defeated and cedes Puerto Rico and the Philippines to the USA.  
 1948: The United Nations proclaims the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.  
 1977: Azucena Villaflor, founder of the Mothers of May Square, is disappeared in Buenos Aires.  
 1996: The Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 is granted to José Ramos Horta, the author of the peace plan for East Timor and to Carlos Ximenes Belo, Bishop of Dili.  
 1997: The Socialist Government of France approves the reduction of the work week to 35 hours.  
 Full Moon: 14h36m in Gemini



Third Sunday of Advent

Isa 61,1-2a.10-11 / Int. Lk 1  
1Thess 5,16-24 / Jn 1,6-8.19-28

Dámaso, *Lars Olsen Skrefsrud*

1978: Gaspar García Laviana, a priest, is martyred in the struggle for freedom in Nicaragua.  
 1994: The First American Summit, in Miami. The governments decide to create the FTAA, without the participation of the people. It will fall apart in 2005.

# 12 Monday

Zech 2,14-17 / Ps 95

Guadalupe, Juan Diego

Lk 1,39-45

1531: The Virgin of Guadalupe appears to Juan Diego at Tepeyac, Mexico where the Nahuatl people venerated Tonantzin, "the venerable mother".

1981: Massacre of "El Mozote." Hundreds of campesinos are killed in Morazán, El Salvador.

1983: Prudencio "Tencho" Mendoza, seminarian, martyred in Huehuetenango, Guatemala.

2002: Congress throws out former President Aleman for fraud of millions, Nicaragua.

2009: Ronaldo Muñoz, theologian of liberation theology and an example of the coherence between faith, theology and practice, dies in Santiago, Chile.

# 13 Tuesday

Zeph 3,1-2,9-13 / Ps 33

Mt 21,28-32

1976: 22 political prisoners are executed in army operation "to eliminate terrorists" at Margarita Belén, Argentina.

1978: Independence of St. Lucy.

1937: The fall of Nanjing, China to Japanese troops begins several weeks of raping and killing of more than 200,000 civilians and prisoners.

# 14 Wednesday

Isa 45,6-25 / Ps 84

Lk 7,19-23

John of the Cross

*Teresa of Avila*

1890: Rui Barbosa orders archives on slavery in Brazil to be burned in order to wipe out the memory.

1973: The UN identifies Puerto Rico as a colony and affirms its right to independence.

1989: Death of Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, Soviet nuclear physicist, human rights activist and 1975 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, 1975.

2003: José María Ruiz Furlán, a priest who worked in slums of Guatemala with popular organizations, is assassinated.



Horizontal lines for writing notes.







# 22 Thursday

Francis Cabrini 1Sam 1,24-28 / Int. 1Sam 2 Lk 1, 46-56

1815: José María Morelos is sent before a firing squad, hero of the independence of Mexico, after having been exiled by the Inquisition.

1988: Francisco "Chico" Mendes, environmental leader, is assassinated by land barons in Xapuri, Brazil.

1997: 46 Tzotziles gathered in prayer are massacred at Acteal, Mexico by paramilitaries in the service of land barons and the PRI.

# 23 Friday

Juan de Kety 1896: Conflict between the US and Great Britain over Venezuela Guyana. Mal 3,1-4,23-24 / Ps 24 Lk 1,57-66

1896: Conflict between the US and Great Britain over Venezuela Guyana.

1952: Vo Thi Sau, 17 year-old revolutionary Vietnamese heroine is shot by the French.

1972: An earthquake rated at 6.2 on the Richters scale destroys Managua, more than 10 thousand dead.

1989: Gabriel Félix R. Maire, French priest, assassinated in Vitoria, Brazil for his commitment to the poor.

# 24 Saturday

Herminia and Adela (Vigil Mass) Isa 9,1-3,5-6 / Ps 95 Titus 2,11-14 / Lk 2,1-14

1524: Vasco da Gama, Portuguese explorer who opened India and East Africa to European colonization, dies in Goa.

1873: Brazilian government takes repressive action against the quilombo's, African fugitive slave settlements, guerrillas in Sergipe, Brazil.

New Moon: 18h06m in Capricorn



Horizontal lines for writing notes.

# 25

Christmas Isa 52,7-10 / Ps 97 Heb 1,1-6 / Jn 1,1-18

Christmas

1553: Valdivia is defeated in Tucapel by the Araucans.

1652: Alonso de Sandoval, prophet and defender of African slaves, dies in Cartagena, Colombia.

1951: Bomb blast kills Harry T. Moore, teacher and U.S. civil rights activist.

Horizontal lines for writing notes.





## January

## February

## March

1 S	1 W	1 T
2 M	2 T	2 F
3 T	3 F	3 S
4 W	4 S	4 S
5 T	5 S	5 M
6 F	6 M	6 T
7 S	7 T	7 W
8 S	8 W	8 T
9 M	9 T	9 F
10 T	10 F	10 S
11 W	11 S	11 S
12 T	12 S	12 M
13 F	13 M	13 T
14 S	14 T	14 W
15 S	15 W	15 T
16 M	16 T	16 F
17 T	17 F	17 S
18 W	18 S	18 S
19 T	19 S	19 M
20 F	20 M	20 T
21 S	21 T	21 W
22 S	22 W <sup>Ash Wednesday</sup>	22 T
23 M	23 T	23 F
24 T	24 F	24 S
25 W	25 S	25 S
26 T	26 S	26 M
27 F	27 M	27 T
28 S	28 T	28 W
29 S	29 W	29 T
30 M		30 F
31 T		31 S

# April

1 S  
2 M  
3 T  
4 W  
5 T  
6 F  
7 S  
8 S Easter  
9 M  
10 T  
11 W  
12 T  
13 F  
14 S  
15 S  
16 M  
17 T  
18 W  
19 T  
20 F  
21 S  
22 S  
23 M  
24 T  
25 W  
26 T  
27 F  
28 S  
29 S  
30 M

# May

1 T  
2 W  
3 T  
4 F  
5 S  
6 S  
7 M  
8 T  
9 W  
10 T  
11 F  
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13 S  
14 M  
15 T  
16 W  
17 T  
18 F  
19 S  
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21 M  
22 T  
23 W  
24 T  
25 F  
26 S  
27 S Pentecost  
28 M  
29 T  
30 W  
31 T

# June

1 F  
2 S  
3 S  
4 M  
5 T  
6 W  
7 T  
8 F  
9 S  
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12 T  
13 W  
14 T  
15 F  
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17 S  
18 M  
19 T  
20 W  
21 T  
22 F  
23 S  
24 S  
25 M  
26 T  
27 W  
28 T  
29 F  
30 S

## July

## August

## September

1 S	1 W	1 S
2 M	2 T	2 S
3 T	3 F	3 M
4 W	4 S	4 T
5 T	5 S	5 W
6 F	6 M	6 T
7 S	7 T	7 F
8 S	8 W	8 S
9 M	9 T	9 S
10 T	10 F	10 M
11 W	11 S	11 T
12 T	12 S	12 W
13 F	13 M	13 T
14 S	14 T	14 F
15 S	15 W	15 S
16 M	16 T	16 S
17 T	17 F	17 M
18 W	18 S	18 T
19 T	19 S	19 W
20 F	20 M	20 T
21 S	21 T	21 F
22 S	22 W	22 S
23 M	23 T	23 S
24 T	24 F	24 M
25 W	25 S	25 T
26 T	26 S	26 W
27 F	27 M	27 T
28 S	28 T	28 F
29 S	29 W	29 S
30 M	30 T	30 S
31 T	31 F	

# October

# November

# December

1 M

2 T

3 W

4 T

5 F

6 S

**7 S**

8 M

9 T

10 W

11 T

12 F

13 S

**14 S**

15 M

16 T

17 W

18 T

19 F

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**21 S**

22 M

23 T

24 W

25 T

26 F

27 S

**28 S**

29 M

30 T

31 W

1 T

2 F

3 S

**4 S**

5 M

6 T

7 W

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9 F

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**25 S**

26 M

27 T

28 W

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1 S

**2 S** Advent, Year C

3 M

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28 F

29 S

**30 S**

31 M

## SOCIAL CHANGE BEGINS WITH THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE IDEA OF GOD

ANDRÉS PÉREZ BALTODANO

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The dominant religious culture in Latin America projects itself into the political and economic culture of the region, creating an elective affinity relationship between a Christian providentialist tradition, a pragmatic political culture of resignation, and the economic values that justify and legitimize the prevailing neoliberal model.

“Providentialism” is a theological concept that expresses a vision of the history of individuals and societies as a process governed and controlled by God. Anthropology, social psychology and popular education have demonstrated the weight of a timid providentialist model in the region. The work of social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró, for example, shows the tendency of the dominant providentialist Catholicism to transform *docility* into a *religious virtue*. In the field of pedagogy and popular education, the work of Paulo Freire revealed how the *oppressed consciousness* of Latin Americans lives in a magical world in which the victims of exploitation interpret their own suffering as a divine plan. The theology of liberation also made providentialism visible and fought it, unmasking the *established* order—supposedly ordained by the will of God, as a true *disorder*, a social sin that we must fight.

Studies of “popular Catholicism”—the majority in Latin America—also have revealed the dominant weight of the idea of a providential God that intervenes in history through angels, saints and supernatural forces to reward or punish humanity. Finally Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement have reinforced the weight of this timid Latin American providentialism.

The providentialist vision of God induces the men and women of the region to accept that their individual and social destinies are determined by forces beyond their own will. This vision has contributed to the generation of a political culture that is able to be dominated by a “resigned pragmatism.”

Resigned pragmatism constitutes a form of perceiving social reality as a historical condition determined by forces foreign to thought and to social action. From a resigned pragmatic perspective, the

politically desirable must be subordinated always to the circumstantially possible. Politics, in other words, is conceived as the capacity to adjust oneself to the reality of the power.

The providentialist religious culture, as well as the poverty and the low levels of education that affect the poor, promotes passive and fatalistic behaviors when faced with inequality, corruption and even attacks by natural forces. It would be an error, nevertheless, to assume that resigned pragmatism does not affect the Latin American economic elites. The power and the wealth of this sector hides its tendency to accommodate itself to the circumstances that the power of the global capital defines. They enjoy its privileges, but they are not capable of expanding the horizon of their reality. It is possible to say, making use of an expression by Gabriel García Márquez, that in spite of their wealth, they have been and continue being, *inferiors to their own luck*.

Resigned Latin American pragmatism resembles those aspects of medieval culture that pushed the men and women of Europe to perceive history as a process governed by God and Fortune. Modernity implied the rising of a new cosmopolitanism that allowed Europeans to assume the right and the duty to participate in the construction of history.

The religious providentialism and resigned pragmatism dominant in Latin America are mixed today with the values of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a model of social organization that intensifies the instrumental rationality of the market until turning that rationality into the normative axis managing all life in society. The basic normative elements of this model have been institutionalized around the world in spite of the immense social cost that it has generated and in spite of the crises that it has suffered.

So then, the instrumental neoliberal rationality has been incorporated into the political and religious Latin American value system, establishing relations of chosen affinity that almost always end up reinforcing the worst dimensions of the values of the market, of the religious values and political values that integrate the collective imagination of Latin America.

Thus, the exacerbated individualism that neoliberal capitalism promotes strengthens the traditional attitude of indifference that forms part of the culture and resigned pragmatic conduct of the Latin American elites. On the other hand, the idea of the God who decides everything has been converted into a convenient disguise to hide the operation of the “invisible hand” of the market that, with its index finger, indicates who eats and who does not eat, who lives and who dies in the globalized world of today.

### **Transforming the Idea of God**

The transformation of the Latin American social reality implies the re-foundation of its religious base and, more concretely, the overcoming of the providentialist idea of God. It supposes, in other words, to abandon the idea of the God that decides everything, in order to assume the responsibility that each person has to become the Providence that defines the future and the sense of history and reality. To be Christian, from this perspective, is to imitate the example of Jesus who turned “into the Providence of God” to fight for an ethical vision of the world and history.

Still more, to transcend the providentialism implies overcoming the idea of the omnipotence of God as the causal center of history. The “omnipotence” of God, as pointed out by Paul Tillich, must be interpreted as the conviction that neither the social structures nor the forces of nature can prevent the triumph of the idea of good and of justice that Jesus preached. To pray, from this perspective, means—as indicated in the title of a recent book “to become the answer to our own prayers.” The transformation of idea of God that Latin America needs must avoid two temptations: the trap of an idealistic Christian humanism based on images and platonic forms of what it means to be a *good man* and a *good woman*, and the trap of a materialistic humanism that denies the transcendent dimension of the human being. A Christian materialist humanism can avoid these two traps.

Humanism expresses the conviction that the primary objective of any social system—the State, the market and the social institutions in general must be the defense and promotion of human dignity.

The materialism in Christian materialist humanism, on the other hand, does not express a rejection of the spiritual dimension of the human being. Simply it represents the phenomenological principle that estab-

lishes that the mind is a mind incarnated in the existential drama of men and women who share a certain time and space. Intelligence, as well shown by the Jesuit martyr Ignacio Ellacuría, is always an *historical intelligence*, that is to say, located in a certain time and a social space.

The proposed materialism rejects the idealistic pretension that is expressed in the defense of universal normative archetypes of social organization that, like the dominant neoliberal democracy in America, is imposed on the reality of the region, crushing or ignoring their specificities and priorities.

The proposed materialistic principle, nevertheless, doesn't deny the possibility nor the necessity of promoting universal and transcendent visions of good and evil, of just and unjust, moral and immoral. These visions must be constructed from below; that is to say, they must be the result of agreements and projections articulated from the recognition of the multiple and diverse aspirations and material needs and spiritualities of humanity. From this perspective, the implicit promise of justice in Christian salvation only acquires a universal relevance when the sense of the justice that orients it responds to the injustices of each people, in the order and with the priorities that each society demands.

Finally, Christianity, the third element in Christian materialistic humanism, expresses the recognition that this doctrine works as the spiritual and normative matrix within which it orders the meaning of Latin American reality. The overcoming of misery and poverty in Latin America only will be able to be achieved within this matrix and from a critical evaluation of the codes that it integrates. In this sense, the model of social organization that manages to elevate the human condition of Latin Americans will be Christian or it will not be.

In synthesis: in order to subvert the prevailing social morality in Latin America, it is necessary to rearticulate the idea of God. This supposes the decoding and reconstruction of the dominant Christian values in the collective imagination of Latin Americans. This is not a question of eliminating God; it is a question of rearticulating our vision of the relation between God, history and humanity. This is the same thing Moses and Jesus did. To be Christian is to continue fighting to humanize the idea of God in order to glorify God. 

# ANOTHER CHRISTIANITY IS POSSIBLE

AUTONOMOUS, RESPONSIBLE, LIBERATED

**DIEGO DE MEDELLÍN ECUMENICAL CENTER**

*Santiago, Chile*

In our American and Caribbean Continent, there is a growing awareness of our differences with other peoples and amongst each other. Our local and regional identities have been and continue to be woven and molded together from thousands of particular histories, each one with its lights and shadows, its scents and tastes, its terrors and experiences of liberation.

In this context, the histories of our religions and atheisms are woven together. Histories of gods that have come from afar, displacing those of our lands, but also histories of uprisings, open or hidden, of the indigenous gods against the conquering ones. Histories of alliances between "divinities" of smaller scale, the "saints" of the poor, with others who, although brought from afar by the dominators, are maternal-like the Virgin Mary--or suffering--like the beaten Christ crowned with thorns. From these promiscuous histories, unique hybrids have arisen, sometimes friendly and close, like the dances of La Tirana, and sometimes terrible, like those that justify distant exploitations or self-flagellations.

Official dominant religion, that is to say, Catholicism, or religions that are becoming "official," like some Protestant denominations, are frightened by this promiscuity and feel threatened because they claim to be the only "true" ones. This claim is now being questioned, additionally, by techno-scientific rationality that, from school and from TV, is being shared by more and more people, literate and illiterate. From this is derived a conception of the world which makes it difficult to believe in a "God" exercising his powers "from above" or "outside of" this world, with threats of punishment for miscreants and prizes for obedient ones in an "eternity" outside of time and space.

These and other images of religious language have become incompatible with the conception of the world and of history that has been developed from the Enlightenment up until today, having these pil-

lars: the worldliness of the Earth, the arrival of the human being at autonomous adulthood, and, as such, assuming the historical responsibility to build or destroy the Earth, no matter humanity's own precariousness.

Because of this, today's women and men are suspecting that our daily decisions and our destiny on the Earth are not determined in any celestial book, prescribed beforehand in divine codes, or even in the law of Moses, but that we find "God" and the "devil" (in quotes), as Dostoevsky and Sartre said, in our own heart, that is to say, as facets of our soul and not as separate beings to whose power, good or bad, we are exposed. We are also recognizing that "heaven" and "hell" are now to be located in the profundities of our soul and in the form in which we seek to relate to each other as we make our human passage on this parcel of the cosmos that is the Earth. We are already persuaded of these suspicions, even if we do not know how to express them with clarity.

