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RELIGION AND THE POLITICS OF INTEGRAL JUSTICE

Gerald M. Boodoo – ORG.

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Gerald M. Boodoo
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RELIGION AND THE POLITICS OF INTEGRAL JUSTICE



PORTO ALEGRE
2020

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SINIVALDO S. TAVARES

INTRODUCTION

This collection of papers was presented at the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, March 12-17, 2018, as part of the World Forum on Theology and Liberation's (WFTL) 8th gathering at the WSF. Heeding the theme of the WSF, *Resistir é Criar, Resistir é Transformar* (*Resist and Create, Resist and Transform*), the WFTL had sessions with over 45 presentations, prior to and within the WSF, addressing themes related to political economy, race, gender, ecology, indigenous peoples, youth, inter-religious dialogue and human dignity.

The 8th edition of the WFTL was held in a location that was the colonial capital of Brazil and the main entry point of African slaves into the country. As a result, it afforded a site that had, and still has, a history of colonial activity and coloniality. It also showcased the unintended consequences of colonization in the very strong visible and invisible blend of Christianity and African indigenous religions that permeate the state of Bahia; the drumming and music that pulsates on the streets and in cafes; the food, especially *acarajé*, that reminds one of the creativities required to survive under oppressive regimes. Overshadowed by the assassination of the young black and gay Rio de Janeiro councilor, Marielle Franco on March 14, who championed human rights, especially for those in Rio's favelas, the meeting in Salvador took place with the palpable feeling that another world *must be possible*.

The reader will notice that chapters in this text are in various languages, English, Portuguese, French and Spanish. Though they are all still colonial languages, our intention is to break the hegemony of any one language presenting itself as the linguistic avenue for world expressions. Though we have a very long way to go in our own forum to achieve this, we think it is important to begin recognizing and acting on this insight.

The title of the text, *Religion and the Politics of Integral Justice*, was generated by the chapters contributed. The first part, *Religion, Society and Politics*, looks at the factors transforming and changing our world and the movements active within it. Lee Cormie, in *Religious Resurgence in the Anthropocene*, explores the ways in which the Anthropocene is being discussed. He points out how scientific discourse largely overlooks the impacts of religious traditions and communities in promoting the historic emergence of the Anthropocene. Universalized notions of nature and humanity occludes differences among humans and the central dynamics of wealth and power in producing what counts as knowledge. This skews ideologies, institutions and structures in ways which disproportionately disadvantage the great majorities of people, other species, and the environment. The discourse needs new theologies and epistemological spaces which take us beyond the colonial/modern capitalist, patriarchal, racist, anthropocentric past/present, to an unknown future.

In *Cultivating Peace in the Digital World*, Jo Ann Lévesque and Gisèle Turcot describe the efforts of the two Canadian organizations, *Antennes de Paix* and *Voix Couleurs Nouveaux Médias*, whose partnership resulted in three on-line initiatives to promote the values of solidarity, justice, reconciliation and peace. The chapter illustrates how a very small organization with limited resources could, when joined with the resources and expertise of a communication team empowered with new social media, promote peace and non-violence by mobilizing. In describing their second initiative, the Public Prize for Peace, they describe the positive responses as well as challenges to maintaining momentum for participation in the nomination and voting processes online. They explain that digital presence is a significant benefit and should be continued, but to achieve their objectives requires continually adjusted communication strategies and the forging of new partnerships for public awareness and support for the initiatives. This is an interesting chapter, in that theological movements still remain slow to recognize and incorporate current technology as God-gifted avenues for building peace and solidarity.

In *Lo Económico/Cultural Descompone la Ciudadanía y la Espiritualidad*, Diego Irarrazaval places in conversation the liberating questions of theology

with the concerns shared in the global *fora* of the social movements. Looking at culture and economy from the margins, he notes how they upset and degrade our environment as well as the hopes and beliefs of the hearts of those affected. In this context, he suggests we create liberative avenues with maps of justice to recognize the Kingdom of God, which will lead us through unprecedented routes that require the recognition of our responsibility to sincerely engage these avenues. According to the author, mysticism unfolds on pilgrimage with boldness and gratuity; by combining silence and action, by being contemplative in action. Paulo Agostinho N. Baptista in *Teologia da Libertaçao e Ação Política Decolonial*, reminds us that Brazil is facing several huge political and economic crises which showcase the immense inequalities among the rich and the poor. He insists that theologians should start critically educating and encouraging social movements, churches, lay men and women, in a way that gathers all of these constituents into a forceful network working towards political action for liberation and decolonialization.

In a similar vein, but in a different location, Adam K. arap Chepkowny in *Resistance and Counter-resistance in Africa Democracy: The Impact and Implication for Transformation*, surveys the challenges to implementation of democracy in Africa. This is related to the legacy of the colonial system which imparted a misrepresentation of the concept of democracy – one that is understood as “rule by a privileged few” – and imposed on the people. He believes that for democracy to prevail in Africa, three primary things are needed within and among the leaders and the people – respect, right to full dignity, and a healthy attitude toward one another. In order to correct these issues, the burden falls upon scholars and learned individuals with “developmental agendas” who are able to educate people on democratic principles, human rights and politics. Following on Chepkowny’s analysis, Ignace Ndongala Maduku in *Religion et politique en Afrique noire: Quelles perspectives africaines de libération?*, notes that in the last ten years, several heads of Sub-Saharan African states have amended or trampled their country’s constitution in order to extend their authoritarian mandates, leaving the population to cope with the power of globalization and neoliberalism. How do religious organizations react? What political theology of liberation appears as pertinent to the Christian Church in

Africa? Using the thought of theologian Jean-Marc Ela, anchored in an analysis of the sociopolitical and anthropological field, he suggests we work to decolonize theology. His “theology under the tree” generates a “theology of disobedience,” “an ethics of transgression” and “a pastoral of dirty hands” in order to bring the liberating force of the Gospel to life.

Juan José Tamayo in *Medellín: Del Cristianismo Colonial al Cristianismo Liberador: Camino Hacia las Teologías del Sur*, attempts to highlight the importance of the post-Vatican Second Medellín conference for Latin America and the universal Church. In Medellín, the paradigm of a colonial Church was changed to a liberating Church, and the validity of Medellín lies in its still being a relevant program for the renewal of ecclesial institutions today. Fifty years after Medellín there are new challenges in the globalized world with new forms of inequality and oppression, and while new theological paradigms are needed, Tamayo argues that Medellin can still be taken as a signpost for the universal Church.

The chapters in the second part of the text, *Liberative Justice*, address ways in which we can understand current modes of oppression and discrimination as a means to understanding how to craft and express what liberative justice means in the face of these forces acting against it. Dieudonné Bwanamuloko in *Le Viol des femmes comme arme de guerre en République démocratique du Congo: Une destruction du lien social et religieux*, graphically reminds us that rape as a weapon of war is an atrocious yet usual practice that has been used in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for more than twenty years. When women survive these aggressions, their bodies, lives and communities end up shattered. Rape as a weapon of war, destroys social links, family bonds, social participation, citizenship, and one’s own relationship to the self and to transcendence. According to the author, religious authorities maintain a paradoxical approach to rape as a weapon of war. On the one hand, they present a moralizing discourse against rape and aggression towards women, but on the other hand, they continue to promote patriarchal theologies that legitimate the control of women’s bodies and their exclusion when they are considered soiled. Strategic resistance to rape as a weapon of war

encourages fighting all sources of violence, rebuilding the social fabric and deconstructing religious patriarchy.