Nevertheless, if we are still members of a church, we barely dare to bring up these intimate persuasions and intimations...Women and men of the 21st century need to think and talk more freely about these doubts, since they form a part of our adult consciousness, without being accused of heresy for them.

The original peoples of the Americas seem to not have as many religious misgivings when confronted with the worldliness of the Earth, because, for them, divinity is not above or outside, but within things themselves. They perceive in them, by means of intuition, a more than human energy that is nevertheless part of the world which they inhabit. The life that flows through the veins and channels of this Earth is pregnant with an immanent energy with internal potentialities and impulses. This intuition is born from a form of knowledge (intuitive and not analytical) and rational presuppositions (in respect to the nature of things) more in accord with the materialism of sci-

ences than with certain official ecclesiastical interpretations. The understanding of the original peoples is not that the “being” of the divine is outside. Rather, it is inside, in the interior of our world.

In our America of many cultures, everyone interacts to a greater or lesser degree with these different conceptions of the world, the original ones and the more modern ones, and the conceptions from the ancient cultures expressed in the Bible. Participating in all of these, we feel with greater or lesser clarity the contradictions among them. There are those who simultaneously seek to live the religious life on one plane, affirming with a blind faith incomprehensible “truths,” and, on a parallel plane, to maintain a conception of the more modern world. This is the attitude--unstable and very precarious--of those who think that they have to comply with a faith that does not permit reasoning or questioning.

There are more and more Christians who feel restless and uneasy within their churches because they cannot talk about the suspicions mentioned above. To this is added the weight of the authoritarian structure of churches, their moralist orientation, and the legalistic and imposing language of some of their pastors. At the same time, these restless Christians are looking for new ways of following Jesus so their lives can acquire meaning.

For those who may be interested in this problematic, we recommend the book *Another Christianity Is Possible: Faith in the Language of Modernity* by Father Roger Lenaers, a Belgian Jesuit. (This book is currently available in the original Flemish, German, and Spanish.) We note some of our agreements with this work and also, from our Latin American and Caribbean perspective, some of its limitations.

This book brazenly describes the change of schemes and paradigms of thought of our time, a change that radically alienates us from biblical mental paradigms and, even more, those of the medieval church, in which a good part of our catechism and theology is still stuck. Because of this, the book points to the necessity of finding a language that can help us to live the Christian faith, taking into account the need to live with coherency alongside contemporary culture. We think this concerns the entire People of God, not just the experts. All of us, including the

poor, have a right to an adult and reasonably formulated faith, as the theologian Antonio Benti<sup>É</sup> has said with other words (*Un M-s All-en Medio Nuestro, Pastoral Popular*, October 2008, p.19). This necessity brings with it the necessity to fundamentally criticize the discourse of the ecclesiastical institution.

The book from Lenaers is right in making this double criticism, but, written from Europe, it leaves in the shadows aspects which, from our experience in Latin America, would complement this proposal for a new language. Reading it from our own diverse cultures, it would seem to lack, first of all, a reflection on the “theological setting” of the reality of poverty and the antagonism and struggle of interests in our societies. From the European perspective, these realities are not as visible or urgent as they are among us. Thus, it is understandable that Lenaers’ book does not highlight these as themes for theological reflection.

In the second place, this book leaves in the shadows a dimension of religious language which contains within itself a good part of “truth.” This is very present in the religions of our original peoples: that of symbolic expression. The “truth” of symbol consists in recognizing the necessity (so resented by some in our latitudes) of speaking to each other about the ultimate meaning of our lives, our goals and hopes, our joys and frustrations, relating them with every color, melody, and tone within our reach, like how Jesus explained the Kingdom in parables. This “narrative,” essential for life, is only realized in the form of poetic and religious symbols or symbolic systems. If the language of our churches has lost meaning, it is perhaps because it has been imprisoned in the didactic genre of “readings of things,” as if “religious things” (grace, virginity, trinity, holy spirit, divinity, other life...) were “objective.” It would be desirable that, instead of this, we could mutually narrate to each other. Inserted into human experiences, near or far, personal or social, this would be a sign that it is possible to open up and beautify human life beyond the limitations of scientific, economic, and political systems.

Criticizing religious language is only the first step in understanding it. Returning to religious symbolism and recuperating it through criticism is perhaps the only manner of narrating the “meaning” of life, and, as such, putting oneself on the path to seek it.

# MYSTIQUE IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

ADEMAR BOGO

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To speak of *mystique* makes us think of *mystery*, in things that happen for which we have no explanation. It also awakens in us sensitivity and admiration for attitudes or events that make certain behavior among human beings stand out. While some want to go further in overcoming challenges, others are happy to stay closer to what is comfortable.

Mystique is that strange force that inhabits the interiority of those who struggle and have the spirit to struggle for the realization of the Great Causes of Liberation. They struggle and do not falter. They risk their individual life so that the collective life can develop and they conquer death that comes through exploitation and violence.

There are three different ways to interpret this *strange force* that accompanies militancy a) through theology that understands it as *spirituality* in which values and persistency are cultivated or b) through the political sciences where it appears as *charisma*, special qualities placed at the service of the collectivity, and c) through philosophy for which mystique is *motivation* and practices *values*.

Mystique appears through culture in its three formative axes: thinking, having, and feeling along with the practice of companionship, solidarity, loyalty, etc., and being integrated into art, aesthetics, music, education, volunteer work, care, and struggle.

These are three ways of saying the same thing: attempts to explain the major manifestations of an inexplicable strength that occurs in the heart of those who struggle for liberation.

In Latin America, the social movements, especially those of the rural and indigenous people, rooted in the need for the earth to produce food, are discovering qualities among themselves that were unknown to the traditional forces of the political parties. This includes the capacity to organize themselves, to plan for action, to form leaders, to publish their own newspapers, to produce food, to transform reality, and to transform themselves—always in community. They are discovering, through the study of philosophy and of their own practice, that mystique is the energy awakened by love for all that lives and needs to be cared for such as the goods of nature and of history.

Although there are regional, ethnic, and cultural differences, there is a feeling of belonging that mobilizes all the forces in the struggle for the same Causes: the defense of the earth, of water, of biodiversity, and of the foundations that guarantee the food sovereignty of each people.

Our ancestors used to say that human beings are different from the animals when they develop the capacity to produce their own ways of living with their own hands. In that way we continue producing, caring for, and keeping safe the flags that motivate the struggles across the world.

Mystique is then the creative energy that does not allow us to grow tired or to falter. It is that strange force that cannot be explained, touched, or measured but that we feel, that pushes us to struggle and to care for the victories achieved. Mystique is the warmth that the human body needs in order to continue being fiery and living.

## The strength of the foundations

Among militants, mystique is like the strength of germination that seeds have. They awaken the social movements to history. They discover the potentiality of the changes that sleep in the heart of Latin America and they move on to believe in their own strength for transformation.

When we began the Landless Peoples Movement (MST) in Brazil in 1984, those involved in the Pastoral Land Ministry and the union members were persecuted. Many among the squatters and workers without land were assassinated. With tears in our eyes, we buried our martyrs, as if we were planting a seed in the earth and, contrary to what the assassins hoped for, instead of stopping, we committed ourselves to continue in the struggle by following their example.

The violence that intimidates is also a school for resistance. The tactics of confrontation are always a response to the violence of the enemies. If they were killing us it was because they viewed us as isolated. The key was to join together, to gather our strengths. This is how the occupations came about. They were beautiful schools of self-defense in which a number of families not only confirmed that “union makes for strength,” but that it makes the sleeping charismas

flourish in each person, in a multitude of men and women who are struggling for the earth, in the many struggles for a piece of land.

Called by their name or by a nickname, leaders, singers, poets and animators arose. They created schools and in them they formed teachers, trainers in awareness, in providing examples and values. In that way not only did the earth come to fulfill its social function but also people came to discover their social and political roles.

So it is that the long years of waiting for the earth, camped under the shade of canvas awnings, did not mean defeat but rather a gain, a gain in formation and in popular organization. Those who abandoned the struggle lost but no one wanted to abandon a place where they became actors.

The energy to confront difficulties always came from the solidarity among those who struggle. For that reason, mystique has not only helped transform the large land tracts into inhabited and cultivated lands but has above all changed people from the inside. They have become more sensitive to the problems of others and have undertaken to resolve those problems as if they were their own.

Without mystique this story would not have happened. The masses would have given up their resistance very quickly. The leaders would have become corrupt and allied themselves with the criminals, and the land would be even more dominated by the large landowners and would not have served to generate respectful cultivators.

### **Mystique in the popular project**

There are three elements that became fundamental in the history of the social struggles in which mystique is present as an incentive for transformation: organization, the Cause and awareness.

*Organization* is the tool of struggle. The period we have lived through has taught us that, when the people are disorganized or dispersed, they do not have any strength, enthusiasm or conditions to confront those who are fostering violence.

The *Cause* is the project, the reason for which we struggle. Mystique needs perspectives. It needs to look at the horizon where dreams are found while they wait for the advances to happen. The project is the conductor of the march that unites the historic distances of the past and the future.

*Awareness* is the acquired wisdom that casts out

ignorance and naivete in social and political relations. Authoritarianism and centralization are overcome through the participation of women and men who learn, like architects, to decide their own destiny.

The popular project is called this because it is in counter-position to the project of the capitalist elites. This does not mean that formulation denies the importance of the classes as protagonists in the transformative projects.

The mystique of the popular project being constructed throughout Latin America is the participative motivator in simple forms of organization, in which the political strategy is simplified and the horizon is placed within the reach of those who were never considered an important force for tracing the direction of transformations. So, it isn't important where we are struggling but what we are struggling for. Those activated forces constitute the new way of realizing the class struggle in order to overcome the old exploitation of human beings by human beings.

The popular masses, in their own way, sustain a project for change. Nobody likes to think that a child who is still to be born will inherit the misery of their parents. On the contrary, those who are still to be born will be proud in the future for having had us as food for hope, because as much as we might focus on the immediate conquests, it is of them that we are thinking.

The mystique of the popular project is the collective elaboration of the people who rebel against the exploiting and oppressive elite. The ways of organizing vary, whether in the type organizing or in the way class is structured or according to the territory or housing. What is important is the movement that each force creates in order to collectively move in the direction of the same transformation.

The social movements had the audacity to construct without manuals. For that reason a new consciousness arose with them and a new way of being agents of history with a mystique that prevents them from being destroyed.

Mystique in this journey is more than what nourishes the one who is walking. It is also the hunger that does not cease or sleep until we reach the place where we want to be. The agent of this history no longer lives for him- or herself but for the collectivity. The certainty that this Cause will conquer lies in the fact that we have learned to walk hand in hand. In this way no one gets lost along the paths of history.

# A NEW CHRISTIANITY FOR A NEW WORLD

About a book by **JOHN SHELBY SPONG**  
Former Bishop of Newark, NJ, USA

Fifty years ago it was said that we were experiencing an era of “profound and accelerated changes.” Since then, they say we are “not so much in an epoch of changes as in a change of epoch.” After twenty years of saying all this, one might presume that we are already in that new age, in a new world. And the question is: For that new world, is religion as we have known it still relevant?

Traditionally, religions have said that however much the world might change, they are and will always be the same. However, increasingly there are those who think just the opposite and who dare to think it out and demonstrate it. One of those people is John Shelby Spong, retired bishop of the [Episcopal] Church of Newark, N.J. He has written a book entitled, *A New Christianity for a New World: Why Traditional Faith Is Dying and How a New Faith Is Being Born*. His message is challenging, provocative and invites dispute.

Older Christians will remember that during the 60s in the last century, another bishop, John A. T. Robinson, published a book, *Honest to God*, which provoked a huge reaction because it criticized the common image of that time about God. He proposed that there was much that needed to be surpassed in that image. Spong, who also felt moved by that Best Seller when he was young, takes up the witness and proposes to continue the reflection. It’s just that he goes further, as befits someone writing 50 years later. It’s not just that we need to correct some things in the image we have of God; rather we need to overcome that image itself; we need to overcome “theism.” This is Spong’s main proposal and in his book he presents it in a way that is both pedagogical and systematic.

Spong begins by confessing that he is a convinced, believing Christian: “I believe that God is real and that I live in a profound relationship with that divine Reality, and I believe that my life is marked in a decisive way by Jesus.”

Still, he then adds, “I do not define God as a being,” a supernatural being that dwells somewhere out there in a higher place, with the ability to enter at

times into this world and intervene in it in a miraculous way.” “I do not believe in a divinity that helps a nation win a war, that intervenes in the healing of a loved one, that permits a certain team to beat its opponent.” That classical image of God as a superior Being, Almighty Lord, intervener..., what is called “theism,” has been surpassed, says Spong. In our modern world there is no longer any place for theism. He exposes in detail cases and aspects in which today’s modern mentality, with its scientific foundation, cannot admit to the existence of a god with those characteristics.

The central thesis of Spong is that the religious experience of humanity is and has been fundamentally the same. However, the explanation, the images with which humans have represented and explained that spiritual experience for itself, have frequently changed throughout time and have to radically change today because their religious experience can be sustained by human beings today only within a post-theist framework. There can be a strong experience of the Divinity but without the mythical belief that there is a superior, all-powerful and miraculous being out there. That is no longer possible. Thus, in order for it to be possible to be religious today, we need to reorganize the whole set of explanations that we inherited from our elders, experiences that were created in a different world, that were pre-scientific, naïve, mythical, a world that is not ours.

Assuredly, we need to maintain the profound spiritual experience of human beings, stripping it of all those theistic explanations that are unacceptable today.

Broadly, Spong defends the idea that theism, the concrete and age-old religious explanation, is empty and is dying in today’s society.

He then goes on to search for the origin of theism. How did it arise? He looks into the Christian tradition, which is his own. He goes through the sacred Christian texts, the gospels and the letters of Paul. He discovers how the first texts that we know of regarding Jesus do not present him as an incarna-

tion of a visiting God who has come from outside in order to save us. And he gradually shows how each text added a new reflection about Jesus until, finally, theism “took over” Christianity with the final results that we know. Theism was added on to what Jesus originally was. Spong reasons that if it is an addition, it can be separated out. And it is more reasonable to do so today since, he says, we live in a time in which theism is dead, in which we can no longer be theists.

But then, who is Jesus? What is he? How can he be explained outside of a supposed theism?

Before trying to explain Jesus, we need to situate him in an adequate framework because the context in which they transmitted him is clearly inadequate today. We need to understand the basic nucleus of Christianity, its “basic myth,” in a new way. What is that? Spong explains that there is a double aspect: incarnation and redemption. The incarnation is understood as the external coming to earth of a god who is introduced into Jesus in order to represent the drama of an expiatory sacrifice that placates God for a primordial sin that the first human couple committed and so save all humanity. This central nucleus, this basic myth, needs to be replaced. And, in the first instance, it needs to be deconstructed.

For Spong, God is not “out there,” and cannot have “come.” There was no original sin and there were no broken relationships to mend. Nor was any redemptive expiation necessary. All this takes up an entire chapter.

The climax of Spong’s work is the chapter in which he tries to understand “Jesus beyond the incarnation: a non-theist divinity.” The author recovers and re-expresses faith in Jesus, his Lord, in a beautiful way, reaffirming his personal experience but beyond the theist categories: a “new portrait” of Jesus, a new vision with its explanations, but still rooted in the same Christian spiritual experience.

If the image of Jesus changes, Christianity, which consists in following his message, also changes. In the final chapters, Spong passes in review various important themes that end up deeply modified by the new vision. One of them is that of “mission.” All theist religions have felt the temptation to superiority and power: they and only they have the complete truth by which it is justified--even more, “it is the will of God”--that they impose their message on oth-

ers. That means that they can send missionaries out to conquer the world. In the new vision, all these claims on power and dominion have to be abandoned. The mission continues to have meaning, but in another way that Spong explains beautifully.

“Prayer” also has a different meaning. If there is no longer out there a powerful supernatural being who can but his hand to human affairs, what good is prayer? Spong acknowledges that he continues to pray, but that, since he has overcome theism, his prayer has taken a 180° turn. He lays that out, reflects on it and gives witness to it.

A final topic taken up in his book has to do with how there can be a “Church” in a post-theist Christianity. It appears in continuity with the current view, but is quite different at the same time. Those human beings among us who have come into a divine dimension through Jesus will still need to come together, sharing, recalling our history, celebrating our rituals, nourishing our spirituality, but without those structures and relationships of power that reproduce the intervening and paternalistic power of an external theistic God.

For Spong, the most important thing is to opt clearly for the future, to hold on to the permanent spiritual experience, and to sense our freedom with respect to the explanations that have been made about all that. These are secondary, can be dispensed with and can be improved.

Spong is an author, a Christian companion, and even more a bishop, who is speaking a powerful word, one that is challenging, reasonable and well reasoned. For that reason, his message deserves to be heard and reflected upon. For those who do not frequent the “frontiers” of thinking and who live the spiritual dimension in settings that are more traditional, Spong’s thesis could seem shocking or even dangerous. It might be a good thing to become better informed: to read him, reflect, debate, share.... The most probable conclusion is that we all need to have our religious convictions shaken up occasionally in one way or another. We need to confront them with challenging authors like John Shelby Spong.

The book was published by HarperSanFrancisco, New York in 2001 (276 pages). It is suitable for group study and debate or even for inclusion in a formation or renewal course.

# ANOTHER CHURCH IS NECESSARY AND POSSIBLE

## GOING BACK TO MEDELLÍN

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### 1. The Prophecy: "Another Church Is Necessary"

There are many good things in the Church in Latin America: recent encounters in Ecuador in memory of Leonidas Proaño; in Chiapas, celebrating with Don Samuel Ruíz; in San Salvador in the 30th anniversary of the martyrdom of Monseñor Romero; and above all, in the life, work, commitment, endurance, hope, and faith of countless peoples and communities.

The deterioration in the Church and its tiredness cannot be hidden when compared to Medellín. For another Church to be *possible*, conversion is *necessary*, to seek fountains of living water and, once found, *to return to them*. Among us, this is a return to Medellín. Then and there an irruption of the poor and an irruption of God in them took place that gave birth to a new Church, communities, bishops and priests, religious life, seminaries, lay movements of men and women, theology, pastoral work, liturgy, and, above all, martyrs that remembered Jesus. Something like that has never happened before.

Medellín has not disappeared entirely, but as a whole, especially in its institutional hierarchical dimension, the Church has been distancing itself from it, when it has not turned its back on it, with notable exceptions. Instead, spiritualizing and integrationist movements have proliferated, worldly and oblivious of the Jesus of the Gospel.

It is not easy to maintain alive "Medellín" because of its demands, just as it is not easy to maintain alive the Gospel. Moreover, from the powerful of the world, and sometimes from the institutional church, hard and lasting campaigns against it have taken place. In the seventies, war was declared on it. Puebla managed to maintain it with dignity. In Santo Domingo, that it was forgotten could not be hidden. In Aparecida, steps were taken to reverse this. Its spirit has been recovered somewhat, but not sufficiently.

The conversion to Medellín must be historicized. The poor who irrupt today do not only *lack* [the material], they are *excluded*, *indigenous*, and *Afroamericans*, and, more and more, *women* and *children*. The God that irrupts is Jesus' God, but with great respect to those of other religions. This historicization is necessary, but

does not make Medellín obsolete: God is in the poor and the crucified, together with and alongside them. As in Isaiah and Amos, the *oppressed* are in the center, bringing unity to all of their oracles. Medellín did not suppress anything, but as Jesus did, it put everything in its right place.

The demand to return to *Medellín* may appear to be a mistake. Given the historical changes, no mimicry is possible, and besides, it is not desirable, because it destroys the hope that is always new. We must remember three things: 1. Acknowledging the distances, it would also be a mistake to attempt to return to *the Passover of Jesus*, above all, the *crucified one*—which is very difficult not because it is *the past* but because it is *the cross*— 2. When they dreamed of a better future, the prophets referred to the origin, not because it occurred in the past, but because it was the *beginning* that originated salvific realities. Thus, they spoke of a new exodus, remembering the reality and the demands that accompanied the *old*. 3. Never has the Church, in Medellín and with Monseñor Romero, better overcome the temptations that have threatened it since the beginning: *docetism*, which is to say, the unreality of being in the world; and *gnosticism*, which is to say, the *unreality* of offering salvation, a temptation that Mark saw with all clarity from the beginning—for this reason he presented a real Jesus who could not be manipulated. Not even in the Council was the Church as real as it was in "Medellín." Let us not forget what Comblin says: "another Medellín can happen."

### 2. Utopia: "Another Church Is Possible"

There is also hope, but not of just any another Church. We mention some of the dimensions of that Church for which we ought to work, insisting, dialectically, only in those points that imply conversion and utopia.

a) *A Church of the suffering poor*. This the foundational beginning. An immersed Latin American Church of mestizos, indigenous, and Afro-Americans, together with Europeans. A local Church with its own culture, opened to other cultures, especially African and Asian. Evangelizing, moved by the Spirit to announce to the poor the good news and—without ignoring the spirit

Translated by Néstor Medina

of the year of grace—to threaten with bad news the powerful and the oppressors, so that Luke 6: 20-26 can prevent the neutralization of Mt 5: 3-11, so that it be *the poor with spirit*. Evangelizing in poverty, without power and stripped of any arrogance in the face of other churches and religions. Let men and women religious take seriously the poverty they vowed and let the hierarchy ask itself—as it did in Medellín—if it lives in poverty or not. We need a Church that is respectful and friendly to reason and the freedom of the poor, without treating them like infants, so that an adult faith does not endanger their ingrained obedience to ecclesial authority. And above all, we need a Church that enters the world of the poor, is moved with their suffering, and makes it her own, considers it as something ultimate, that touches the ultimate historically, and, in this way, becomes theological.

b) *A Church of the people*. Ellacuría used to say that “it is difficult to speak of Monseñor Romero without talking about the people.” Let the Church herself be the people, not an institution; close to everybody, but more to popular groups. Let it consider the poor as originators of their destiny, conscientious, organized, and active in order to struggle for truth and justice, together with universities, and even seminaries. We need a prophetic Church, helped by social doctrine, but with the suffering of the oppressed first in view. A Church that unifies God and the people, as Monseñor Romero [said] in his last homily in the Cathedral: “in the name of God, and in the name of the suffering people, whose laments go up to heaven more tumultuously every day: I plead, I beg, I order you, in the name of God: cease the repression.”

c) *A Church of women*: Let them speak and encourage them to speak, even if what they say hurts precisely because it is true. Without women, the Church sinks—and many times entire countries sink. They offer dedication, wisdom, and simplicity, which are lacking in the institution. We must not disrespect women with simplistic exegesis so we can to continue as we are, maintaining a men’s monopoly on the sacred power that grants ministry.

d) *A Church of “good shepherds”*—a problem that cannot be hidden—with new attitudes to configure the hierarchy: fraternity, liberty, and joy, and against submission, imposition, and fear of Rome; the flavor of the “covenant of the catacombs”; going hand in hand with the poor and not with the potentates; collegiality foremost, that of friendship with others, as it was in

Riobamba in 1976, and in Washington Street in Puebla in 1979; thankful to fellow brothers, “fathers of the Latin American Church,” four of them martyrs, Angelelli, Ponce de León, Romero, and Ramos, and Dom Helder and Casaldáliga, who were saved by the mistakes of the killers; and thankful to Paul VI in Mosquera and Medellín.

e) *A Church of Jesus*, the one from Nazareth, that he may not be diluted in the midst of all kinds of devotions. Let the Jesus that irrupted among the poor and with his God remain alive, who caused so much joy to the poor and so much fear to the oppressors. Let what was said by the Grand Inquisitor, “go and come no more,” not happen. It is this Jesus we must follow. It is the way to Christ and the assurance that Christ does not end up being another symbol of power.

f) *A Church of God*, the one referred to in these quotations. Guamán Poma: “God remembers the smallest one.” Puebla: for being poor “God defends them and loves them.” Monseñor Romero: “Please tell me, brothers and sisters, that the fruit of my preaching be that each one of us finds God, and that we live the happiness of his majesty and of our smallness.” Calsaldáliga: “Everything is relative but God and hunger.”

g) *A Church of martyrs, of consequential mercy with the poor*. This is what has characterized the Church of Medellín the most. With this we close the circle that began with the suffering of the poor: an immense cloud of witnesses, bishops, priests, religious, countless lay people, and admirable Christians. Martyrdom is the “greatest love” and one cannot go beyond it, but we can be precise. In Latin America, lives have been given not for any love but for defending the victims, poor majorities, innocent and defenseless. That Church has been martyred for being, as Jesus was, merciful to the end. Martyrs are those who are merciful with consequences; the fathers and mothers of the Latin American Church. Because of them, the deterioration is not greater, and because of these men and women, what is best in our Church lives on. Times change, but the temple of the martyrs continue to be necessary: the decision to risk oneself and not flee from conflict in order to defend millions of victims.

God knows in what measure “another Church is possible,” but, until the end, Ellacuría did have hope in a civilization of poverty and in a Church of the poor. And in God. “New men, who continue to announce firmly, although always in the dark, a future always greater, because beyond successive historical futures we see the saving God, the liberating God.”

# POPULAR RELIGION

## PRIESTS FOR THE OPTION FOR THE POOR

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Saying that God arrived in the Americas before the missionaries is now commonplace. And this is not anything else than what the martyr Saint Justin called "the seeds of the Word," in order to talk about the many common elements that he saw between the Greek philosophers and the Scriptures. Even to the point of comparing more than one with the Biblical prophets. Additionally, this is not any different from what has been called the "transcendental argument of existence," affirming that in truth, unity, and beauty, "existence" appears in some way.

It cannot be but obvious that such truth, beauty, and spirit, "uniting" with the Gospel, many times went beyond the control that "the Church" could have over "religion." While the Roman Church proposed and imposed European models of living one's faith, the "poor of the earth" were discovering gaps and spaces where they could find God and live their faith in their own language, in their own culture. This has caused a profound synthesis that has marked our culture from the beginning, and has continued to flourish with the centuries. It is true that the "learned" and "European" sectors have dismissed all this through their ethnocentrism: "one can't compare Greek philosophy with Mayan or Incan myths," or "this is syncretism." It is clear why an Egyptian obelisk with a small cross in St. Peter's Square is "the evangelization of cultures," and "Indian theology" is syncretic...

Throughout the centuries, many roads were being opened and many were being closed. This same people, that received the spirit before the missionaries arrived, was living an authentic "reception" of its religiosity, and the pathways that it proposed. It would seem that the theological category that deals with how the Holy Spirit accompanied the simple people before the hierarchs came (J. Ratzinger) should also be used to talk about God in regards to this people as it continues to move through history. In both the past and present, there have been many ephemeral popular

religious expressions that have not enjoyed been seen as authentic "reception" and have ended up disappearing or being transformed. But there are others that resist time, history, and "official" pastoral work.

It is certain that there also exist forms of religiosity that clearly have a increasing adherence but that seem disconnected from the following of Jesus or the construction of a more just world. Jon Sobrino puts his finger on it: "a religiosity predominates that we can call 'what makes us happy:' healing for our own benefit, an understandable desire, but dangerous if causes us to ignore the exigency of following; innumerable expressions of praise, sometimes well chosen, others in an more individualistic, intimate line; pilgrimages, sometimes to far places, a mix of devotion and tourism. I don't want to exaggerate, but I feel that that the popular religiosity of yesteryear was sturdier. And, certainly, to be the Church of Jesus it had to pay a high price; tensions and internal arguments, always painful; external conflicts with the powerful and with oppressors; insults and persecutions. Not now." (Letter to Ignacio Ellacuría 2008). In Argentina, we see popular religiosity connected to the Kingdom of God, connected to solidarity with the neighbor in prayer, novenas, and sharing what little there is, the demand for bread and work in the sanctuaries of Saint Cayetano, and in demonstrations, popular demands, and road closures, with images of the Virgin heading up social protests.

In this sense, it is interesting to follow the evolution that the topic has had from Medellín to Puebla--with the clear influence of Evangelii Nuntiandi--passing through Santo Domingo until arriving at Aparecida. It does not cease to be picturesque, in this last document, that our bishops and Roman delegates talk about our popular religiosity (DA 43), although not many of them can be seen dancing, making pilgrimages, or touching images. A privileged place of this religiosity are the sanctuaries, the small and large

ones, which continue being the places most people approach in order to experience the encounter with the Other and with others. But for many sectors of the "Official Church," this expression is seen as a fetish in need of "evangelizing" although, on the other hand, they make use of it to demonstrate how the institution still can convene people. What is certain is that sanctuaries are the people's place to encounter the holy and the Holy One. And in this sense it is impossible to detain the Spirit, "that blows where it will," although we do not know "from where it comes nor where it is going." (John 3:8).

Something that seems very important for us to state clearly is that it is very different to talk about "popular religiosity" and "popular pastoral practice."

In our pastoral work, in the midst of the poor, in general, faced with the new and old experiences of popular religiosity--precisely because of the difference between religiosity and pastoral practice--we have chosen, on principle, to let ourselves be guided by a "hermeneutic of suspicion," taken from feminist theology. That is to say, we are suspicious of our own viewpoint, which can often be elite or European, recognizing on principle that the faith of the people is a true faith, and that it leads to a true wisdom. We do not deny that there can be elements that obscure this faith, but the resistance of 500 years, the maintenance of a true popular Latin American and Caribbean faith, and the confidence in the Spirit that guides and leads towards "reception," invites us to be very careful in our analysis and viewpoint. This is especially because of the number of times we have seen religious expressions we first viewed with worry abandoned, with others taken up by the people with a new meaning.

Looking at the religious faith of the poor, their love of the Virgin, their insistence on baptism, and their capacity for resistance when confronted with suffering and the cross, found in their faith, lived as a people, in solidarity and with the capacity to celebrate, we recognize that these are nothing but unquestionable elements with which popular religiosity enriches us. This is especially the case when an elite faith, ritualistic, individualistic, without solidar-

ity, and without an authentic response to suffering is presented to us. A good example of this can be seen in the capacity of discovering this integrating anthropology, which includes the body, the senses, and one another in popular celebrations, as compared to an elite anthropology which almost exclusively relates to "the mind," in "official" celebrations. Isn't it evident that the Eucharistic celebration in its Roman rite is clearly European, and everything is a "word," while in popular celebrations, colors, smells, music, pilgrimages, dances, instruments, and singing are included?

We are now celebrating the year of the priest, proposing a model of being a priest as mediator between God and men. Popular religiosity invites us to celebrate life from other places, with other altars and other ministries. Other men and women become mediators. In this type of popular religiosity, we are not lacking for vocations, they are overflowing (although this interesting and important theme is outside the scope of this reflection).

It is true that we are in an era of change that is still hard to make sense of. Certainly the changes that we see coming are not like those of years or centuries past. How will popular religiosity deal with this? What image of God will it discover and reveal in its faith? It is difficult to predict in this moment. There are a few elements that can be negatively seen: it seems that the number of baptisms has been reduced, the phenomenon of disbelief or agnosticism--before limited only to "intellectual" environments--is starting to be seen in popular environments (this only seems to be absent in ecclesial documents; for example, this was ignored in *Aparecida*); but, additionally, popular religious demonstrations continue increasing: the pilgrimage by foot to Luján--for example--last year had a historic number of pilgrims (more than 1,300,000 according to the calculations of the police, walked the 70 kilometers that separate the city of Buenos Aires from the Sanctuary). Confronted with the newness that is forming, it is important for us to trust in the synthesis that the people will continue to produce, guided by the Spirit, with its own capacity of purification, and to continue believing that God will speak before the missionaries do.

# THE VERDICT ON RELIGION

JOSÉ ANTONIO MARINA

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The 19th Century prematurely issued a death certificate to religion, but reality hasn't complied with these expectations. Religious ideas continue drawing human interest. "The role of religions in the world is increasing rather than decreasing," writes J. Runzo in *Ethics in the World Religions*. In 1965, Harvey Cox, spokesman of secularization, predicted the decline of religion in his bestseller *The Secular City*. But in 1985 he had to admit: "The world of religion in decline, to which I directed my first book, has begun to change in a way that few people could foresee. More than an era of rampant secularization and religious decline, it seems to be an era of religious resurgence and a return to the sacred." Since then, this fragmented and chaotic renovation has continued, although related to fundamentalist and fanatical politics. In many cases, religion has become an identity marker, which is not good news.

Dilthey said that human beings cannot be known through introspection, but through studying those activities that they have assiduously devoted themselves to throughout history. Culture is, in a sense, an expression of the human essence, its unfolding. Well, humans have always tried to understand reality, explain things, create languages, paint, make music, establish norms, and invent religions. Religiosity forms part of our vital repertoire. A few months ago, an editorial press challenged me to write a book to respond to the following question: Has religion contributed to the progress of humanity? I accepted the challenge and I am now working on it. Religion as the acceptance of a symbolic world superior to the visible world in power, perfection, and goodness, related to an absolute reality—whether God, Brahman, Tao, Mana, or whatever—has been instrumental in allowing human beings to define themselves, as limited beings in relation to the unlimited. Descartes tried to demonstrate the existence of God from the fact—surprising to him—that human intelligence could be capable of producing the idea of God. The argument is not conclusive, but it emphasizes that—apart from its

veracity—thinking about the divine has expanded the expectations of human beings and the way that they understand themselves. I believe that this is what Horkheimer was referring to when he said that religion is the longing for the totally other: "In truly free thinking, the concept of the infinite preserves society from an imbecilic optimism, of absolutizing and converting one's own knowledge into a new religion."