In *Femicide: An Instrument of Control over Women's Bodies*, Luiza Tomita looks at the challenges of femicide, a homicide perpetrated with cruel measures against women with gender motivation, and general violence against women in Brazil, which has the 5th highest rate of femicide in the world. What had previously been seen as a cultural and juridical problem has received greater attention in the country's laws since 1986. Yet, at the same time, there have been increases in violence against certain groups of women, particularly black women, whose rates of murder increased 54% between 2003 and 2013. What can be understood as a part of a continuum of violence against women is part of socially constructed gender and power differences, particularly the "kyriarchy" found in the Western world as described by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Feminist theologians agree that these issues require multiple forms of resistance, including building a "spirituality of resistance" based on a spirituality for life and justice and taking into consideration women's cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, the violence against woman must be "broken by a feminist theology of resistance that transforms the relationship between men and women by creating and establishing the end of a hierarchy of power between genders."

Speaking from a Canadian context as a "settler," Élise Couture-Grondin states that indigenous women's voices "play a role in challenging the legal system's structure which is rooted in colonialism." In *Transforming the Idea(l) of Justice: Reading Stories by Indigenous Women as a Feminist Settler*, she explores how reading testimonies or autobiographies by indigenous women could serve to transform the readers' idea(l) of justice. She describes her experiences of reading such testimonies, such as that of an autobiography by An Antane Kapesh (Innu) published in 1976, who denounced abuses by police officers in the region of Val-d'Or, and a testimony by Rigoberta Menchú (Maya Quiche) published in 1983 who exposed the brutal violence of the Guatamalan government against the Maya during their civil war. The author describes her experiences of reading these texts and their depictions of how colonial injustices and violence affected the authors' lives but also contributed to raising settler readers'

awareness. At the same time, she explains how indigenous women's writing has been critical of the exclusion of their voices in indigenous self-determination and feminist movements. Because violence against indigenous women has been and continues to be an aspect of colonialism, she discusses how she can read these texts in ways that "underline the texts' visions of justice and potentially play a role in the field of justice notably by providing spaces in which to reimagine relationships altogether."

In a similar decolonial vein, Gerald Boodoo, Michelle Blohm and Fortunatus Mugisha, attempt to de-link mercy from a colonial matrix of "justice" that has given it reflexive power differentials between those who bestow and those who receive mercy. In an interesting turn, they use a pre-colonial thinker, Isaac of Ninevah, a 7th century monk who lived in what is now modern-day Qatar, as a theological resource for de-linking mercy from "justice" and re-linking it to humility in the face of God's mercy. As an orthodox Christian saint that lived the majority of his life in a Muslim dominated context, his writings offer a unique perspective on understanding mercy. The authors conclude by emphasizing a more expansive soteriology and in questioning the use and abuse of power. The goal in re-linking mercy to humility is to firmly situate human dignity at the center of mercy.

Kemdirim Protus' chapter on *The Samaritan Woman and Caste System in Igboaland, Nigeria: Mission Response from Women's Evangelistic Perspective*, explains that in spite of the efforts of nineteenth-century missionaries in Igboaland and the apparent growth of Christianity, the caste system continues to exist. As a result, Igbo society is divided by discrimination and exclusion in the same way as Jews and Samaritans in the time of Jesus. He states that the task of evangelism in Igboaland necessitates overcoming social and cultural barriers that he describes as exemplified in the Samaritan story. In the same way that the Samaritan woman could be identified as a model of courageous action, African women evangelists who hold various congregational functions address the caste system and issues faced by African women Christians still weighed down by patriarchal structures. Protus analyzes these parallels through an analysis of Jn. 4:1-12 to show how the two major characters in the story are exemplars for women in evangelism and demonstrates Christ's rejection

of a discriminatory culture. He concludes that the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman contains the liberating message that salvation is for everyone and encourages the breakdown of prejudices which will lead to the transformation of Igbo society.

Keeping in mind the conditions of health inequity of the black population resulting from the impacts of individual and institutional racism, Kronbauer, Moura-Corrêa and Rodrigues in *Formação em Saúde da População Negra: Uma Abordagem a Partir da Metodologia Ativa* propose a permanent training program in health directed to the black population based on theoretical-practical references oriented at intervention, as well as the development of policies and laws that give universal access to healthcare in an equitable manner. They also champion the use of an active methodology, following Charles Maguerez Arch, in which popular and professional knowledge is valued as a whole in determining healthcare. This chapter highlights how forces of oppression advance a culture of death and ill health, which is in sharp contrast to the culture of life advocated by liberative justice.

Luiz Carlos Sureki in *Teologia Pluralista das Religiões e Teologia da Libertação* makes a synthesis of the pluralist theology of religions based on the collection of five books edited and published in Portuguese and Spanish by EATWOT/ASETT, which began in 2001. To develop the theme, he picks up Paul Knitter's article published in the first book of the collection, giving emphasis on introductory themes as the hermeneutics of suspicion, the option for the poor and salvation, in a Christian perspective. Daniel Stosiek in *Liberation of Nature: The Relation Between Human beings and Nature as Economic, Social and Spiritual Issues*, is arguing for liberation theologies to better attend to, and articulate, the spiritual and social connections between the suffering of people and nature. This would involve a redefining of the Marxist theory of value to one which more explicitly makes the connections between the labor of both people and nature as the sources of wealth and capital. He argues that through dialogue with indigenous peoples, a better critique of capitalism can be developed. Sinivaldo S. Tavares in *Ecologia Integral e Guinada De(s)colonial: Interpelações à Ecoteologia* observes that the theme of colonialism, coloniality, decoloniality have become more visible and attractive in the-

ological discussion since the World Forum on Theology and Liberation in Montreal in 2016. As he presents the interface of modernity and colonialism as the two sides of the same coin, he asserts that the “financialization of economy” is a neoliberal project to justify the plunder of natural reserves of raw material and energy from the Southern countries in view of the maintenance of very high levels of consumption and waste by the North. This highlights the complex relationship between an ecological paradigm and the “decolonial twist”. Tavares therefore proposes an ecotheology which is able to unveil the ghastly face of globalization and neoliberalism so as to fight the challenges of inequalities and injustices, while encouraging the experience of solidarity with the poor and excluded, in the perspective of the Christian eschatological dimension.

The chapters in this text continue the commitment of the WFTL in working towards another possible world that cherishes human and environmental dignity, gender equity, racial harmony and liberative peace and justice. The editorial team wishes to thank all of the people who worked to make the meeting in Salvador da Bahia meaningful, especially our presenters and those who submitted their presentation for this publication. Situating the meeting in a context that has been marked by slavery and which still exhibits coloniality, we hope the chapters in this text add to the call to resist and create, resist and transform, for another world is indeed possible!

Gerald M. Boodoo

PART I:
RELIGION, SOCIETY AND POLITICS

1.

RELIGIOUS RESURGENCE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

LEE CORMIE¹

Introduction

Since the 1960s and 1970s (and in many cases drawing on earlier traditions of resistance and transformation) waves of progressive social movements have nurtured the voices of the great majorities of the world's historically marginalized others, drawing on other than modern cultural and political traditions, forging a series of critical lenses revealing unseen dimensions of life and dynamics of social order, expanding our perceptions of human agency, and unfolding wider horizons of possible futures.²

¹ Since the 1970s Lee Cormie has been a researcher, teacher, and writer publishing articles on Christian liberation theologies and social movements, and a participant / observer in church-based social justice initiatives in the US and Canada, and in World Social Forum processes and the World Forum on Theology and Liberation. Until retirement in 2012 he served as a professor of theology and interdisciplinary studies in the Faculty of Theology, the University of St Michael's College and the Toronto School of Theology, in Toronto, ON, Canada.