Horkheimer connected that "longing for the totally other" with the hope in a perfect justice, which permits me to speak of the most notable contribution of religions to the progress of humanity: its role in the moral humanization of the species. This is the aspect in my work I have studied in more detail. There is a particularly important moment in the history of religions, one in which a terrible god is converted into a kind god. I think religious morals have evolved into a universal ethic, to which they should submit themselves. Ethics is the work and at the same time the limit of religious morals. History tells us that religion has been manipulated in many cases, that there is no brutality or generosity that has not been done in the name of God, and that, at this time, it looks more like a danger than a salvation. But the closer we approach the great religious figures, the more we are impressed by their pure vision of reality.

These contradictions of the religious phenomenon made me ask a few years ago whether at this stage it still made sense to be religious, or whether religious was a superstitious remnant embedded in modern culture. To answer that question, I wrote *The Verdict on God*. The main conclusions were the following:

1. All religions have in common a reference to a deeper reality—powerful, good, or spiritual—than everyday reality. Some identify it with God and others do not—there are theistic and non-theistic religions.

2. Religions have had a mixed and unreliable origin in which many different concerns and experiences are intermingled: fear of chaos, the need to find explanations, to seek salvation, to organize society, the

interest in ensuring the sacredness of power and rule, numinous and ecstatic experiences, dreams, revelations, intoxication, terrors, and the desire to find meaning in life.

3. In this confusing conglomerate of feelings and beliefs, some revolutionary personages emerged who changed the course of humanity: Moses, Zoroaster, the prophets of Israel, Buddha, Lao-tse, Confucius, Mahavira, Jesus of Nazareth, Mohammed, and others. They communicated their experiences, convinced and fascinated others, and determined the course of humanity.

4. Religions are based on private experiences that escape scientific corroboration. They provide security to those who accept them, but they differ on how to achieve that security. They can derive from a divine gift, the illumination of a transfigured conscience, the imitation of a master, the practice of a method, purity of heart, or the effects caused by the voluntary acceptance of a belief. The fact that they are founded upon a private experience tells us nothing about their truth or falsity, but only on their peculiar mode of verification or corroboration. They are "private truths," placed upon a person in the most intimate place, in the conscience, but these cannot be universalized through a demonstrative method.

5. It is necessary to affirm an ethical principle of truth: "No private truth can be used to criticize an intersubjective truth, or to guide a behavior that can harm another person."

6. It is possible to establish an ethic, understood as a transcultural moral system, to serve as a broad framework in which to place relationships between the religious and secular worlds, and the different religions between themselves. It originates from religions, and from the dynamism of the search for perfection generated by them, but ends up being a criterion for evaluating their own religious morality. In fact, it is easier for religions to agree on ethical issues than on dogmatic issues.

7. Within many religious traditions, good conduct and purity of heart are the main ways to access religious experience.

8. From the above arguments and from an understanding of the history and evolution of religions and theologies, it is possible to derive evaluation criteria for religions, including the following important aspects:

a) The compatibility of its moral principles with universal ethical principles and its ability to perfect them and accomplish them.

b) The proximity of religion to religious experience, rather than church discipline.

c) Confidence in the ability of intelligence to bring human beings to God. Irrationalism such as Karl Barth's continues to be suspicious.

d) If based on Scripture considered sacred, its capacity to free itself from a literal interpretation.

e) The decision not to use dogmatic immunization systems which invalidate any criticism or any new experience. For example, saying that what the Bible says is true because its author is God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived...closes off all possibility of discussion.

f) The purity of its transmission, which involves not using coercive means, not limiting information given to the faithful, freedom of discussion, not using fear as a method of indoctrination, and respect for other religions.

g) The separation of political power and the rejection of force to impose beliefs.

Clarifying the relationship between ethics and religion seems to me a matter of historical transcendence because the immediate history of humanity will depend on how this problem is resolved. I think religion must continue to maintain that longing for the absolutely other, which Horkheimer talked about, so we have the energy for the task in which we are involved of dignifying the human being. This includes rejecting the closure of the natural, pragmatic, economic, and technical world. For me it is an attitude of poetic and creative rebellion. It seems important that religions make the effort to recuperate their initial purity in order to free themselves of historical garbage and convert themselves into second generation religions, that is to say, into ethical religions, more preoccupied by theopraxis than by theology. In *Why I Am a Christian*, I maintained that Christianity changed its course when faith changed from meaning accepting the way of living proposed by Jesus to meaning the acceptance of a group of philosophical-theological formulations proposed by the church. I still think that this is one of the most important debates of the moment.

# BELIEVING IN ANOTHER WAY

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In the Gospel we have the best, unsurpassable image of God that has appeared in history. But long centuries of contamination have distorted it to the point of making it unrecognizable on many points that are not always the less important ones. Here, looking at the basic concepts, I will indicate some that are crying out with special urgency to be thoroughly gone over, grouping them in three chapters.

## **Against a Distorted Reading of Creation**

Although it is on the way to being overcome, one of the greatest problems that pulls at current theology is the literal or fundamentalist reading of the Bible. In a very special way, it affects nothing less than the wonderful stories of creation in Genesis. In them, with the deep symbolism of mythical language, we are told of the intention of God who does not seek more for us than fulfillment, love and happiness. This is what the symbol of paradise means: the goal to which we are destined. Evil stands in opposition to that goal; for that reason the Bible puts it outside of God. The mythical narration, preoccupied by calling us to goodness, pays attention above all to human sin, that, as the first chapters show – from the murder of Cain to universal corruption – has done so much damage. But to take it literally, turning what only intends to be a moral exhortation into a physical or metaphysical explanation, leads to crazy ideas.

1) Beginning now with original sin: even after being recognized as mythical, the specific narration of the tree, the fruit, and the serpent nevertheless perpetuates the terrible idea that the horrific evils of the world are a divine punishment because of the historic error committed by our ancestors. With this, two monstrous conceptions are being hammered into the collective unconscious: a) God is capable of punishing in so horrible a way, and b) God does it to billions of descendants who don't have the least guilt in that one supposed error. On top of that, it reinforces the idea – so wide spread and so harmful – that, in the last instance, if there is evil in the world, it is because God wanted it and wants it, as paradise would otherwise be possible on the Earth and, on top of that, punishment would not be meted out. In

this way, the general belief continues to thrive that suffering, disease, and death originate from a divine decision, even if it is in the form of punishment.

2) Bound with this idea is the idea of the creation of man and woman for the “glory” of God and for his service. Those words can have an acceptable meaning, but in the normal way of thinking they have been taken literally: it is God who demands we serve him in order to save our souls; otherwise, punishment will come. Feuerbach supported his atheism there: because God is everything, man must be nothing. In fact, the opposite is true: in creating us, God has not thought of himself, but only and solely in our welfare. Using this language, it would have to be said rather that, as reflected in Jesus, it is God who serves us, because he loves us and we need him.

3) Morality, far from being the word of love and the promise of help that orients and helps us towards true happiness, becomes a burden imposed by God. Kant denounced this conception as unworthy and infantilized. The worse thing is that it makes the effort, the discipline, and even the sacrifice that – for everyone, be they believers or not – morality often entails seem like something God has imposed on a whim, and not because it would help life be easier for us. Surely it never will be possible to measure the amount of resentment that this horrible conception has accumulated in the conscience of many believers.

4) All of this reaches its intolerable climax in the idea of hell, as punishment for someone who “did not serve” or “did not comply.” In short, God, who loves without limits and pardons without conditions, ends up being described as punishing--for all eternity and with unheard of torments--our always small errors, the fruits of a weak and limited freedom. The advance of sensibility has brought about in our time a generalized opposition to the death penalty and even to life in prison. Are we humans better than God?

5) The vision of sin marches in parallel. Thomas Aquinas already had said that sin is not bad because it does evil to God, but because it does evil to us: because we do not offend God more than in the measure that we act against our own well-being. Nevertheless,

Translated by Michael Dougherty

a great part of theology and preaching continues ignoring that what is fundamental is God's interest that we not do harm to ourselves, that we not spoil our own life and ruin our own fulfillment. The father of the prodigal son does not worry about his honor or insult, he is concerned that the son was dead, and he has returned to life; he was lost, and he has been found. Along with moralistic deformation, it has caused, in the depths of the consciousness of many people, the idea growing like a poisonous worm that sin would be wonderful for us, but we cannot enjoy it because God forbids it to us. In other words: God does not want us to be happy.

### **Against a Distorted Reading of Redemption**

If that happens to the creation, the consequences can be felt with more force in the redemption. The marvel that we could never be able to imagine on our own, of a God that becomes present in history in a thousand ways and with infinite patience in order to go about helping us to overcome evil and sin, is, for many, turned into a terrible settling of accounts, with a punishment in the beginning and a threat in the end.

1) Already it starts with an inconceivable particularism. A God who, creating for love, is from the beginning awakening salvation wherever there is a man or a woman, that is to say, everywhere and, in an express way, in all the religions, was presented for many centuries as preoccupied solely with a single people: the chosen ones. The others remained outside of his revelation and his total salvation: extra ecclesiam nulla salus. At best, there was the hope - in a type of marathon waiting list - that one day a mission would arrive to them (that for billions never arrived nor will arrive). Fortunately, since Vatican II, this horrible vision it is being superseded. But the effects endure with intense sharpness: there continues being much dogmatism and much exclusivism; too much resistance to a revision of the concept of revelation and to a generous dialogue among religions.

2) More serious yet is the sacrificial vision of the entire process. The effort of God to intensify to the maximum his presence and to open paths to his grace; his working through Jesus to reveal his love without limits and his unlimited understanding of our weakness and sin; his not turning back although such love would cost him nothing less than the murder of his beloved Son...all came to be interpreted as a

price that he demanded, as a punishment necessary to appease his wrath.

It is painful to use these expressions, but, incredible as it seems, they can still be found for example, taking literally the abandonment on the cross in important theologians of our time: not only Luther and Calvin, who were still nearly in the middle ages, but also in Barth, Moltmann and Urs von Balthasar, to cite some of the greats. I insist, because, although I do not question their good intention, it is indispensable to avoid everything that can obscure the infinite love of the Father. From faith, in a non-fundamentalist interpretation, we must be sure that God never was so near his Son as when they were breaking him on the cross (he did not abandon him), and he never would have allowed his death, if it were possible to avoid it (He didn't want the agony in the Garden).

3) Finally, there is something that, at its heart, is much more serious, because it encompasses everything: the belief that all the suffering of the world is a punishment of God for a sin that, except for Adam and Eve, the rest of us have not committed; otherwise, if by chance God had decided not to punish us - that is to say, he was compassionate and pardoned us - we would be living in a paradise. And then, in order to pardon us, he demanded nothing less than the bloody sacrifice of his Son. Finally, if we do not behave ourselves, the eternal punishment of hell waits for us (on which, with spelled out consequences, the ministry of fear has so insisted).

This scheme has become engraved as something so obvious upon the religious imagination that it is almost impossible for us to perceive its true hideousness. Luckily, when it is explained, almost nobody takes it literally. That is why it is necessary to bluntly expose it in order to be able to reject it with all possible force and to replace it with the true one, already proposed in essence by St. Irenaeus in the 2nd century: Creation in the inevitable weakness of birth; loving support of God in history despite our failures and sin; culmination of that support in the saving fullness of Christ; and hope of total salvation in Glory. That is to say, the promise of birth and the hope of a glorious happiness.

### **Against a Distorted Experience of Spirituality**

As anticipated, that double vision that we finished outlining schematically ends up formulating the expe-

rience of faith in concrete life.

1) The dualist vision is on the first level of importance, because it is the one that in some way organizes religious space. God there above and we here down below, the sacred and the profane, that which pertains to God and that which belongs to us, the church and the world... they mark the religious life with a cruel fire. It would be ingenuous to think that the distinction can be completely suppressed, because it responds to a real fact: the difference between God and his creation. But that difference is for the affirmation of our being: God does fight over territory with us. Quite the opposite: the more present he is, the more he makes us exist; the more we welcome his action, so much more do we find fulfillment ourselves. The bad thing is in turning the difference into distance, the distinction into dualism, the support into imposition. Because then God becomes master and religion consists of serving and appeasing him, in requesting aid and favors from him, in order to secure his reward and to avoid his punishment.

2) A negative vision of life spontaneously derives from that conception. Redemption is separated from creation and opposed to it, in such a way that everything created ends up appearing indifferent to faith, when not as bad and corrupted. Texts of the Scripture, in themselves deep and venerable, are taken in the sense opposite to which, really, they mean. Thus, for example, the call to deny oneself or to lose one's own life cannot mean the cancellation of our being, but exactly the opposite: to deny our negation, that is to say, what damages our authentic being, that impedes our self-realization and reaching wholeness. God does not want to annul our being, but to take it to its literally infinite fullness.

3) The consequences have been serious. As a result an enemy of the body spirituality, distrustful of all joy, was born, that opted for the fuga mundi and agere contra as a global style. It put in place a sacrificialist mood that unconsciously placed in the environment the belief that God is contented when he sees us suffer or that he grants favors in exchange for our gratuitous suffering or our sacrifices. It cannot be surprising that this has often resulted in the excesses that today terrify us (certain groups and certain shrines show that still there are too many remainders) and the accusations of Christianity being an enemy of

life (Nietzsche).

4) Almost worse: that approach has obscured the meaning of truly Christian suffering. Not the suffering that looks for mere asceticism or one's own perfection, but one that, like Jesus', is embraced when it is necessary in order to love others. It is the work of service, it is risking one's life in favor of justice, it is being capable of self-renunciation in favor of the poor. It is, really, what the theology of the liberation and the example of their martyrs try to teach to us, learning it from Jesus: he did not avoid the normal joy of living, even being accused of being a "glutton and drunkard" because he did not practice a false asceticism; but he was able to love "until the end," until giving his life for love of all.

5) Finally, we point out something less showy, but of decisive importance: the radical investment of the Christian experience of grace, that came to change the meaning of prayer. Creating us for love, God takes the absolute initiative, as much to bring us into being (creational moment) as to help us into fulfillment (salvific moment). For that reason, our role is to welcome his initiative: to let us be and be saved by Him, accepting his grace and collaborating with his action in us and others. But, insensitively, we have been turning everything around up to the point to which it seems that we have all the initiative, as if we were truly interested in salvation and we had to convince God so that He also gets interested and collaborates with us. Prayer then turns into a petition that dares to remind God of the needs of fellow human beings, seeking to convince him so that he helps the sick or the victims; we can even go so far as to offer gifts and sacrifices to him to cheer him up; and, finally, we come to repeat to him a chorus urging that he be good and compassionate: that "he listen and have mercy." I know that these words are hard and unjust given the intention of the petitioners. But it is necessary to detect this false direction and its terrible reversal of the roles between God and us.

#### **Coda**

I know well that there are objections and difficulties... But it is necessary to think about them and speak them out loud. This primary evidence should spark us to new creativity and a sincere effort to update our understanding and experience of faith as we keep faithful to the living Word of God. □

# A CALL FOR A NEW REFORM

**JOHN SHELBY SPONG**

*Bishop emeritus of Newark, NJ, EEUU*

*Martin Luther ignited the Reformation of the 16th century by nailing to the door of the church in Wittenberg in 1517 the 95 Theses that he wished to debate. I will publish this challenge to all Christians in the bulletin of the Diocese of Newark, The Bishop's Voice. Posting them also on the internet, I send these 12 theses to the recognized Christian leaders of the world, inviting them to a debate. My theses are far smaller in number than were those of Martin Luther, but they are far more threatening theologically. JS Spong.*

1. **Theism**, as a way of defining God, is dead. God can no longer be understood with credibility as a Being, supernatural in power, dwelling above the sky and prepared to invade human history periodically to enforce the divine will. So, most theological God-talk today is meaningless unless we find a new way to speak of God.

2. Since God can no longer be conceived in theistic terms, it becomes nonsensical to seek to understand **Jesus** as the incarnation of the theistic deity. So, the Christology of the ages is bankrupt.

3. The biblical story of the perfect and finished creation from which human beings fell into **sin** is pre-Darwinian mythology and post-Darwinian nonsense.