² Of course, these movements and the interactions among them have developed in different ways, at different paces, on different scales in different places around the world. But there is no single widely-accepted definition of 'left' or 'progressive'. And there is no single complete list. (See Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond*, 160. New York, NY: Zed Books, 2006, p. 160). Still, in my experience, in ways which largely escape conventional cultural and political frameworks, there are many signs of a rapidly expanding and intersecting visions of the world and multiplying solidarities among and with historically marginalized 'others'. In this spirit see Ramón Grosfoguel, "Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality: Decolonizing Political Economy and Postcolonial Studies." *Eurozine*, 4 July 2008, p. 20. [Http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-07-04-grosfoguel-en.html](http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-07-04-grosfoguel-en.html) (accessed 12/4/9).

As we in the World Forum on Theology and Liberation (WFTL) know so well, these movements have also irrupted in Christian churches and other faith communities, which are often major sites of resistance and creativity, transforming our experience of the Spirit,³ views of the church and of religion more generally, theological and ethical horizons and methods, missiological frameworks and pastoral priorities.⁴

Most importantly perhaps, these movements repeatedly confirm that this world is less given, less fixed and fundamentally unchanging than many conservatives have imagined as well as less determined in progressive directions than most liberals and radicals have imagined. Humans, in myriad combinations and permutations, play much larger — but far from omnipotent and often clashing — roles in the history of life on Earth.

In the last two decades another new set of critical voices has emerged, initially among geologists and biologists and Earth scientists more generally.⁵ Still largely overlooked in WSF and WFTL circles, and in theology in particular, these voices are vastly expanding our perceptions of the Earth System and its dynamics, human agency, and epochal transformations at the dawn of a new geological epoch- the Anthropocene. As Thomas Berry long ago pointed out, “[w]e have changed the very structure of the planet, the biosystems of the

³ For a rich sampling of specifically Christian theological insights bubbling up around the world see Virginia Fabella, and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds. *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000. For insight into the ways these developments are transforming biblical studies, church history, theology and ethics see Daniel Patte, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010; for background on the origins and organization of this ground-breaking collaborative effort see Daniel Patte, “Foreword: The Making of *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*.” *Journal of World Christianity* 4, no. 1 (2011): 1–20.

⁴ For ways these insights are transforming the study of religion see Tony Ballantyne, “The Persistence of the Gods: Religion in the Modern World.” In *World Histories from Below: Disruption and Dissent, 1750 to the Present*, edited by Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne, London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 137–67. For the study of world Christianities in particular see Dale Irvin, “World Christianity: An Introduction.” *Journal of World Christianity* 1, no. 1 (2008): 1–26. [Http://www.journalofworldchristianity.org/index.php/jowc](http://www.journalofworldchristianity.org/index.php/jowc) (accessed 09/4/10).

⁵ ‘Earth science’, or ‘geoscience’, is an inclusive term for the natural sciences related to planet Earth see “Earth Science.” *Wikipedia*, 5 August 2018. Https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_science#Biosphere (accessed 18/8/5).

planet, even the geology of the planet".⁶ In short, as one leading voice recently insisted, "... *everything* is now in play".⁷ Like 'globalization' in the 1970s and 1980s, the 'Anthropocene' is rapidly spreading, increasingly appearing at the center of debates in every scholarly discipline about virtually everything. These claims have profound implications for thinking theologically about the Creator, creation, human nature, and the shifting horizons of reality and possibility.

Here, I probe different facets of the rapidly evolving debates about the Anthropocene and the profound limitations of the scientific discourse in which it is framed. I do this especially in relation to the largely overlooked impacts of religious traditions and communities in promoting the historic emergence of the Anthropocene, in clarifying issues today, and in nurturing more inspiring visions of alternatives and movements for a different future. In a world increasingly haunted by nightmares of civilizational collapse and drastic population decline, maybe by 2050,⁸ perhaps followed by human extinction with the mass extinctions of thousands of other-than-humans, hope and faith have never been more questionable, or more significant.

The Anthropocene

Since 2000, earth system scientists have led the way in forging a new Anthropocene framework as a way of grasping the expanding scope, scales, magnitude, and pace of changes transforming the Earth System and the

⁶ Thomas Berry, Thomas Clarke, and edited by Stephen Dunn and Anne Lonergan. *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth--Thomas Berry, C.P. in Dialogue with Thomas Clarke, S.J.*, Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991, p. 5.

⁷ Clive Hamilton, "Human Destiny in the Anthropocene." In *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis: Rethinking Modernity in a New Epoch*, edited by Clive Hamilton, Christophe Bonneuil, and François Gemenne, New York, NY: Routledge, 2015, p. 34.

⁸ See Richard Steiner, "From Anthropocene to Ecocene by 2050?" *Huffpost*, 23 October 2017. [Https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/from-anthropocene-to-ecocene-by-2050_us_59e7b66ce4boe60c4aa3678c](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/from-anthropocene-to-ecocene-by-2050_us_59e7b66ce4boe60c4aa3678c) [accessed 18/2/12].

central role(s) of humans in this process.⁹ With a growing sense that geological, ecological, sociological, cultural and psycho-dynamic changes are proliferating, expanding, accelerating, and radically transforming the Earth, these scientists set out to refine the term, identify and measure a range of markers in sediments and ice around the world which are sufficiently distinctive to justify recognition of the Anthropocene as a new epoch in the Geological Time Scale. They are compiling growing mountains of evidence of human impacts in every dimension of the Earth System: the atmosphere, the hydrosphere (surface water, ice, water vapor), the cryosphere (snow, ice, permafrost), the biosphere (living beings and their relationships), and lithosphere (upper mantel and crust). As one interdisciplinary team summarizes this new way of seeing:

We use the term global change to mean both the biophysical and the socioeconomic changes that are altering the structure and the functioning of the Earth System. Global change includes alterations in a wide range of global-scale phenomena: land use and land cover, urbanisation, globalisation, coastal ecosystems, atmospheric composition, riverine flow, nitrogen cycle, carbon cycle, physical climate, marine food chains, biological diversity, population, economy, resource use, energy, transport, communication, and so on. Interactions and linkages between the various changes listed above are also part of global change and are just as important as the individual changes themselves...[m]any components of global change do not occur in linear fashion but rather show strong nonlinearities.¹⁰

⁹ See the widely recognized pioneering contribution of Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, "The Anthropocene." *International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme Newsletter* 41 (May 2000). [Http://www.mpch-mainz.mpg.de/~air/anthropocene/](http://www.mpch-mainz.mpg.de/~air/anthropocene/) (accessed 08/5/20). Clearly Anthropocene thinkers carry forward many fundamental insights and concerns of the environmental and ecology movements erupting since the 1970s. But they add an emphasis on a broader and longer term view of the history of life on earth, and insist on the unprecedented system-transforming character of human impacts, and the magnitude — for good and ill — of changes already underway.

¹⁰ Will Steffen, Paul Crutzen, and John McNeill. "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?" *Ambio* 36, no. 8 (2007): 615.

Another group insists on the expanded view of the Earth System and of deep history, the fundamental changes currently transforming this system, and the central roles of humans in this process:

We are passing into a new phase of human experience and entering a new world that will be qualitatively and quantitatively different from the one we have known. The Anthropocene provides an independent measure of the scale and tempo of human-caused change — biodiversity loss, changes to the chemistry of atmosphere and ocean, urbanization, globalization — and places them in the deep time context of Earth history. The emerging Anthropocene world is warmer with a diminished ice cover, more sea and less land, changed precipitation patterns, a strongly modified and impoverished biosphere and human-dominated landscapes.¹¹

With growing momentum in research and computer modelling, these scientists brought a proposal to the International Commission on Stratigraphy and in 2016 the Working Group on the Anthropocene (WGA) recommended acceptance of this new epoch to the International Geological Congress. Momentum is growing for its formal incorporation into the Geologic Time Scale.¹²

¹¹ Will Steffen, Åsa Persson, Lisa Deutsch, Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Katherine Richardson, Carole Crumley, Paul Crutzen, Carl Folke, Mario Gordon, Mario Molina, Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Johan Rockström, Marten Scheffer, Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, and Uno Svedin. "The Anthropocene: From Global Challenge to Planetary Stewardship." *AMBIO*, 12 October 2011. [Http://www-ramanathan.ucsd.edu/files/pr185.pdf](http://www-ramanathan.ucsd.edu/files/pr185.pdf) (accessed 17/12/5).

¹² The geologic time scale is a system of chronological dating developed by geologists, paleontologists, and other Earth scientists to chart the sequence of major shifts that have occurred during Earth's history which can be documented in the geological record, overseen by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS); see "Geologic Time Scale." *Wikipedia*, (accessed 18/2/) 2018. [Https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geologic_time_scale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geologic_time_scale) (accessed 18/2/26).

Meanwhile, use of the term has been proliferating widely, including among social scientists, and increasingly in popular media.¹³ Despite many fundamental questions as well as well-funded and politically powerful denial industries¹⁴ and politicians (like President Trump and the growing wave of populists), it is becoming increasingly difficult to avoid the conclusion that earth-shaking changes are underway. That geological, biological, evolutionary, social, and Earth System dynamics are changing. That humans have already made fundamental and far-reaching impacts, and that in myriad combinations and permutations with particular others, we hold important keys to the next steps in this story. The next chapters in this story are very rapidly unfolding. As one conservation biologist points out,

“[t]he current trajectory of environmental and social decline cannot continue much longer. Indeed, the Anthropocene will be gone in the blink of geologic time. The real question is: what will be left of the biosphere at the dawn of the Ecocene [proposed name for the already emergent successor epoch], e.g., what species, including *H. sapiens*, will survive the Anthropocene evolutionary bottleneck?”¹⁵

Inevitably, many fundamental theoretical, epistemological and ethical/political questions remain, as we scramble to catch up to what is already happening.

¹³ As Colebrook points out, “[t]he end of the world is a growth industry. You can almost feel Armageddon in the air: from survivalist and ‘prepper’ websites (survivopedia.com, doomandbloom.net, prepforshtf.com) to new academic disciplines (‘disaster studies’, ‘Anthropocene studies’, ‘extinction studies’), human vulnerability is in vogue” (Claire Colebrook, “End-Times for Humanity.” *Aeon*, 1 June 2017. [Https://aeon.co/essays/the-human-world-is-not-more-fragile-now-it-always-has-been](https://aeon.co/essays/the-human-world-is-not-more-fragile-now-it-always-has-been) (accessed 18/2/12).)

¹⁴ Naomi Oreskes, and Erik M. Conway. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2010.

¹⁵ Richard Steiner, “From Anthropocene to Ecocene by 2050?” *Huffpost*, 23 October 2017. [Https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/from-anthropocene-to-ecocene-by-2050_us_59e7b66ce4boe60c4aa3678c](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/from-anthropocene-to-ecocene-by-2050_us_59e7b66ce4boe60c4aa3678c) (accessed 18/2/12).

The Underdeveloped Social Dynamics of Anthropocene Discourse

Ironically, in a discourse devoted to clarifying the increasing role of humanity in transforming nature, mainstream Anthropocene discourse, like Euro-Amerocentric discourses generally, are characterized by highly abstract, essentialized, universalized notions of nature and humanity reflected in excessive use of the pronoun we, as if there were a single social reality termed humanity with a single unified capacity to know and to act.¹⁶

However, as critical liberation voices have repeatedly confirmed, abstract nouns like nature, humanity, society, civilization, faith, etc. occlude the vast differences among humans, the central dynamics of wealth and power in producing what counts as knowledge, and the skewing of ideologies, institutions and structures in ways which disproportionately disadvantage the great majorities of people, other species, and the environment.¹⁷ ‘We’ have not all exercised the same power in precipitating the Anthropocene, or in benefiting from earlier policies. And ‘we’ do not all share the same capacities to act or responsibility. Not surprisingly, for example, environmental racism remains a central dynamic of extractive industries around the world. And climate change denial industries continue to promote blindness and policies accelerating catastrophes in the pursuit of ever more profits.

¹⁶ As White, Rudy and Gareau point out,

“[t]alk of “the anthropocene” can present generic “humans” as a geological force reshaping the planet. This discourse can also rather sidestep the observation that the “anthros” is profoundly divided in power, wealth, voice and opportunity. Basic political questions concerning whose interests this emerging anthropocene serves remain underinvestigated.” (Damian F. White, Alan P. Rudy, and Brian J. Gareau. *Environments, Natures and Social Theory: Towards a Critical Hybridity*, xix. New York, NY: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2016.)

See also Håvard Haarstad, Siddharth Sareen, Tarje I. Wanvik, Jakob Grandin, Kristin Kjærås, Stina E. Oseland, Hanna Kvamsås, Karin Lillevold, and Marikken Wathne. “Transformative Social Science? Modes of Engagement in Climate and Energy Solutions.” *Energy Research & Social Science* 42 (August 2018): 193.

¹⁷ Indeed ‘exclusion’ from jobs and wealth-creation dynamics altogether is increasingly the pattern. See Saskia Sassen, “Expelled: Humans in Capitalism’s Deepening Crisis.” *Journal of World Systems Research* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 198. (accessed 13/10/30).

So, as growing numbers of scholars insist, Anthropocene discourse needs the critical lenses of progressive movements and scholars, drawing on feminism,¹⁸ black feminist-inspired attention to intersectionality, Latin American decolonial thinking, critical Marxisms,¹⁹ and basic re-framings as Capitalocene, Plantationocene, and/or Chthulucene.²⁰ Understanding the roles of great inequalities and (im)balances of wealth and power are central in recognizing historical responsibilities, forging broader coalitions, rejecting false hopes of *deus-ex-machina* solutions promoted by scientific and technical elites (e.g., geoengineering) and nurturing alternative, more modest, diverse, pluralistic and inclusive politics from below, in the spirit of the WSF and the WFTL.²¹ Moreover, given the myriad ways religious traditions, communities and modes of discourse are entwined in multiple ways in the debates over the Anthropocene, this broadening conversation needs them too.²²

More generally, it is becoming clear that there is no single Anthropocene, but rather a multiplicity of Anthropocenes reflecting the diverse standpoints and perspectives and capacities to act of very different

¹⁸ Angela Harris, "The Treadmill and the Contract: A Classcrits Guide to the Anthropocene." *Tennessee Journal of Race, Gender, & Social Justice* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1–36. [Http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1079&context=rgsj](http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1079&context=rgsj) (accessed 18/3/2).