4. The virgin birth, understood as literal biology, makes the **divinity of Christ**, as traditionally understood, impossible.

5. The **miracle** stories of the New Testament can no longer be interpreted in a post-Newtonian world as supernatural events performed by an incarnate deity.

6. The view of **the cross as the sacrifice** for the sins of the world is a barbarian idea based on primitive concepts of God that must be dismissed.

7. **Resurrection** is an action of God, who raised Jesus into the meaning of God. It therefore cannot be a physical resuscitation occurring inside human history.

8. The story of the **ascension** assumed a three-tiered universe and is therefore not capable of being translated into the concepts of a post-Copernican space age.

9. There is no external, objective, revealed standard **writ** in Scripture or on tablets of stone that will govern our ethical behavior for all time.

10. **Prayer** cannot be a request made to a theistic deity to act in human history in a particular way.

11. The hope for **life after death** must be separated forever from the behavior-control mentality of reward and punishment. The church must abandon, therefore, its reliance on guilt as a motivator of behavior.

12. All human beings bear God's image and must be respected for what each person is. Therefore, no external description of one's being, whether based on race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, can properly be used as the basis for either rejection or **discrimination**.

Author's Note: These theses posted for debate are inevitably stated in a negative manner. That is deliberate. Before one can hear what Christianity is one must create room for that bearing by clearing out the misconceptions of what Christianity is not. Why Christianity Must Change or Die is a manifesto calling the church to a new reformation. In that book I begin to sketch out a view of God beyond theism, an understanding of the Christ as a God presence and a vision of the shape of both the church and its Liturgy for the future.

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## **Pedagogical suggestions** for study groups:

- In a single session, read each thesis and have a debate by trying to see what the author is referring to and what is said as well as by discerning what seems correct.
- Organize a workshop with a session for each thesis,

*complementing the topic with readings.*

- Invite the whole community to study the theme, preparing everyone perhaps through an appropriate brief course.
- In addition to this text, see what doesn't fit well today in our faith and study that in community. □

# WE LACK NEW RELIGIOUS IMAGES

SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL IMAGES ARE SPENT AND EVEN HARMFUL  
**JOSÉ MARÍA VIGIL**

*Panamá, Panamá*

## SEEING:

### What is reality according to religion?

Any world view can be reduced to a few traits or basic images. In outline, what is the world, what is reality, as it is seen by religion? The vast majority of Christians would answer that reality is:

-A God who lived alone forever, who one day decided to create this fragile world, which continues to exist because he sustains its being;

-An almighty Lord God who dictates his law moral to us so we can be incorporated into his Plan of Salvation for the world, whose final triumph he guarantees;

-A God the Father who tests us in this material world in order to later bring us to eternal life with him in heaven, after we are judged...

These are three basic schemes or "scenarios" by which reality is understood or imagined by religions, e.g., the monotheistic ones. And many believers think the reality is just like this, literally.

## JUDGING:

But reality, in itself, continues to remain an inaccessible mystery. "Why does reality exist, rather than nothing?" asked Leibniz. Cultures--and religions within them--responded to this anguished unresolved question by picturing reality as any of these or other "scenarios," through creative and original images and metaphors, sometimes beautiful. Our ancestors were able to live with these schemes, which gave them a purpose, an understanding of the world, a hope, a mission.

But we ask ourselves, do these images "describe" reality as it is? Obviously not; reality itself is a mystery that surpasses us. Only fundamentalists think that reality is literally how religions traditions "describe" it. These traditions are symbolic: profound truths, not literal truths, not descriptive truths. Are images perfect? Or can they have their drawbacks? Can they be improved upon? Are they eternal images for "forever," or do they expire? Can it be that some are not only obsolete, but even negative, harmful today?

## Specific problems of these three images

- The image of a Creator who created everything out of nothing has its difficulties. If God always existed by himself, and he could have always existed like that, what is the meaning of reality? Is it a whim (of God)? Could everything not have existed? Isn't there anything that exists in itself?

This image of creation completely eliminates the reality between the Creator and creation, emptying this entity and reducing it to a mere contingency, only "sustained in its being by God." A transcendent God distant from the world would truly be the totality of being.

But who says that reality is dual, and that there is a creative principle exiled from reality, entirely different and transcendent, and that the real reality that we know and are is pure emptiness and dependence? The world we live in today, and that the current scientific explosion presents us with, is incompatible with that image. For a quite a while, this creation has not been plausible according to science. Can religion contradict it?

This dualistic and split image harms us because it alienates us, removes any existential reality from the cosmos, and removes immanence from our world. It prevents a unified holistic experience of transcendence and immanence: it makes us schizophrenic.

- The image of God as an almighty feudal Lord who we all must serve by virtue of being born in his fiefdom, whose principle essential relationship with humans is a relationship of total dominance-submission, also has major problems.

Imagining God as a King who rules the world has every appearance of being a projection of patriarchal agrarian society, which spread through cultures starting from the Neolithic era, when "religions" (not religiosity) of the warrior, patriarchal, monarchical God began to appear.

But an image like this does not respond to our sensibility, our vision, our current situation. Today this "ontology of lordship and hierarchical-patriarchal domination" is unacceptable to us. Moreover, this im-

age absolves us of our responsibility when we believe that God will save the world no matter what happens.

This image hurts us in the present situation where we live with the possibility of a final global disaster (nuclear or climate) caused by humans because it makes us blind to what we now see clearly: that the world is in our hands, and nobody will come to save it if we refuse to accept our responsibility. In this concrete sense, the common religious discourse about God as Lord harms humanity and the cosmos.

- The image that we are souls currently reduced in our spiritual condition, living for a short time chained to a material body, but destined to an eternal life in heaven after passing an individual judgment has been in force with much strength for millennia.

This view looks only at the historical drama of humans. They are the only important thing in reality: the rest of reality is accidental, additional, only props in a scene in which the spiritual salvation history of humans is represented. All material is an aspect or negative marginal episode that will finally disappear...

But we do not live in that dualistic world of matter and spirit at odds. Those Platonic concepts are simply unacceptable once we open our eyes to today's world, where the distinction between matter and spirit is increasingly uncertain. There is no matter entirely devoid of selfhood, energy, and life. Particles and waves, matter and energy, land and life, mind and consciousness...are only different aspects of the same single reality. We cannot think that we are expatriates of our original world, nor that we are competing for an individual salvation outside of this world.

We no longer share this vision that the most important thing in the cosmos is the human being, along with our interests, history, and personal celestial salvation. We want to live the religious dimension in the real world of the cosmos, of Gaia, in a holistic manner with all matter, energy, life, mind, spirit, and Divinity. Being the last to arrive, we have the privilege to be trained to humbly and responsibly take on the co-governance of nature.

Many more things should be said about these and other images (we say a few things in complementary materials) that seem discordant today, and that for many Christians who live in accordance with the best advances in current thinking seem strange (original sin, redemption, heaven, hell).

## **ACTION:**

### **Recognizing the nature of religious language**

We must be aware of the peculiarity of religious language: it is symbolic, metaphorical. It expresses "deep" truths. But it does not have the capacity or power to describe to us or inform us about reality, the other world, material, and spirit. It is like poetry: it tells us wonderful things and transmits profound experiences with lots of true content, but we should not get confused by it, interpreting it literally instead of "poetically."

Our ancestors interpreted the symbols literally, as descriptions. We are the first generation that is seeing this epistemological cultural change.

No one has seen Ultimate Reality, but all people have needed to ask about it to live out our religious dimension. This inaccessibility has been supplemented with intuition, imagination, creativity, symbols, and metaphors. Religious images made like this cannot be perfect (they are human) or endure forever (because they wear out over time and lack foundation with advancement of knowledge). There may come a time when they not only cease to be useful, but even prove harmful.

Moreover, if we look at history, we see that traditions, including ours, have never ceased to create new images and to abandon others. It is not anything new. Only now, the change is faster, more radical, more urgent, and, for the first time, conscious.

The problem is complex and has no easy solution, because metaphors do not come about by decree or by the brilliant imagination of one individual. They arise from the collective subconsciousness of the time.

What should we do then, just wait passively? It is possible to do many important things: become aware of the particularity of religious epistemology, overcome fundamentalism, recognize that our religious discourse does not describe reality, and consider the need to renew it, even when our community tranquilly lives with its inherited ancestral images. There is no need for people to change who do not feel the need, but it is important that they recognize the problem in order to understand what is happening with many people, and in order not to impede the necessary transformation.

In the supplementary materials of this Agenda, we offer texts, reflections, and suggestions.

# TEN TIPS FOR LIVING RELIGION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

**FREI BETTO**

*São Paulo, Brazil*

1. Get reconnected. Avoid solipsism, individualism, fatal loneliness. Reconnect to the deepest part of your own self, where infinite goods are grown; to nature, of which we are all expression and conscience; to our neighbor, on whom we are inevitably dependent; to God, who loves us unconditionally. This is religion: reconnecting.

2. Keep in mind that religions emerged in the history of humanity about eight thousand years ago. Spirituality, however, is as old as humanity itself. It is the foundation of every religion, like love is the foundation of the family. In your religion, seek to enhance your spirituality. Be wary of religion that does not cultivate spirituality and prioritizes dogmas, precepts, commandments, laws, and hierarchies.

3. Make sure your religion is centered on God's greatest gift: life. Religion centered on authority, doctrine, the idea of sin, or predestination is the opium of the people. "I came that you may have life and life in abundance," said Jesus (John 10:10). Therefore religion cannot stay indifferent to all which impedes or threatens life: oppression, exclusion, submission, discrimination, and disqualification of those who do not hold the same belief.

4. Commit yourself to a religious community committed to the enhancement of spirituality. Religion is communion. And give your community a social character: combat misery; be in solidarity with the poor and wronged; uncompromisingly defend life; denounce the structures of death; announce that "another world is possible," one that is more just and free, where all can live with dignity and joy.

5. Internalize your religious experience. Turn your belief into your work. Reduce the contradiction between your prayer and your action. Do for others what you would have them do for you. Love others as God loves us: unconditionally.

6. Pray. Religion without prayer is like a menu without food. Take a moment of your day to encounter God within the most intimate part of yourself. Let the Holy Spirit polish your mind, unleash your inner self, expand your capacity for loving.

7. Be tolerant of other religions as you would want them to be of yours. Rid yourself of any fundamentalist tendency of thinking you own the truth and can best interpret the will of God. Engage in dialogue with those who have different beliefs than you. One who loves is not intolerant.

8. Remember: God has no religion. It is us, in institutionalizing different spiritual experiences, who have created religion. All religions are inserted into this world in which we live and they maintain an intrinsic interrelation. Every religion, in the society in which it appears, plays a political role, whether legitimizing injustices, remaining indifferent to them, or denouncing them prophetically in the name of the principle that we are all sons and daughters of God. Therefore, we have the right to make humanity a family.

9. A tree is known by its fruits. Assess whether your religion is loving or exclusionary, sower of blessings or herald of hell, servant of God's project in human history or the power of money.

10. God is love. Religion which does not lead us to love is not of God. More important than having faith, embracing a religion, or going to church, is loving. "If I have a faith that can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing," said the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 13:2). Better an atheist who loves than a believer who hates, discriminates, and oppresses. Love is the root and the fruit of all true religions, the experience of God, and all authentic faith.

Translation by Rebecca Chabot



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Brief articles, various topics.

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The Latin American martyrs, day by day.

## 10) La Página de Monseñor Romero

<http://servicioskoinonia.org/romero>

The homilies that Mons. Romero preached on the biblical texts that are read to us today.

## 11) Pedro Casaldáliga's Page

<http://servicioskoinonia.org/Casaldaliga>

His articles, poetry, circular letters, books, the listing of his complete works.

## 12) Cerezo Barredo's Page

<http://servicioskoinonia.org/cerezo>

The weekly Sunday drawing and others.

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# RECURSOS PEDAGÓGICOS SOBRE RELIGIÓN

MARTÍN VALMASEDA

Equipo Cauce, Guatemala, equipocauce.com

Antes, para buscar esos documentos y materiales pedagógicos, era necesario acudir a videotecas y librerías. Hoy con los lazos, enlaces y redes, podemos bucear en webs, youtubes, emules, ares, y links, para encontrar películas, canciones, textos al alcance de la mano -de la tecla-, bajarlos y trabajarlos. Nos ayudarán en esto los buscadores más comunes, preguntándoles por el tema o el material que necesitamos, o también por páginas de «enlaces cristianos», «webs cristianas», «recursos cristianos»... o de cualquier otra religión. Dividimos nuestras sugerencias por bloques.

## - Videos, audiovisuales, powerpoints

Entre los powerpoints que corren de computador a computador, uno que desmonta nuestra imagen simplona del Dios viejito barbudo: *Dios es mujer*, que podemos encontrar en *radialistas.net*

Hoy día el video es «tecnología punta», inimitable hace unas décadas, y ahora profusamente difundida, y disponible hasta la saturación: basta ir a Youtube y escribir cualquier palabra-tema, o cualquier nombre de personaje, o pensador, o teólogo... Sólo pondremos un ejemplo: busque *Karen Armstrong*, o *John Shelby Spong*, o también *Richard Dawkins*, por sólo hablar de los más célebres. Infinitos recursos a nuestra disposición; sólo hace falta «perder tiempo» para encontrar lo que necesitamos, y compartirlo.

## - Series radiofónicas, audios, mp3

- Mencionamos en primer lugar las grandes series radiofónicas latinoamericanas clásicas, de hace ya unos años, producidas por SERPAL, puestas a disposición pública en *serpal.org* Mención especial para el tema que nos ocupa merece «Un tal Jesús», disponible en *untaljesus.net* tanto en audio como en texto. También existe un CD interactivo que lo complementa.

- Nueva es la serie *Otro Dios es posible*: cien entrevistas a Jesús (que “vuelve” a la Tierra), en programas audio y texto escrito. Acompañan a cada entrevista unos documentos para fundamentarla. Toda la serie está liberada en *emisoraslatinas.net*. También existe un libro con su CD.

Para aclarar a quienes se escandalicen fácilmente, CAUCE ha editado un pequeño folleto que ayuda a

reflexionar sobre las distintas actitudes frente a esos programas. Se encuentra en *equipocauce.com*

## - Canciones

La canción, o el disco-foro, ofrece siempre una base atractiva de diálogo. Algunos temas:

Las clásicas *Preguntas sobre Dios*, de Atahualpa Yupanqui, reflejan de modo sangrante lo que busca reflexiva la teología de la liberación.

Como respuesta a esas preguntas escuchamos el poema de Casaldáliga, musicalizado por Ricardo Cantalapiedra: *Donde tú dices ley, yo digo Dios*... Muchas de las letras que nos ofrecen los discos de este cantautor («El profeta», «La casa de mi amigo», «No queremos a los grandes palabreros») han resistido el paso del tiempo y hoy pueden enfrentarse a la piadosería musical de lo llamado carismático.

Los Guaraguau nos recuerdan que *No basta rezar*.

Domingo Pérez en *Oración comprometida* ha puesto música a poemas de Casaldáliga: *Piensa también con los pies, Maldita sea la cruz, De vuelta voy*... nos ayudan a no poner nuestra creencia en memorias estereotipadas: *www.domingoperez.net*

## - Cine

Para reflexionar sobre la fe en el cine debemos rebuscar igual que las amas de casa revuelven las «pacas de ropa»: rebuscar videos breves para trabajos de grupo como *Jesús de la pirámide al círculo* (Cauce) o películas de todas las épocas con las más distintas respuestas religiosas. Algunas:

*Nazarín*, el sacerdote entregado, hundido en el sentimiento de fracaso en su fe. En algún aspecto es semejante a la obra de teatro *El león dormido*, de Graham Green.

Otra meditación sobre fe agónica: *Diario de un cura rural*. No se citan estas obras por tratar de sacerdotes sino por su profundización dolorosa en la fe.

*El séptimo sello*, de Bergman, una de las películas clásicas que buscan el camino trascendental del ser humano. También *Los comulgantes*.

Por citar algunas películas de diferentes nacionalidades, que tienen latente la búsqueda de Dios, citaré la china: *El camino a casa*; el filme iraní: *El color del*

*paraíso*; el musical norteamericano, en ambiente de los judíos rusos: *El violinista en el tejado*.

Dentro de los cientos de películas no biográficas sobre Jesús, cito solamente *Jesús de Montreal*. Las que «cuentan la vida de Jesús» pedirían un tratamiento aparte, y muy crítico.

Hay películas que aparentemente no son religiosas como *El festín de Babette*, pero nos ayudan a descubrir a Dios escondido en la comunidad y la fiesta.

#### - **Materiales, libros, folletos y artículos breves**

Muchas editoriales tienen **series** o **colecciones** «de frontera», con libros especialmente pensados para provocar el pensamiento. Un ejemplo es el patrocinado por esta misma Agenda Latinoamericana, la ya conocida colección «Tiempo axial», con autores como Lenaers, Spong, Knitter, Hick... que hacen pensar, replantear y debatir temas profundos.

Muchas **novelas**, algunas pasadas al cine nos plantean la presencia de Dios en la vida: Graham Green, Bruce Marshall, Martín Descalzo...

Mención especial merece la novela de Unamuno: *San Manuel bueno mártir*, sobre la fe experimentada en el vacío. Destacamos varias obras de Saramago: *El Evangelio según Jesucristo*, *Ensayo sobre la ceguera*, *Ensayo sobre la lucidez*... Su ideología queda reflejada en la frase: «Dios es el silencio del universo, y el ser humano, el grito que da sentido a ese silencio».

No podemos dejar de recomendar los **libros de teología** mismos: si antes eran un campo reservado a los especialistas, hoy hemos de saber que hay una gran cantidad de ellos en internet, a disposición. Refirámonos sólo a **servidores masivos** más conocidos, repletos de libros, como *scribd.com*, *4shared.com*, *mediafire.com*, *rapidshare.com*, *megaupload.com*...

Hay también ya una respetable cantidad de **revistas de teología en línea**; seguimos sosteniendo que la RELaT ([servicioskoininia.org/relat](http://servicioskoininia.org/relat)) es la más veterana, pero hoy son cientos: pregúntese en un buscador por «revistas de teología en línea» y similares.

Muy variada es la colección de **folletos** «Cristianismo i justicia», de los jesuitas de Cataluña, públicamente disponibles en *fespinal.com*. Algunos títulos: *El joven*, *El gurú y el pájaro*, *Cuatro testimonios*, *Por qué volví a la fe*, *El dios de Bush*, *La difícil laicidad*...

Los folletos de la revista Alandar ([alandar.org](http://alandar.org)): *Yo no soy ateo* (testimonio de Tierno Galván), *Oye Dios*, *¿Por qué sufrimos?*... alimentan nuestra reflexión.

CAUCE procura acercar a la reflexión sobre la Trinidad con el folleto: *La santísima comunidad*.

Hay que conocer los **dibujos** y reflexiones personales de José Luis Cortés. Destacan las series: *El Señor de los amigos*, y *Tus amigos no te olvidan*, en los que dibuja un poco menos y escribe un poco más.

Es importante para la conciencia popular la publicación de **escritos breves** que se empiezan en viajes de autobús y se terminan comentándolos en comunidad. Como los audiovisuales cortos, los “youtubes”...

Entre muchos **artículos** actuales que responden a la crisis de la actual situación me limito a recomendar uno de José Enrique Galarreta: ¿Qué está pasando en la Iglesia?, publicado en «Somos Iglesia» de Andalucía, por *redescristianas.net*

Afortunadamente no nos faltan teólogos y pensadores que popularizan en artículos breves sus reflexiones. Un ejemplo es «la columna semanal de Leonardo Boff», que ya pasa de las 400 semanas sin interrupción... ni siquiera en vacaciones. Pueden encontrarse en *servicioskoininia.org*, *ciudadredonda.org*, *redescristianas.net*, *atrio.org*, *ciberiglesia.net*...

Hace falta sembrar la inquietud en quienes tienen muy segura una doctrina que al menor empuje se les tambalea. Es mejor que se la tambaleemos nosotros, para que caiga lo que tiene que caer y se mantenga la fe. La fe vestida, casi disfrazada, aunque por debajo siga siendo fe.

Y es que muchos de estos materiales, reflejan la «parábola» que escuché a la cuenta-cuentos Ana G, Castellanos, y que nos ayuda a abordar expresiones alejadas del lenguaje religioso que hemos estado acostumbrados a manejar. Dice que: La verdad andaba desnuda por la vida y todos la insultaban y rechazaban. La mentira pasó a su lado y se compadeció de ella. Si quieres, le dijo, yo puedo ayudarte a mejorar tu presencia. La cubrió con un bello vestido, la adornó con collares, pendientes... y la maquilló.

Cuando la verdad se iba así adornada, gritó la mentira: “¡oye muchacha, cuando te vean no les digas que eres la verdad!”

- ¡Pero yo no quiero ser mentira!

- No, no. Solamente diles que eres... la fábula.

(Algunos la llaman parábola, símbolo, mito, género literario)

De todo eso tratan los materiales aquí citados. Utilícenlos para cubrir y descubrir la verdad de la fe. 

# INFORMACIÓN Y MATERIALES COMPLEMENTARIOS

PARA AMPLIAR Y TRABAJAR PEDAGÓGICAMENTE EL TEMA DE ESTA AGENDA

*Nuestra Agenda es un instrumento, una herramienta para el trabajo de concienciación y de educación popular, de ahí su estilo de diagramación intensivo sobre el papel, bien aprovechado, sin espacios blancos ni elementos gráficos. Pero desde muy al comienzo de la era digital, adoptó la iniciativa de conjuntar «papel y telemática», ofreciendo en internet un amplio repertorio de materiales complementarios, a pública disposición, para quienes quieran servirse de su propuesta temática anual. Estas dos páginas son sólo una selección de los materiales y recursos que en la «página complementaria de la Agenda» ([latinoamericana.org/2011/info](http://latinoamericana.org/2011/info)) se ofrece: una amplia bibliografía (libros), una seleccionada cibergrafía (páginas y enlaces de internet), y documentos históricos y artículos especialmente aptos para ser debatidos y trabajados en la educación popular.*

## 1. ORGANICE ACTIVIDADES

Vea si su comunidad está viva y entusiasta, o si necesitaría una renovación. Vea si sería bueno proponerle hacer un curso de renovación, de replanteamiento, de estudio de los puntos aparentemente *anticuados*, o *sobrepasados*, o *no comprensibles*...

Haga primero la propuesta a la comunidad, y que ésta decida el tema o la materia a revisar y compartir. Aparte de los materiales aportados en esta Agenda'2011, sugerimos estos otros que pueden utilizarse como guión-manual de estudio en grupo o comunidad:

- LENAERS, Roger, *Otro cristianismo es posible. Fe en lenguaje de modernidad*, Abya Yala, Quito 2008. Sus capítulos pueden tomarse de: [http://2006.atrío.org/?page\\_id=1616](http://2006.atrío.org/?page_id=1616)
- VIGIL, José María, *Teología del pluralismo religioso*, Abya Yala, Quito 2005, 400 pp; o El Almendro, Córdoba, España, 2005. Puede tomarse de: [http://cursotpr.adg-n.es/?page\\_id=3](http://cursotpr.adg-n.es/?page_id=3)
- SPONG, Jon Shelby, *Un cristianismo nuevo para un mundo nuevo*, Abya Yala, Quito 2010, colección «Tiempo axial».
- HERRERO DEL POZO, Juan Luis, *Religión sin magia*, El Almendro, Córdoba (España) 2006.

En cada país hay materiales adecuados, cursos de renovación, y también personas que pueden asesorar y animar actividades. Pida asesoramiento a los centros y entidades especializados. Monte su actividad en colaboración con otros; es mejor.

Todo esto y más en: [latinoamericana.org/2011/info](http://latinoamericana.org/2011/info)

## 2. CIBERGRAFÍA

[www.atrío.org](http://www.atrío.org): lugar de diálogo entre profano/sagrado  
[www.ihu.unisinos.br](http://www.ihu.unisinos.br): Instituto Humanitas Unisinos  
[www.redescristianas.net](http://www.redescristianas.net)  
[curasopp.com.ar](http://curasopp.com.ar): Curas en la opción por los pobres  
[www.ciudadredonda.org/](http://www.ciudadredonda.org/)  
[www.espiritualidadprogresista.blogspot.com](http://www.espiritualidadprogresista.blogspot.com)  
[josemariacastillo.blogspot.com](http://josemariacastillo.blogspot.com)  
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[www.feadulta.com](http://www.feadulta.com)  
[www.cebcontinental.org](http://www.cebcontinental.org)  
[chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/?sp=y](http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/?sp=y)  
[www.petition-vaticanum2.org/pageID\\_7331924.html](http://www.petition-vaticanum2.org/pageID_7331924.html)  
[www.ccp.org.es](http://www.ccp.org.es)  
y muchísimas otras...

En **Youtube** hay numerosos vídeos sobre:  
ARMSTRONG, Karen, como "TED Prize" (subtitulado en castellano); *The history of God...*  
CÂMARA, Helder: *O santo rebelde...*  
CASADÁLIGA, P., *Pregunta a dom Pedro Casaldáliga; O anel de tucum...*  
FREIRE, Paulo, *Paulo Freire e a Teologia da libertação*  
COMBLIN, *Conversación con Cristian Warken...*  
KÜNG, "Obra escrita"..  
SPONG, John Shelby: *Infierno; Beyond Theism; Future Christianity; Must Christianity Change or Die?; God in the 21st Century...*  
LÖWY-NASCIMENTO: *Oque é a teologia da libertação...*  
y como éstos, se puede buscar muchos otros.  
-Otros vídeos y materiales: cfr esta Agenda, pp. 232.

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# LOS TITANES DEL TIEMPO

WINNER OF THE  
«LATIN AMERICAN SHORT STORY»

AROLD MOISÉS PESCADO TOMÁS

*Sumpango, Sacatepéquez, Guatemala*

Se acercaba el tiempo de las luciérnagas en el aire, esas pequeñas luces que con las primeras lluvias dan la idea de ser chispas de fuego al extinguirse el incendio que quemaba la tierra en el verano.

La noche que no era noche delineaba figuras chincas por el camino de tierra, de piedra, de polvo, de lodo. En el lento vaivén del alarido de un viento quejumbroso flotaba la frescura de un cielo estrellado, sin nubes, sin sombras. Cuando pasaba por el camino de pedregales el sonido se hizo grande, que cubría todo, que lo envolvía todo y el firmamento se movía como si viajara en barco. De pronto se sintió caer en un profundo abismo, sintió volar hacia atrás, de espaldas por un segundo sin fin.

El ladrido de un perro negro que dormía en el camino lo vino a despertar; era como alma de diablo que mostraba sus dientes blancos mientras pasaban Lila, una vieja mula acanelada, y él, montado sobre ella casi dormido en el sueño del amanecer eterno.

¡Guau!, ¡guau!, ¡guau!, ¡guau!, guuuuu... ladraba el perro en tanto corría y regresaba como queriendo jugar a espaldas de la bestia. Lila seguía con su andar tranquilo, como si también durmiera de tanto caminar. Don Encarnación se tocó la cintura para revisar si seguía ahí el machete que colocó con mucho cuidado al salir de su casa. Y tuvo que sostenerse también el sombrero ancho para no caerse, porque la mula despertó asustada, ya que se sintió caer de espaldas frente a la fuerza del ladrido de un lebril pinto que se oponía a su camino.

-¡Shhitt!, ¡chucho! -dijo, para apartar al animal del pasaje-. Silencio. Atrás quedó la granja de los frailes y sus fieros guardianes caninos.

-¡Mercado central!, ¡mercado central!, ¡vamos madre!, ¡llega, llega! Con las primeras luces sonaban las bocinas como reses para el matadero, docenas de canastos y sacos con plumas, frutos, verduras y hortalizas eran cargados al camión donde viajaría Ña Candelaria. Bajo la luz de las estrellas y luceros pálidos florecía un verdadero mercado terrestre, casi acuoso por el vapor de las tazas de café que servían unas mujeres prietas a los camioneros rechonchos y malhumorados. Cestos con gallinas, patos, pavos; limón, toronja, chile, tomate, cebolla; calabazas, porotos y maíz.

En la alforja fósforos, ocote, pixtones, sal, chile, agua. La oscuridad palidecía como hombre que se asusta y que dormido enflaquece y despierto muere. La aurora aparecía tímida y ligera detrás de cerros con dioses seculares. El canto del ceniztle lloraba agua, y el hombre con su mula llegaba al monte, para trabajar la tierra sagrada y benévola, que generosa da a su tiempo la espiga, que es la madre del pan, y el maíz, padre del hombre americano. El sol pintaba el horizonte con sus rayos de luz. Mula y hombre eran como sombras en ese paisaje de oro. Los brazos y piernas, reumáticos de tanto labrar la tierra comenzaron su larga faena. Olía a tierra seca.

Doña Candelaria, mujer vieja y paciente como su esposo, llevó a vender miltomates verdes, gallinas amarillas y conejos blancos a la plaza de la ciudad.

-¡Hoy no hay venta!, ¡aquí nadie vende más! -gritaron unos gendarmes. Y hubo que correr para salvar la vida, y dejar la venta para no ir al calabozo, y llorar para destruir el badajo de plomo en la garganta. Los miserables no tienen derecho a ganarse la vida honradamente porque causan desorden y afean las horribles ciudades. Y causan enojos a los grandes estadistas idiotas, burgueses que creen ver todo y no ven nada.

Los primeros aguaceros agujerearon las viejas láminas de cinc. Don Encarnación regresó a casa y se quitó las botas de hule, ahora llenas de agua limpia y llovida. Entró a la cocina y vio a su esposa con las pupilas llenas de granizos calientes, tan calientes como lágrimas. Doña Candelaria narró con la voz quebrada cómo perdió todo y quedó ella sola, sin dinero, sin gallinas, ni conejos, ni nada. Los toscos brazos envolvieron a su esposa, los dos viejos lloraban. Menos mal que a ella no le había pasado nada. El agua sonaba como piedras en la lámina, roja de tan oxidada; pero eran piedras tan duras como diamantes, gotas de esperanza. Un colibrí hecho con cabellos de luna volaba entre las gotas de lluvia y de sus alas se desprendían fracciones de tiempo color del arco iris en el crisol de la tierra seca y sedienta. Los trabajadores con su trabajo honrado y noble son los verdaderos héroes de la historia, de la patria, de esta tierra milagrosa y legendaria. □

# EL RECUERDO O LA ESPERANZA

WINNER OF THE  
«LATIN AMERICAN SHORT STORY»

SUSANA BENAVIDES ALPÍZAR

San Vicente, Costa Rica

Despertó asustada buscando, más que con sus manos, con su alma, el cuerpo de Fernandito, le había costado dormirlo por la tos.

La puerta se había abierto con el viento. Cómo le pegaba la soledad cuando se despertaba en la madrugada creyendo que había vuelto...

No pudo volver a conciliar el sueño. Prendió una vela a la virgen de los ángeles y se sentó en la hamaca a meditar con profunda tristeza: la vida, más bien las circunstancias, le habían arrebatado la paz. Es que apenas habían pasado diez meses y no sabía si resignarse al recuerdo o mantener la esperanza.

Conoció a Ricardo siendo apenas una chiquilla, pero desde la primera vez que lo miró a los ojos se sintió mujer. Fue en una fiesta patronal donde los presentaron. Él era de aspecto maduro para su edad, moreno, de cejas pronunciadas y sus brazos dejaban notar el sin fin de laderas que había volcado con la pala. Dulce lo flechó con su sonrisa y con sus ojos que no necesitaban de palabras.

Maduraron las caricias y la moral se desbarató un día dejando a Dulce embarazada. Unos meses atrás la noticia hubiera sido una bomba pero, para asombro de ambos, nadie le prestó mayor importancia.

Por esos días habían llegado unos extranjeros gordiflones a negociar con la gente del pueblo. Ofrecían cambiar fincas por casas y empleos en la ciudad, empleos de mierda, pero muchos se la creyeron, abando-

nando cultivos, trabajo digno y monte por un poco de suerte.

Ricardo le insistió a su padre que se quedaran. Se enojaron. Su madre tuvo que intervenir para que aquello no terminara en golpes, pero nada pudo hacer para que el cerrado de su esposo cayera en cuenta. La pareja de viejos se fue con un montón de familias que se creían pobres a convertirse en pobres de verdad.

El problema en el pueblo surgió meses después, cuando el monocultivo de los gordiflones empezó a afectar a los que se quedaron. Los comerciantes prefirieron los precios bajos de éstos, dejando al resto comiéndose sus papas o trabajando para los misters por salarios de limosna.

Ricardo empezó un alboroto. Tomó primero la opinión del sacerdote, quien le aseguró que organizarse para defender a su gente no era ningún pecado. Se reunió con los vecinos dispuestos a reclamar. Poco duró la iniciativa. Rapidito llegaron amenazas anónimas de acabar con quienes buscaran derechos. La mayoría dejó de asistir a los encuentros que se convirtieron en furtivos.

La mañana de la desaparición Dulce le besó la frente y mientras lo persignaba le dijo con ternura: «Ricardo, hoy cumple un año Fernandito, llegue temprano pa' que comamos juntos». Qué iba a saber él que no volvería... Le sintió mientras le apretaba la sonrisa con un beso. 