¹⁹ Alf Hornborg, "Post-Capitalist Ecologies: Energy, 'Value' and Fetishism in the Anthropocene." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27, no. 4 (2015): 61–76. [Http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2016.1196229](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2016.1196229) (accessed 17/3/3); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Politics of Climate Change is More Than the Politics of Capitalism." *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2–3 (2017): 25–37; John Merrick, "Against the Anthropocene." *Verso Blog*, 2 December 2015. [Https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2364-against-the-anthropocene](https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2364-against-the-anthropocene) (accessed 18/4/4).

²⁰ Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene; Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015): 159–65.

²¹ In this vein, Connolly recognizes that: "[t]oday the urgency of time calls for a new pluralist assemblage organized by multiple minorities drawn from different regions, classes, creeds, age cohorts, sexualities, and states. This is so in part because the effects of the Anthropocene often hit the racialized urban poor, indigenous peoples, and low-lying areas hard, while its historical sources emanate from privileged places that must be challenged from inside and outside simultaneously. Militant citizen alliances across regions are needed to challenge the priorities of investment capital, state hegemony, local cronyisms, international organizations, and frontier mentalities." (William E. Connolly, *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017, p. 9.)

²² See Celia Deane-Drummond, Sigurd Bergmann, and Markus Vogt, eds. *Religion in the Anthropocene*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.

groups of people employing diverse ways of seeing in different places around the world.²³ Eco-social orders involve multiple constellations and modes of agency operating in often chaotic fashion, sometimes producing abrupt non-linear transitions.²⁴ Taking account of this diversity, dynamism, chaos and non-linearity is central to sorting out more inspiring visions of another world and promising collaboration in forging new paths.²⁵

Beyond Positivist Science

No doctrine is more central to the discourse of modernity than secularism, the doctrine that religion is hopelessly backward, conservative, reactionary, irrational, and destined to the dustbins of history. It is to be replaced by neutral, objective, universally relevant science and technical expertise in managing personal lives and society. But secularist faith in science is rapidly being undermined; here I point to two major fault-lines in particular.

First, social activists and expanding science studies repeatedly confirm the entanglements of science with the modern civilizational dynamics of wealth and power production, radically undercutting

²³ See Jason Kelly, "Anthropocenes: A Fractured Picture." In *Rivers of the Anthropocene*, edited by Jason M. Kelly, Philip Scarpino, Helen Berry, James Syvitski, and Michel Meybeck, Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018, p. 1-22.

²⁴ As one interdisciplinary group argues:

"Complex socio-ecological systems share a number of fundamental properties that require changes in scientific methods, criteria of truth and quality, and conceptual frameworks. These properties include non-linearity, plurality of perspectives, emergence of properties, self-organization, multiplicity of scales, and irreducible uncertainty." (Gallopin, Gilberto, Silvio Funtowicz, Martin O'Connor, and Jerry Ravetz. "Science for the Twenty-First Century: From Social Contract to the Scientific Core." *International Social Science Journal* 168 [2001]: 1. [Http://sustainabilityscience.org/keydocs/fulltext/gg_scicentury_ijss.pdf](http://sustainabilityscience.org/keydocs/fulltext/gg_scicentury_ijss.pdf) [accessed 05/7/12].)

²⁵ Thus Allenby and Sarewitz advise:

"Stop trying to think our way out of what is too complex to be adequately understood, and seek the sources of rationality and ethical action in our uncertainty and ignorance about most things, rather than in our knowledge about and control over just a few things. Add to that — or derive from that — a degree of psychological and institutional flexibility that acknowledges and dignifies our ignorance and limits. Rehabilitate humility." (Allenby, Braden R., and Daniel Sarewitz. *The Techno-Human Condition*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011, p. 12–33.)

the posture of scientific neutrality, objectivity, and universality.²⁶ For example, proliferating histories of science are documenting the deep connections between the entanglements of the military-industrial-academic-bureaucratic complex²⁷ in weapons research and development (including chemical and biological warfare), and in the development of basic science more generally.²⁸ In recent years there have been seemingly endless exposés of the unacknowledged connections between medical researchers, research funding, and the respected research journals that publish their findings, so often in favor of the sponsoring pharmaceutical companies' drugs. And denial industries are also proliferating, with corporations in sectors like tobacco, coal and oil production mobilizing consulting firms, lawyers, and scientists in distorting public awareness, and delaying, if not ending altogether, prosecution and regulatory reform.²⁹

Second, proliferating historical studies confirm that religious dynamics remain significant social forces, though often occluded and appearing in secular guises, for example, in the ideological campaigns of both sides in the Cold War.³⁰ Indeed, expanding scholarship is unveiling religious imagery and themes at the heart of the most secular aspects of modern societies,³¹

²⁶ See for example Hans Weiler, "Challenging the Orthodoxies of Knowledge: Epistemological, Structural, and Political Implications for Higher Education." Colloquium on Research and Higher Education Policy of the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research, and Knowledge. Paris, France, 2004. [Http://www.stanford.edu/~weiler/Unesco_Paper_124.pdf](http://www.stanford.edu/~weiler/Unesco_Paper_124.pdf) (accessed 06/8/16); and Sandra Harding, *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

²⁷ Paul Rogers, "A War-Promoting Hydra." *OpenDemocracy*, 25 May 2018. [Https://www.opendemocracy.net/neweconomics/media-forgot-financial-crisis-embraced-austerity/](https://www.opendemocracy.net/neweconomics/media-forgot-financial-crisis-embraced-austerity/) (accessed 18/6/17).

²⁸ See Jacob Darwin Hamblin, *Arming Mother Nature: The Birth of Catastrophic Environmentalism*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 9.

²⁹ See Oreskes, and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*.

³⁰ Dianne Kirby, ed., *Religion and the Cold War*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; Johnson, Sylvester, and Steven Weitzman, eds. *The FBI and Religion: Faith and National Security Before and After 9/11*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2017.

³¹ See Aditya Bharadwaj, "Sacred Modernity: Religion, Infertility, and Technoscientific Conception Around the Globe." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 30, no. 4 (2006): 423–25.

including science and technology,³² and the economy.³³ So religion has not disappeared in the modern world; much of the modern can only be understood with reference to its religious dimensions and dynamics; and in the process religion too is being fundamentally re-thought.

In this context, leading thinkers in mainstream Anthropocene discourse recognize many limits in conventional science, the need to transform science in radically interdisciplinary ways to grasp the dimensions and dynamics of the Earth system, to mobilize support for changes to mitigate climate catastrophes, and to adapt to rapidly changing environments.³⁴ In so doing, some, like E. O. Wilson, envision what he terms ‘consilience’, a new unity of knowledge which transcends modern positivist epistemology and overcomes the historic divisions among natural science, social science, and the humanities in educating and mobilizing humanity to address the climate change crisis.³⁵ At the same time, though, this discourse reinscribes the superiority of positivist science and scientists in the process, reframing religious contributions according to scientific criteria, and (re)claiming God-like omniscience in defining problems and proposing solutions. In the name of secular science, Anthropocene experts reproduce the sacred aura of direct divine revelation and (re)claim God-like omniscience and authority.³⁶

In religious terms, this is not science but idolatry, blind faith in a false God. Understanding these idolatrous dimensions is essential to understanding the ways in which modernist discourses have contributed

³² See, for example David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

³³ See for example Franz Hinkelammert, “The Politics of the Total Market, Its Theology and Our Response.” In *Payment of Foreign Debt*, ed. LADOC, Lima: LADOC, 1986, p. 45–53.

³⁴ As Hamilton points out:

“In the Anthropocene, any geoscientist who models an Earth system that excludes humans is stuck in Holocene thinking; and any social scientist who analyses ‘human systems’ isolated from Earth system processes is stuck in a world of modernity, the world of the epistemological break, that is no longer consistent with scientific understanding.” (Hamilton, “Human destiny in the Anthropocene,” p. 36.)

³⁵ Edmund O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

³⁶ For an excellent summary and criticism of this way of thinking see Lisa H. Sideris, *Consecrating Science: Wonder, Knowledge, and the Natural World*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017.

to Anthropic changes, to sorting out current perspectives and options, and to educating and mobilizing people for more realistic and promising changes.

Transmodern Religious Communities

Expanding dialogue and study within and across faith communities is also resulting in far more complex and dynamic pictures of religious traditions. In particular, developments in critical religious studies and liberation theologies are rejecting the traditional vs modern binary, and through closer study confirming what many people already knew: that religious communities and their traditions are neither premodern, nor modern, nor postmodern. Rather, they are transmodern, internally diverse, contested, each iteration re-inscribing different aspects of earlier traditions and continually intermixing with newer influences. Of course, they have changed fundamentally, in past periods of systemic turmoil and transition, like the fall of the western Roman empire or the dawn of modernity marked by the Reformation, European colonialism, and the emergence of the colonial capitalist world-system.³⁷

Of course, religious communities and institutions are also undergoing great challenges, far beyond the limitations of historically shaped doctrinal and ethical formulations, along with the failures of imagination and sins of too many institutions and leaders. The demographic center of gravity has already shifted from the North to the South.³⁸ Inevitably the foundations of established modes of thought and social organization are crumbling, and commentators are scrambling to catch up with notions like paradigm shifts,

³⁷ See Andrew Walls, "Eusebius Tries Again: The Task of Reconceiving and Re-Visioning the Study of Christian History." In *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History*, ed. Wilbert Shenk, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002, p. 1–21.

³⁸ See William Shenk, "Introduction." In *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History*, ed. Wilbert Shenk, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002, p. xii.

axial transformations, post-religional³⁹ transitions, civilizational crisis, epochal transition.

Surely religious communities confront radical challenges to conversion and renewal as well. At their best, though, these communities also embody continuing capacities to cultivate broader awareness, to resist the centers of power and their life-destroying projects, to nurture hope that another world is possible, and to mobilize in communities, organizations, networks, movements, and coalitions to shift course.⁴⁰

New Epistemological Spaces for Hope and Faith

For reasons alluded to above, faith in positivist science as neutral, objective, and universally relevant has also been eroding, due to: insights flowing from the development of the natural sciences themselves, and growing appreciation for their historical conditioning and limitations; growing awareness of the roles that science has played in contributing to Anthropocene developments; and deepening appreciation, cultivated in networks like EATWOT and the WFTL, of other modes of knowing, diverse standpoints, perspectives, traditions.

New epistemological proposals are appearing in the new pluriverse of knowledges, with many turning to feminist epistemology, indigenous epistemology, and epistemologies of the South for more inclusive ways of thinking about knowledges. As well as of their limits, translations across difference, and mutual enrichment, contributing to broader solidarities

³⁹ EATWOT's Theological Commission. "Towards a Post-Religional Paradigm: Theological Proposal." *Voices* 35, no. 1 (2012). [Http://internationaltheologicalcommission.org/VOICES/](http://internationaltheologicalcommission.org/VOICES/) (accessed 13/4/15).

⁴⁰ Of course, we know that conservative and fundamentalist currents within religious and political traditions are not standing still either, in the name of preserving or returning to an illusory tradition lobbying for other kinds of radical, far-reaching changes. And in these ways they are modern and radical too!

and practical collaboration in movements, coalitions and campaigns.⁴¹ I also wish to propose that in the midst of the upheavals sweeping every form of knowledge, new epistemological spaces are also opening for hope which transcends current constellations of power and dominant historical trends, like the hope that another world is possible, and for the faith which sustains such hope in the face of overwhelming odds.

Resurgent Religious Questions

As suggested above, Anthropocene discourse is steeped in religious images and themes as well. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how it could be otherwise, since the most fundamental questions concerning the place of life, intelligence and humanity in the cosmos — and concerning how we know, what we dare to hope, and why — have been reopened. These questions cannot be avoided, they cannot be answered in definitive ways by science and we cannot avoid responding even if only as passive acceptance of prevailing dynamics. Religious traditions embody far richer and broader traditions of insight and wisdom concerning living with and through apocalypse (a religious image which has remained central, often in secular guises, in modern contexts, especially in the US)⁴² or end times and new beginnings.

Most fundamentally, as suggested above, the Anthropocene points to resurgent religious questions, not about the rightness or wrongness of certain formulations reflecting earlier eco-social worlds. Rather, in a world in which the terms of existence are radically changing, the Anthropocene

⁴¹ See, for example Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2014; Arturo Escobar, *Sentipensar con la Tierra. Nuevas Lecturas Sobre Desarrollo, Territorio y Diferencia*. Medellín, Columbia: Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana, 2014; Sandra Harding, *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

⁴² See Kathleen Stewart and Susan Harding, "Bad Endings: American Apocalypses." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (October 1999): 285–310. [Http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.anthro.28.1.285?cookieSet=1](http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.anthro.28.1.285?cookieSet=1) (accessed 05/11/1).

points to new questions — in different terms for different groups of people in different contexts — which cannot be avoided and require responses not only or especially at the level of ideas, theories, doctrines, but in the ongoing practical re-organizations of eco-social lives in which we are all caught up at various levels, for good and ill.⁴³

In this context it is impossible to avoid religious language, in particular the image of ‘playing God’.⁴⁴ Such images are sprinkled throughout the debates about scientific and technological advances and naive optimism for the future.⁴⁵ Evidence is flooding in from many directions concerning the faith in modern Western science and technology which obscures the fatal limitations of mainstream science and the distortions of wealth and power skewing the development of new knowledge, new technologies, and social technologies of communication and organization. A future which includes humanity requires, along with another kind of science and another kind of politics, another kind of hope and faith.⁴⁶

Of course, there have been other world historic transitions, and other traditions of end times and new beginnings, nurturing other perspectives on this Anthropocene. In particular, Indigenous traditions have long been wrestling with the questions provoked by the end of their then-existing worlds. As Vine Deloria pointed out in the turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s,

⁴³ Here especially I am drawing on my earlier “New Heavens / New Hells.” In *Religion, Human Dignity and Liberation*, edited by Gerald Boodoo, São Leopoldo, RS: Oikos, 2016 p. 265-80.

⁴⁴ See Elaine Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture*. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

⁴⁵ See for example: Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1999; Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. London, UK: Harvill Secker, 2016; Michio Kaku, *Physics of the Future: How Science Will Shape Human Destiny and Our Daily Lives by the Year 2100* New York, NY: Doubleday, 2011, especially p. 10.