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- La **página de información y materiales complementarios** de la Agenda: [latinoamericana.org/2011/info](http://latinoamericana.org/2011/info)  
*Todo lo que no cabe en este libro de papel pero que la Agenda también le ofrece para su trabajo de educación popular.*
- El **archivo telemático** de la Agenda: [servicioskoinonia.org/agenda/archivo](http://servicioskoinonia.org/agenda/archivo)  
*Todos los textos de los 20 años de la Agenda, organizados por temas, autor, título... a disposición pública permanente.*
- La **colección digital** de las Agendas aparecidas desde 1992: [latinoamericana.org/Desde1992](http://latinoamericana.org/Desde1992)  
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- La «**Cartilla popular**» de la Agenda: [latinoamericana.org](http://latinoamericana.org)  
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- Eventualmente, un «**Curso de teología popular**»: [servicioskoinonia.org/teologiapopular](http://servicioskoinonia.org/teologiapopular)  
*Lo que la Agenda no puede desarrollar por falta de espacio en el papel, desarrollado y razonado amplia y pedagógicamente. Para estudio individual o como programa comunitario de formación, un círculo de estudio, o una actividad universitaria.*
- La **colección «Tiempo Axial»**: [tiempoaxial.org](http://tiempoaxial.org) y los «**Servicios Koinonía**»: [servicioskoinonia.org](http://servicioskoinonia.org)

# JESÚS LOS ENVÍA EN MISIÓN

RELECTURA DEL ENVIO DE JESÚS A LOS DOCE Y A LOS 72

WINNER OF THE  
«NEOBIBLICAL PAGES» CONTEST

GERARDO GUILLÉN DE LA ROSA

México DF, México

La Asamblea estaba llegando a su fin. Estaban por tomar la resolución final. Se acordó que peregrinarían una mujer y un hombre de cada uno de los pueblos originarios. Irían representando a todos y cada uno de los que conforman estos pueblos; una pareja de zapotecos, chontales y hwaves, como de matlatzincas, popolucas y tepehuanes; dos mixtecos, ixcatecos y chocholtecos; así de chinantecos, náhuatlés y mazatecos, un par de mixes, altacuates y triques, también de zoques, chatinos y amuzgos. Irían una mujer y un hombre: tlapanecos, mayas y purépechas. Se escogerían dos tzotziles, tzeltales, choles y tojolabal. Parejas de ñañús, mazahuas y totonacos, de wirráríca, coras y mexicanero. Pares de tepehuanes, rarámuris y ténéks, como de puricuris, guaicuris y cochimí ooh'tames; dos yaquis, mayos, kikapúes y cuicatecos.

Después de dialogarlo, se resolvió que caminarían a todos los pueblos y lugares acordados y trazados en una ruta. Un niño que había estado presente desde el principio, muy calladito, escuchando el camino a seguir, tomo su crayón y fue uniendo cada uno de los lugares con una línea. Cuando vieron el mapa con la raya trazada se dieron cuenta que tenía forma de caracol. Asintieron con la cabeza, ésta es la ruta.

Uno de los ancianos se levantó y dijo:

—Sabemos que es mucho el trabajo y lo que tenemos que hacer para tener una buena milpa y cosechar unas buenas mazorcas, no es cosa fácil, y nosotros somos unos cuantos, por eso debemos pedir, rogar y quemar candela a la Madre Tierra y al Padre Cielo para que cada día haya más gente que quiera cultivar y cosechar para este mundo.

Se sentó.

Después de un silencio, una mujer, ya algo mayor, se puso de pie, se acomodó el rebozo bordado como los hacen en su pueblo, tomó la palabra y, despacito, dijo:

—Vamos a ir como becerros al matadero. No debe-

mos de llevar nada para el camino, sólo lo indispensable y sólo aquella ropa que llevemos puesta.

Volvió a tomar su lugar.

Se escuchó un murmullo que parecía un avispero. Poco a poco fue disminuyendo su intensidad hasta quedar otra vez en silencio. Uno de los principales levantó la mano para tomar la palabra.

—Aquellos que sean elegidos, cuando lleguen a un pueblo, localidad o ranchería, deben de buscar a los que ya estén organizados, en el templo, el barrio o como campesinos. Primero salúdenlos. Que ellos designen dónde podrán dormir y cómo se organicen para darles sus frijoles y sus tortillas. Agradezcan lo que se les dé. Quédense únicamente el tiempo necesario para ayudar a la organización en lo que les pidan.

Tomó su lugar.

Se comentó lo que se había dicho.

Una mujer, ya mayor, que había permanecido toda la asamblea en un silencio participante, como si únicamente estuviera escuchando, se puso de pie, con cierta dificultad, pero ya levantada se veía firme y bien plantada en el suelo. Suspiró y les dijo:

—Cuando lleguen a algún lugar y no los quieran recibir, no los ofendan, no los critiquen, no los cuestionen. Pero antes de seguir la peregrinación díganles, y que les quede claro, que aun sin su participación este reino de una mejor humanidad se está construyendo y les sería mejor si participaran.

La Asamblea les dio poder y autoridad para hablar en nombre de ellos, para que ayudaran a quitar los demonios que terminan con las organizaciones populares: envidias, avaricias, miedos y para curar los males de este mundo. La falta de solidaridad con los demás, en especial con los que menos tienen. La apatía y desorganización en la participación social. El no luchar por un mundo más justo y humano.

Luego los envió a proclamar la construcción entre todos del reinado de Dios. 

# EL ÁRBOL, SÍMBOLO DE VIDA Y COMUNIÓN

WINNER OF THE  
«NEOBIBLICAL PAGES» CONTEST

ORLANDO VALDÉS CAMACHO  
Pinar del Río, Cuba

*El árbol que viste, que crecía y se hacía fuerte, cuya copa llegaba hasta el cielo, que se veía desde todos los confines de la tierra, cuyo follaje era hermoso y su fruto abundante, en el que había alimento para todos, debajo del cual vivían las bestias del campo y en cuyas ramas anidaban las aves del cielo, tú mismo eres... (Daniel 4,20-22).*

Para Arturo Aragón, joven cristiano, todos los días tienen un misterioso encanto, todos los días resultan un regalo que Dios le da y que él lo siente cuando, al salir de casa, sus ojos contemplan el frondoso laurel que se levanta imponente a pocos metros del portal. Allí, en medio del gorjeo de los gorriones y el bullicio de los autos en su ir y venir matutino, con la luz del sol colándose desde el horizonte por entre las ramas, se regala unos minutos de oración mientras observa la magnificencia de aquel árbol que, como otros tantos que se extienden a ambos lados de la calle, cada mañana le da la bienvenida.

Sin embargo hoy, para sorpresa de Arturo Aragón, el laurel no está ahí para saludarlo, no está con el acostumbrado retozo de los pájaros y el rocío de la noche que termina. El hombre siente que algo se rompe en su interior, el encanto de una vida pasada toca a su fin. Pero su pesar es mayor cuando recorre con la vista la calle de izquierda a derecha y ve cómo la hermosa alameda, que durante años cobijó con su sombra los bancos coloniales que pululaban en las aceras, está desapareciendo al caer sus árboles uno a uno, cortados con modernos equipos. Incluso la enorme ceiba al final de la calle ya recibe la primera poda.

Arturo se acerca rápido al grupo de obreros y después de preguntar quién es el responsable se dirige hacia donde está un señor grueso, con gafas en la punta de la nariz que contempla con detenimiento varios planos sobre una mesa portátil de aluminio. Arturo conoce el motivo de aquel desastre. El gobierno ha autorizado la tala de la antigua alameda para construir una calle más amplia que permita el paso de una mayor cantidad de autos ligeros y camiones de carga. Entonces pregunta si el gobierno estudió la posibilidad de realizar una circunvalación que sea capaz de cumplir con aquel objetivo sin necesidad de destrozarse los laureles, pero el grueso individuo, sin mirarlo,

contesta que es mucho más fácil y barato utilizar los espacios laterales de la alameda, que comenzar una obra tan costosa por las afueras de la ciudad.

Arturo no dice más, sabe que el individuo es otro de los tantos indolentes que apoyan las tontas ideas de quienes planifican el progreso a golpe de extinción. Regresa con la cabeza gacha y se sienta en el portal, no puede concebir que alguien pueda estar de acuerdo con destruir un sitio que es el símbolo de la localidad, no sólo porque ayuda a purificar el aire enrarecido, sino porque los árboles representan la vida, el establecimiento de las raíces del ser humano sobre la tierra, el acercamiento al cielo y la comunicación con Dios.

En ese momento Arturo comprende que la deforestación que ocurre de manera desenfadada en la cuenca del Amazonas y en la mayoría de los países de América Latina para sustentar las economías de las naciones poderosas, también, de manera peculiar y poco ortodoxa, está teniendo lugar en su país, en su provincia, en su ciudad.

No importa que esa deforestación no sea masiva, pues cada árbol que se arranca significa que alguien morirá por contaminación del aire o falta de alimento. Las personas ateas y sin una visión racional del mundo, se han olvidado que el Señor del universo creó los árboles al tercer día del comienzo, mucho antes de que gracias a su misericordia y magnanimidad el hombre poblara la tierra. ¿Entonces, por qué destruirla? ¿Por qué levantar un monstruo de cemento y asfalto donde la gente de bien puede mantener una estrecha relación con la naturaleza, una hermosa complicidad de amor con el espíritu mismo de la creación? ¿Acaso el árbol no representa también la familia, la capacidad del hombre de amar, de mantener sus vínculos con el pasado y su respeto por el futuro?

*(pasa a la página 241...)*

# LA LÓGICA DE LA IRRACIONALIDAD

WINNER OF THE  
"GENDER PERSPECTIVES" CONTEST

VILMA AMANDA AGUINAGA  
Managua, Nicaragua

Tanto el patriarcado como el actual sistema económico configuran un entramado de relaciones imposible de concebir el uno sin el otro, siendo la naturalización, invisibilización y la mentira algunas de las herramientas que perpetúan su hegemonía.

Estos constructos sociales tienen rostro masculino, no en su esencia biológica, sino más bien social, ambos se basan en la opresión, desigualdad, injusticia social, explotación, exclusión y en la imposición de una lógica concreta justificada por determinaciones divinas, biológicas, culturales, etc.

Desde ambos sistemas se articula una lógica que sólo puede ser comprendida y aceptada desde la desigualdad e irracionalidad de la «racionalidad» del *homo economicus* entendido como aquel que maximiza su utilidad, tratando de obtener los mayores beneficios posibles con el menor esfuerzo.

Si no, cómo comprender y «aceptar» que en 2009 a nivel mundial se destinaron 20 mil billones de dólares para salvar el sistema financiero y que a finales de ese año bancos como Santander o BBVA registraran ganancias superiores a los 15 mil millones de dólares.

Si no, cómo comprender y «aceptar» que se sigan aludiendo razones de falta de recursos para enfrentar problemas gravísimos como el hambre, la pobreza, la desnutrición, la devastación del medio ambiente y de sus especies.

Si no, cómo comprender y «aceptar» el fracaso de la última cumbre del clima donde las enormes expectativas se diluyeron frente a la lógica del crecimiento de los países conocidos como desarrollados, quienes impusieron su razón con el argumento de su fuerza y poder.

Si no, cómo comprender y «aceptar» que se siga usando un enfoque keynesiano borrando de las cuentas nacionales el aporte inmenso de las mujeres en el desarrollo económico de los países.

Y es que es desde esta racionalidad, basada en la exclusión y la explotación, desde donde organizamos el mundo en sus dimensiones públicas y privadas (organización de la intimidad y organización de la ciudadanía).

Configurando un mundo dicotómico organizado entre lo privado y lo público, entre el trabajo productivo y reproductivo, entre la lógica del cuidado atribuida al mundo de lo privado y la lógica de la producción adscrita al mundo de los negocios.

Este mundo en blanco y negro consolidó roles de género monolíticos, siendo el hombre el director del espacio público y proveedor por excelencia, «el cabeza de hogar», midiéndose su valía por su aporte económico o en otras palabras por el dinero generado.

Y consolidándose el imaginario de la «mujer para lo demás» realizada en la medida de la realización del otro/a, recordemos la expresión universal: «detrás de un gran hombre hay una gran mujer». Es decir, la mujer como soporte de funcionamiento del primer engranaje.

Esta mujer entregada por entero a los demás desarrolló una perspectiva del cuidado en línea unidireccional (cuidador-cuidado), posesionándose de la esfera del amor y de la satisfacción de las necesidades de los demás, pero no por determinismo biológico o providencial, sino por estructuralismo social, siendo «buena mujer» según el desempeño efectivo de su rol de madre, de esposa, de hija, en fin de mujer sumisa y entregada.

Con esta división del trabajo el hombre asumió la perspectiva de la generación y la mujer la perspectiva del cuidado, siendo esta última perspectiva infravalorada y considerada como algo natural. Esta división marcó profundamente nuestra manera de ver y organizar el mundo, coexistiendo ambas en contextos articulados entre sí, pero a su vez separados inexorablemente.

Esta separación entre cuidado y generación de riqueza excluyó del mundo de la producción la lógica del cuidado, sino pensemos por qué en todos los niveles pensamos más en las ganancias que en los costes, pero no de producción, sino humanos, ambientales e incluso personales, siendo consideración, respeto, cuidado, empatía... signos de debilidad y fracaso.

Esta lógica ha permeado a todas las personas de tal manera que una mujer que pretenda ser economi-

camente exitosa deberá ser igual de fría y calculadora cuando se trate de generar riqueza, si no, recordemos la supuesta racionalidad del *homo economicus*.

Este pensamiento y praxis ha creado un monstruo que vive en nosotros/as, siendo cada hombre y mujer desde diferentes posiciones sociales su origen y producto o como diría José Martí -refiriéndose a EEUU-: «No conozco al monstruo porque viví en sus entrañas, sino que el conocimiento del monstruo está en el conocimiento de su producto, que soy yo».

Ese monstruo no está afuera, sino dentro alimentándose de la indiferencia, el consumismo y el pragmatismo resignado. Y ocultándose en la normalidad y naturalización de comportamientos que son productos sociales y no determinaciones divinas o genéticas.

Este monstruo es por acción y omisión el mejor aliado de la dinámica económica hegemónica estructurada alrededor del poder, la exclusión y la devastación del medio ambiente. Y es desde su lógica que aceptamos lo inaceptable, que nos inmutamos frente a la barbarie y que nos atemperamos frente a la tormenta.

El analizar el mundo desde una perspectiva telescópica ciertamente nos da pistas para enfrentar los problemas creados desde la lógica del patriarcado y el sistema económico, pero al hacerlo desde una perspectiva microscópica -desde nuestra realidad más inmediata- reconoceremos herramientas más cercanas, accesibles y prácticas, herramientas que nos ayuden a combatir ese monstruo que vive en cada persona y que es aliado de la lógica irracional que marca las pautas de nuestra vida.

Por ello hay que voltear también nuestra mirada a las relaciones cotidianas, a lo aparentemente insignificante que es donde se encuentra la savia que alimenta el sistema de opresión hegemónico, pues por decreto podríamos prescribir un mundo más justo y ecológicamente sostenible, pero en lo cotidiano continuar siendo una sociedad de esclavos.

Este análisis microscópico nos plantea también el reto de recuperar y de revalorar de la esfera privada la perspectiva del cuidado para hacerla extensiva a las relaciones políticas, económicas y sociales, para ser cuidadores y cuidados, para ser de verdad independientes al reconocerlos dependientes, para ser orgullosos, pero humildes y atentos en nuestras relaciones con las demás personas y con la naturaleza. 

(viene de la página 239)

Arturo suspira, sabe que no se trataba de negar el desarrollo, de no mejorar las posibilidades que pueda tener la comunidad de viabilizar su desenvolvimiento cotidiano, pero sí de hacerlo en común armonía con la naturaleza, buscando un equilibrio entre arquitectura, flora y fauna. Porque durante decenas de años esos árboles han sido la fuente de vida y el refugio para una multitud de seres vivos. Su ciclo de existencia representa la renovación constante del oxígeno, el alimento que beneficia directa o indirectamente al ser humano, y también, por qué no, la cuna donde nacen los sueños de aquellos que creen en el mejoramiento del mañana.

Fue su padre el primero en inculcarle el amor por la naturaleza, el que primero le enseñó el significado de las plantas a través de maravillosas lecturas bíblicas, quien le dijo que el hijo de Dios, por medio de parábolas y sabios preceptos, demostró a nuestros ancestros el poder manifiesto de la creación de los árboles. Quizás por eso desde muy temprano Arturo se propuso ser ingeniero forestal. ¿Cómo resignarse entonces a que el hermoso paseo donde crecieron sus antepasados, los bancos donde los enamorados compartieron orgullosos sus primeros besos y donde la ternura de las hojas empujadas por el viento dibujaron formas increíbles, sea ahora un paraje descubierto, un espacio maltratado por el sol, el ruido y el humo de los autos? ¿Cómo asimilar que el hombre, encargado de generar proyectos que perpetúen la obra de Dios, el responsable de mantener vivas las esperanzas de una recuperación ambiental para las nuevas generaciones, es quien está destrozando el entorno y autodestruyéndose?