⁴⁶ As Gere points out, images of humans as Gods “are not just misleading, but actually a part of the very problem they are intended to address.... Against the idea of an earth shrunk to a size that we can see as a whole, we should be more realistic about our own actual shrunken status, power, and importance.” (Charlie Gere, “The Incredible Shrinking Human.” In *Criticism, Crisis, and Contemporary Narrative: Textual Horizons in an Age of Global Risk*, edited by Paul Crosthwaite, New York, NY: Routledge, 2011, p. 47.)

[a]lmost everywhere we turn whether we be red, white, black, brown, or yellow, we are confronted with the necessity of renewing our vision of the totality of our existence, our understanding of the nature of the universe, and the paths by which we can move forward as diverse peoples upon the continent.⁴⁷

In the midst of the earth-shaking turmoil of the Anthropocene it is increasingly difficult to avoid the conclusion that we are already caught up in epochal transitions from the colonial/modern capitalist, patriarchal, racist, anthropocentric past/present, to an unknown future, that we (in all our different combinations and permutations in different places) are significant actors within. Far beyond what we can know with reasonable confidence, religious questions demand responses, inevitably involving leaps of hope and faith, which contribute to tipping the balance among divergent possible futures. At this historic juncture no issues are more important than hope and faith. And in new and old forms theologies will be at the center of these debates.

⁴⁷ Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red*, New York, NY: Dell, 1973, p. 69–70. See also Figueiroa-Helland, Leonardo, and Pratik Raghu. “Indigeneity Vs. ‘Civilization’: Indigenous Alternatives to the Planetary Rift in the World-System Ecology.” In *Social Movements and World-System Transformation*, eds. Jackie Smith, Michael Goodhart, Patrick Manning, and John Markoff, New York, NY: Routledge, 2017, p. 189–211.

2. CULTIVATING PEACE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

JO ANN LÉVESQUE¹ AND GISÈLE TURCOT²

Antennes de Paix: From Working for Peace to Mobilizing Knowledge

Founded in 2007 in Canada, a country known for its peaceful coexistence, the organization *Antennes de Paix* aims to contribute with others to promote a culture of peace and non-violence. As Quebecers are recognized in Canada for their lack of interest in military matters and for their preference for solidarity and international cooperation activities, it seems like the right time to offer a new approach to working for peace, inspired by the long-standing experience of the international Pax Christi movement in the field of reconciliation and peace.

Antennes de Paix adopted UNESCO's definition of the culture of peace:

¹ Dr. Jo Ann Lévesque is an Expert Consultant in strategic research development and funding for the following universities: ÉNAP, UQTR, UQAR, UQAC, TÉLUQ, UQ Network, Polytechnique - Université de Montréal, St. Paul University, McGill University, Laval University, Concordia University, Secretary of *Antennes de paix*.

² Gisèle Turcot, MA in Social Work, Director of *Relations* (1988-1993) magazine of social, cultural and religious analysis (publication of the Justice and Faith Center in Montreal), member of the Notre-Dame du Bon-Conseil de Montréal, founding member of *Antennes de paix*.

A culture of values, attitudes and behaviors that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavor to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society.³

The first *Antennes de Paix* team initially employed the awareness tools used in many community organizations: thematic meetings and workshops, prayer vigils for peace, participation in campaigns, advocacy, and coalitions to help obtain an international treaty on the trade in small arms. In 2013, on the initiative of the *Antennes de Paix* and under the direction of theologian Gregory Baum, a collective work was published on how the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was received in Quebec⁴. This book was a pivotal document dealing with the aspirations of peoples to live in peace and it was widely circulated, raising the question of how to mobilize citizens to work for peace. That same year, the international community became more aware of the explosion of violence associated with the actions of rebel groups such as Daesh in Syria. It is in the context of new calls for peace, including those of Pope Francis, that the unlikely and unexpected meeting took place between *Antennes de Paix* and *Voix Couleurs Nouveaux Médias*, a communications agency that wanted to collaborate with an organization working for peace. A partnership agreement between the two groups resulted in three on-line initiatives to promote the values of solidarity, justice, reconciliation and peace:

³ This definition combines the approaches taken by two important UN resolutions: the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace adopted in 1999; and the 1998 UN resolution on the culture of peace.

⁴ Gregory BAUM, dir. *Pacem in terris - Paix sur la terre. Relecture engagée dans le Québec d'aujourd'hui*. Montréal, Novalis, 2013, 132 p.

- Twenty-four hours for peace in the world, a vigil that has been celebrating the World Day of Peace on January 1st every year since 2014, a day when hopes and wishes for peace on a global scale are exchanged.⁵
- The Public Prize for Peace, whose mission is to promote the broadest possible recognition of peacemakers and their initiatives, first awarded in 2014⁶ including a page in Spanish⁷
- The *Antennes de Paix* website, which broadcasts calls, messages, cases and prayers for peace⁸ and has been in operation since August 2014.

These three initiatives are part of a double stream of thought: on the one hand, the conviction that the work for peace rests on the compassion that comes from listening to distress calls, whether associated with poverty or with divisions that cause conflict and destruction; and on the other hand, the spirit of knowledge-sharing, of the multiple faces that preside over the creation and use of social media (creative commons), a powerful tool for peace through better knowledge and mutual respect of humanity.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how a very small organization, with a very limited budget, with the expertise of a communication team empowered with new social media, can help to promote a culture of peace and non-violence by mobilizing, thanks to the web, knowledge rooted in a reservoir of compassion and benevolent solidarity.

We will focus on the second initiative, the Public Peace Prize (PPP), which illustrates our point based on quantitative data collected on WordPress, Facebook and Twitter platforms.

⁵ <http://www.facebook.com/24hoursforworldpeace>

⁶ <http://prixpublicpaix.org> <http://publicpeaceprize.org>

⁷ <https://publicpeaceprize.org/espanol/>

⁸ <http://antennesdepaix.org>

A Prize for Unsung Peacemakers: the PPP

In the era of globalization, media culture largely echoes the phenomena of violence, confrontation and physical or linguistic threats, and misunderstandings between nations and their leaders. Isolated acts of violence receive more attention than years of community service or diplomatic efforts. In a context that fosters the culture of violence, why not give more visibility to women and men, to groups that have sometimes devoted much of their lives to resolving conflicting relationships, creating relationships and conditions favourable for peace? This is what the PPP is tackling.

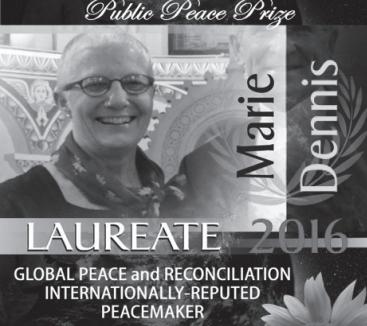
Origin

The PPP was launched during the first 24-hour on-line event for world peace at the end of 2013. The public was invited on the one hand, to share New Year's peace wishes (poems, songs, children's drawings, messages and reflections) and on the other hand, to present the names of people working for peace, whether at the local, regional or international level to the world. From the beginning, this has been a project conceived and undertaken by a network of volunteers working with *Antennes de Paix* and *Voix et Couleurs Nouveaux Médias*. The citizens' initiative follows a completely democratic path. Anyone can, according to an established schedule,

- Propose a candidate according to a simple procedure set out on the site;
- Support nominations as soon as they are validated and posted on the platforms mentioned;
- Comment / disseminate / share profiles of nominees and their actions for peace on their own networks.