Con lentitud pasmosa, como si las piernas le pesaran una eternidad, Arturo entra y cierra la puerta. Luego se arrodilla junto a la cama y comienza una oración por el mundo, por su país, por su ciudad. Finalmente, con los ojos apretados para impedir que la lágrima salga, pide perdón por él mismo, porque en el fondo, por un inexplicable miedo que lo lleva a no hacer nada, él también se siente culpable. 

# POINT OF ENCOUNTER

Thanks for what is growing in us, and what helps us to give form to what we have already experienced in our reality and the relation God-human-planet-devotion. We do not find this in many of our parishes and not many of our pastors want us to think and to speak in this way.

Thanks for confirming in me what I already thought and that I could not find someone with whom to share it. All your work redounds to the action of the Holy Spirit in the growing of the kingdom.

Once again, THANKS, because Faith finds an adequate expression in its times. Regards.

**Inilce M. Albani**, unilcealbani@yahoo.com.ar

I am so grateful for your fast response to my request. That is for sure one of the many virtues of those working in Koinonia. I am a very enthusiastic reader of everything published by you, because I feel part of the group that is very disappointed in a church that turns its back on Vatican II. I recommend all your articles to as many people as I can. My children in their reflection group also take into account your writing.

I am looking for the Lord in new ways, for so many years already and as a flower of those theologians from Uruguay Juan Luis Segundo, I have encountered a surprise in the great freedom of "Spong" in his biblical analysis. This author is a valuable stimulus in my biblical investigation, and in conjunction with enormous contributions of those who are working in Koinonia, is my partner on the road in these new times that we have to evangelize. "A big hug". Keep going!

**Luis Coutinho**, Montevideo, Uruguay.

Dear Friend (companion):

I am a former priest and I work with a small Base Christian community (CEB) in an impoverished area of Managua. Every Saturday afternoon, when it does not rain, we gather under a tree. There are twenty people. The majority are women who form our small CEB "The Good News". If you could only see how wonderful is the environment, to reflect on the biblical readings for Sunday with the help of the commentaries of Ko-

inonia Biblical Services! We are so grateful for this help.

**Felix Jimenez**, Managua, Nicaragua.

We are a group of religious and lay women from diverse areas of Uruguay, who are living and working in very poor sectors (CRIMPO). In July 2009 some of us gathered in Montevideo to reflect upon the subject of the Agenda: "toward a new socialism. The Utopia continues" Previously we sent to the group a large selection of the Agenda content, to be studied.

In the gathering we used the method "to see, to judge and to act". In each step we chose some articles, shared the readings, and analyzed it when relating its content to our lived experiences, opinions expectations...in our context.

At the end of the work we promised ourselves to continue the reflection at the personal and communal level and at the same time we decided that the theme of our retreat 2010 be "Utopia as spiritual road"(Title of the article by Marcelos Barros).

Thanks for the Agenda, for this collective work of art that encourages us to continue walking.

**Information received from OBSUR**, Montevideo.

We read the book "Other Christianity is possible", from the collection Tiempo Axial, and we made flash cards in order to reflect with the youth group. Many interesting things have come out related to how we can continue working on our identity as believers, but with a more open vision as lay people.

**Pablo del Hierro**, Proaño Formation Center, Quito.

We worked in the sanctuary of the Virgen de la Pena, from Yariguanrenda-Tartagal, Salta, Argentina. The Franciscan Friars continually are making allusions to the environmental and ecological themes. Moreover, in the sanctuary there is a religious formation house functioning (at this point there are 13 young people in formation and in preparation to be formation directors or accompany others).

In Tartagal there is a school which has an "ecological patrol", composed of children and parents. We studied the content on regular basis for our work on

raising consciousness levels. Moreover, we are having an impact through the mass media.

We will need to download the whole course and also to get the Agenda for next year. THANKS.

In the year 2002, I received as a gift the Biblical Diary, and since then I connected with Koinonia. I loved it, and continually I am downloading the texts. Boff and Casaldaliga are two people I admired very much. I cannot stop sharing their thoughts and writings. Thanks.

hsclara@arnet.com.ar

We are organizing a few things for the Xa Juvenile Pastoral Assembly of the South of Quito. It is an opportunity for evaluation and decision making for planning of the year 2010. We are proposing the themes for the Agenda for the whole year. We are preparing an action campaign, in relation to the "new ecological consciousness", with our militant team. We are also revising the flash cards to be taught in the schools in which we have contact. The young men and women are very enthusiastic about the theme.

**Pablo del Hierro**, Proaño Formacion Center, Quito.

For me, like for many other readers in Latin American, Koinonia is already part of our lives and supports us in our struggles. It is a very necessary and pertinent tool for evangelization/liberation of our excluded and poor people. I discovered this site and I have followed it since the Popular Theology of Religious Pluralism began.

I considered many of you, those who make this service possible, my teachers and a testimony of diakonia. This is the reason, I shared this text with so much delight....

Congratulation for all these years of services.

A fraternal and sororal hug to all,

**Valentin Mendoza Morales**, Mexicano en Bogota.

Hi friends:

I am sharing with you a brief reflection. Congratulations for the Latin-American Agenda' 2010. Beautiful! The themes... very rich and important for all of us. I am developing these themes here in Brazil with groups of children (boys and girls) from 6 to 17 years of age, who are socially vulnerable. I am very grateful!

Biasm2009@hotmail.com

Dear Friends of KOINONIA:

A group of women want to share with you their rich experience at being accompanied with the excellent material from your site thorough the course "Theology and Religious Pluralism".

As we commit with God's cause, with God's project, we continue discovering that this is making a commitment with Jesus' cause, the Kingdom cause. The great utopia and God's dream is: that love becomes a reality, justice, freedom, life for all, in communion with the universe. This is also our dream, our utopia.

Today, we are finding ourselves in a crucial time (axial!), a time of great changes and transformations. This calls us to live in a more conscientious and responsible manner. We are part of this process of change.

The path we have been working on for two years through the course "Theology and Religious Pluralism", has helped to open our minds and hearts. It has helped us to revise our beliefs, our theology that for years has accompanied us. It has taught us to construct and to deconstruct; it has freed us from nonsense and inflexibility. It has helped us to initiate a path of freedom.

We have discovered that the RUAH is present and acting in every religion and culture of every people, in all historical times, and that it continues to accompany humanity in history, known and unknown, and also to the cosmos, conducting it to its fulfillment and transformation.

We have discovered the difference between "spirituality" and "religion", between "theology of religions" and "Theology of Religious Pluralism", without absolutism of what we continue to discover as "mediations". The course has helped us to revise our image of God, the concepts of revelation, selection, etc.

It has been a very freeing experience. It has been an invitation to intra-dialogue and the inter-dialogue, to openness to the other person, centered in the love of others, especially those who are the poorest and most excluded.

From this experience a song of praise to our God of life, to the RUAH which has become intimate, a companion and friend.

**Clara Romero**

redmujerespachacuti.blogspot.com/search?q=koinonia

# WHO'S WHO

## AMONG THE AUTHORS OF THIS AGENDA

*Only some; others need no introduction for our readers...*

**Leonardo BOFF** is one of the founders of liberation theology. A Catholic theologian, he now focuses his work especially on the theme of ecology. Many of his books are available in English, including *Ecology & Liberation*, *a New Paradigm* and *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. His weekly column is available in Spanish at [servicioskoinia.org/boff](http://servicioskoinia.org/boff)

**Ernesto CARDENAL** (born January 20, 1925) is a Nicaraguan Catholic priest and was one of the most famous liberation theologians of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, a party he has since left. From 1979 to 1987 he served as Nicaragua's first culture minister. He is also famous as a poet. Cardenal was also the founder of the primitivist art community in the Solentiname Islands, where he lived (1965-1977).

**Pedro CASALDÁLIGA** is the Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of São Félix do Araguaia. He has been a tireless advocate for the poor of Brazil since arriving 1968. While there are many theologians of liberation, Casaldáliga is also a poet of liberation. His poems can be found on [servicioskoinia.org/CASALDALIGA](http://servicioskoinia.org/CASALDALIGA). His English-language books include *Political Holiness and In Pursuit of the Kingdom*, both published by Orbis.

**Franz DAMEN**. 1944. Doctor in Theology and MA in Indology, un Lovain. Also Philosophy and cultural anthropology. He served in Bolivia from 1981 to 1994. Currently, Secretary of Stauros International Association. Since 1998: Provincial Passionist Superior of Belgium. Since 2008: coordinator of Northern European Passionist Sector.

**Marta GRANÉS** holds degrees in East Asian Studies and the humanities and is a founding member of CETR (Center for the Study of Traditions of Wisdom, [www.cetr.net](http://www.cetr.net)) of Barcelona, where she is also the director of studies and activities and teaches courses on Buddhism. She has participated and coordinated the online work of CETR at: [www.cetr.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=775](http://www.cetr.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=775)

**Eduardo HOORNAERT**, 1930, Brussels, Belgium. Trained in classical languages and ancient history, he spent two years in Africa as a professor. Since 1958, he has lived in Brazil. He has been a professor of the

history of Christianity in many theological institutes in the Northeast of Brazil. He is a founding member of CEHILA (Commission on the Study of the History of the Church in Latin America). He is the author of innumerable books, including: *Formação do catolicismo brasileiro, 1550-1800* (1974); *La memoria del pueblo cristiano* (1986); *Essa terra tinha dono* (1990); *História da Igreja na América Latina e no Caribe* (1995); *Brasil indígena: 500 anos de resistência* (2000); *Origens do cristianismo* (2006).

**Roger LENAERS**. 1925, Ostende, Bélgica. Jesuit. In 2000 and 2002 he published two rather extended essays about the clash between modernity and modern religious convictions. By reinterpreting the essence he tried to reconcile the theological message with modernity. The two booklets got a remarkably clear response in Flanders. In 2005 the two essays came out as one book, first in German, in 2006 in English. There-upon Spanish, Portuguese and Italian translations followed. Recently he published another book with the provocative title "Even without a God-in-the-highest."

**José Antonio MARINA**. Thinker and writer awarded with many Prizes, specialized, among others matters, in the field of religious critic. He's written *Dictamen sobre Dios*, and *Por qué soy cristiano*.

**Andrés PÉREZ-BALTODANO** is a professor in the department of political science at the University of Western Ontario in Canada and an associate researcher for the Institute of the History of Nicaragua and Central America (IHNCA) at the University of Central America (UCA) in Managua. He has published extensively in academic journals in Canada, the United States, Europe, and Latin America. He is the Author of *Entre el Estado Conquistador y el Estado Nación* (IHNCA: 2003 y 2008).

**Paul POUPARD**. 1930, Angers, France. Cardenal of the Catholic Church, he is the former rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris, Archbishop of Paris, and Emeritus President of several pontifical advisory bodies, including that of Culture, created by John Paul II in 1982.

**Pedro A. RIBEIRO D OLIVEIRA**, a sociologist, lives in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, Brazil. He is currently a professor in the Sciences of Religion Masters Program at PUC-Minas, is a consultant of ISER-Assessoria, and is a member of the leadership of the Movimento Nacional Fé e Política.

**Félix SAUTIÉ MEDEROS**, 1938, Havana. Degrees in social sciences and biblical and theological studies. He was the the director of Education for Peace, the Professor in the Superior Institute of Biblical and Theological Studies (ISEBIT) of Havana. He is a member of the Lay Association of Theologians of Spain. He has worked in political activities, social prevention, and peace activities in Cuba.

**Pablo SUESS**, Köln, Germany, 1938, in Brazil since 1966. See: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulo\\_Suess](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulo_Suess)

**John Shelby SPONG**, Charlotte, North Carolina in 1931. Spong first book was in 1973, *Honest Prayer*. His books in the last 10 years are *Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality* (1991). *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture* (1992). *Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Birth of Jesus* (1994). *Resurrection: Myth or Reality?* (1996). *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile* (1999). In it Spong sets out his "12 theses" insisting that Christianity is doomed if we continue to insist on a supernatural God. [www.johnshelbyspong.com](http://www.johnshelbyspong.com)

**Elsa TAMEZ**. 1951, Monterrey, México, studied in the Latin American Biblical Seminary and at the National University of San Jose, Costa Rica. Masters in literature and linguistics. Doctorate in theology from Lausanne, Switzerland. Her last project is an interlinear New Testament in Greek and Spanish.

**Faustino TEIXEIRA**. 1954, Juiz de Fora-MG, Brazil holds a doctorate in theology from the Gregorian in Rome. He has dedicated himself to the study of interreligious dialogue. He is a professor of theology in the Religious Sciences Department at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora and coordinates the post-graduate program in religious sciences.

**Pere TORRAS FERRER**. 1940, Albons, Baix Empordà. He holds a degree in theology from the Gregorian in Rome. He was a professor of morals and philosophy for some years at the seminary in Girona. Since 1977 he has worked to create a parish that is more like a Christian community than center of religious services,

the parish of Saint Joan in Vilartagues, a new part of the city of Sant Feliu de Guíxols.

**Andrés TORRES QUEIRUGA**. 1940, Riveira, La Coruña, Galicia, Spain. He is a Galician theologian who resides in Santiago de Compostela. He is a specialist in fields such as the philosophy of religion, revelation, and inter-religious dialogue. Many of his works are written in Galician, his mother tongue. He is very well known and studied in Brazil and Latin America.

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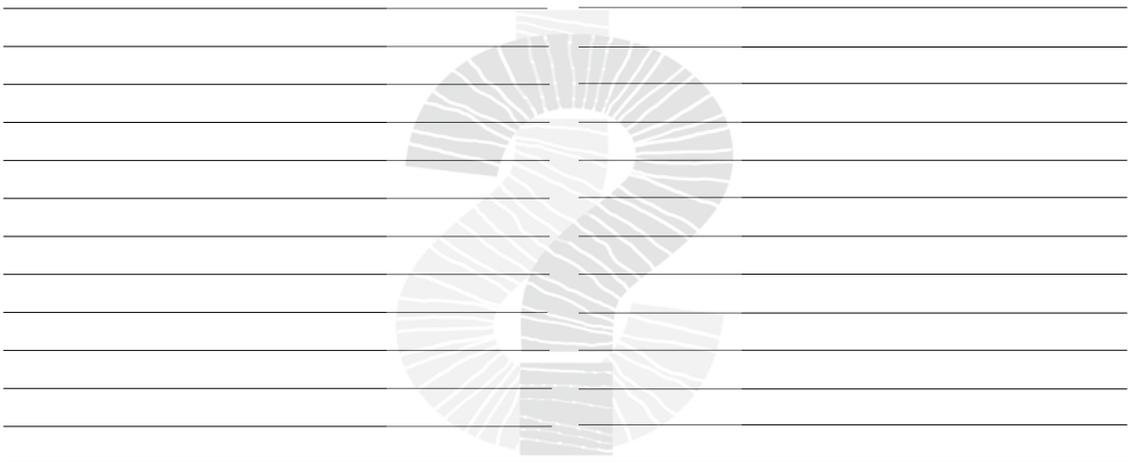
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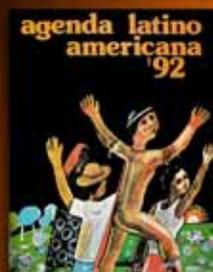


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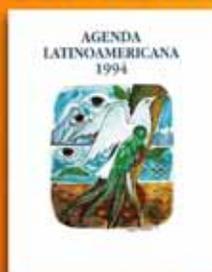
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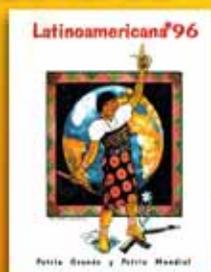
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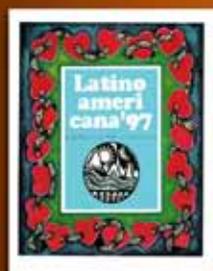
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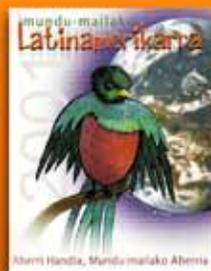
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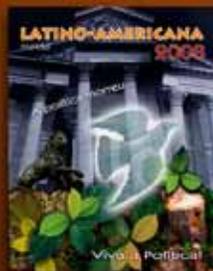
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