The nomination and public support process ends with the finalists being revealed, and after the vote, the award winners are announced at the web

celebration of peace initiatives and peacemakers, at a date that varies each year. The examples below illustrate the web representation of four winners.

	
<p>Amazon RAONI, an esteemed leader in his defense of indigenous cultures and forests, received the “International Reputed Peacekeeper Award” in 2014.</p>	<p>The Belgian doctor Michel ENGLEBERT, a former member of Doctors Without Borders, was recognized as a “local peacekeeper” for creating a fulfilling living environment for disabled adults, beyond all differences.</p>
	
<p>“Peacekeeper” in the communities, prize won by Mabel KATZ. American host and speaker born in Argentina, she highlights a peace dynamic inspired by a Hawaiian spiritual approach.</p>	<p>Marie DENNIS of the United States, a respected icon of international peace and reconciliation movements, brings together compassion, advocacy and spiritual wisdom in intercultural and interreligious dialogue.</p>



The PPP does not award prize money but contributes greatly to the visibility of the finalists and winners through search engine optimization, in addition to offering to the winners a souvenir plaque reflecting the web representation. The whole process remains focused on the desire to raise the profile and recognition of peacemakers around the world, now facilitated by social media.

Modus Operandi

A management committee made up of representatives of *Voix et Couleurs* and *Antennes de Paix* helps to validate the nominations by proposing new categories adapted to the nominations and, if necessary, by suggesting new public mobilization strategies, which will be discussed later. Admittedly, one of the challenges faced by PPP initiators is to move the public from information-consumer behaviour to a participant and advocate-for-action position—that of people who make a difference to peace; it often requires a leap of faith, because it involves supporting a person or a group living in a little-known region. The objective is really to raise awareness and to encourage the public to promote the initiatives of peace highlighted through the nominations by sharing them on social media. Meeting this challenge requires constantly

deploying new animation strategies required by social media⁹ where the image plays a key role: *No picture, no message!* We will come back to this.

Public Participation

Let us look at public participation in the 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 editions, often referred to as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th editions. Table I shows the number of finalists, those who have correctly met the requirements¹⁰, the winners and the number of countries from which they come.

Year	Finalists	Winners	Number of Countries
2014	13	4	3
2015	5	5	5
2016	13	5	4
2017	13	8	8

Figure 1. The finalists and winners of the 2014-2017 for the Public Peace Prize (PPP)

Right from the initial launch of the competition in 2014, there were 26 nominations from 13 different countries, but only 13 of the candidates met the minimum requirements of eligibility. In 2016, there were 39 candidates from some 40 countries, but only 5 completed their applications.

Figure 2 shows the selection criteria used by the PPP management team to categorize the selection of winners. From year to year, the

⁹ Kira Page, 5 Things We've Learnt About Social Media at COCo, *Front Page, ToolBox*, May 31, 2018.

¹⁰ The requirements are: a text of half a page or more that presents the candidate's action, supported by 10 people whose text confirms this action.

criteria evolve according to the specific nature of the applications. This involves highlighting the contribution of each one to the work of peace. For example, in 2017, the category “mediator for reconciliation and peace” appeared, as it better reflected the daily work of nominees.

2014	2015	2016	2017
Local	Local	Local	Local
National	National	National	National
International	International	International	Mediators for Global Peace and Reconciliation
Emerging Peacemaker	Emerging Peacemaker	Social Integration and Community Peacemaker	Artist for Peace
	Solidarity groups for peace	Personal Peace Weaver and Social Peacemaker	Culture of Peace and Local Memory-Building
	Peace Weavers	Peacemaker and Social Activist for Solidarity, Justice and Peace	Militant for the Rights of Unjustly Incarcerated Prisoners
		Architect for Global Peace and Reconciliation	Ambassador and Spokesperson for Peace

Figure 2. Evolution of categories for the selection of laureates for the Public Peace Prize (PPP)

Figure 3 shows English and French data from WordPress; number of views, number of visitors, average visitor attendance and comments that were made for all the finalists in the various competitions between 2014 and 2017.

Years	Views	Visitors	Views per visitor %	Comments
2014	48,123	18,004	2.73	1,681
2015	28,109	13,290	2.11	464
2016	28,226	13,463	2.22	576
2017	25,551	11,887	1.51	2,437

Figure 3. Public behaviour on the Web for the Public Peace Prize (PPP)

Note the number of comments in 2017 in relation to the percentage of visits to the PPP web page. It seems that people are taking longer to consult the presentation of candidates and are more generous with their comments.

Figure 4 illustrates the English and French search engines most used by visitors to the PPP site. There is no doubt that Google dominates the list of search engines.

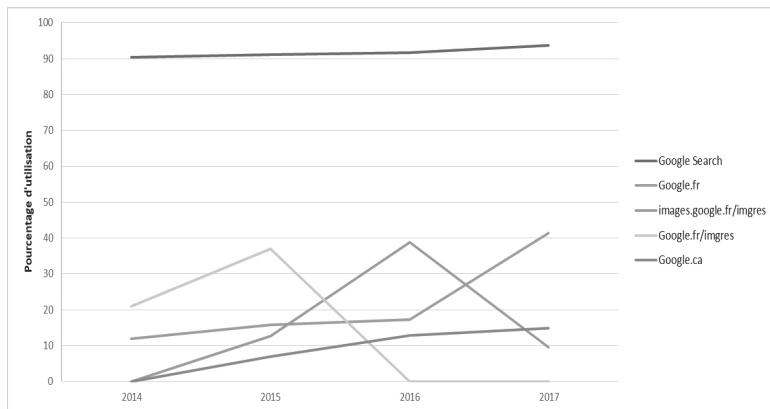


Figure 4. Behaviour of the most popular search engines for the Public Pease Prize

Finally, Figure 5 shows the number of votes cast by the finalists in all PPP contests from Facebook.

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Votes	19,100	81,224	89,500	18,912

Figure 5. Votes per finalist from 2014 to 2017 for the Public Prize Peace

Note that there was a 21% jump in votes between 2014 and 2016, and a decrease in 2017 due to the change in Facebook's statistical formulae and a difference in data compilation between World Press and Facebook. Despite the very innovative nature of this initiative, the simplicity of its operation and all the means deployed, the PPP has not reached the critical threshold of impact proportional to the amount of work invested by the sponsors of *Voix et Couleurs* and *Antennes de Paix*. A review of support and communication strategies used with the general public, nominees and partner organizations will be considered in the next section of this article.

Some Support and Communication Strategies

It is not enough to launch an initiative on new platforms, however valid, for the public to become participants and promoters or broadcasters. As in the theater, actions must take place behind the stage, producing sound and light effects intended to highlight the main narrative and the key moments of the drama portrayed by the actors. The volunteer team that launched the PPP has deployed various means to attract, to support and to guide web, Facebook and Twitter subscribers. Here is a brief overview.

Illustrations that Seduce the Eyes

At the 1st edition of the PPP, as Christmas approached, *Voix et Couleurs* posted a humorous illustration:



"All we want for Christmas is a cease-fire!" As a result, the number of likes and shares immediately peaked, raising awareness of the PPP at the same time.

In 2016, during the 24h vigil for peace, a tale entitled *Under the Stars* was launched online. Illustrated with animated characters (motion in design), the story has been very popular and continues to be broadcast

around the world, as are the other drawings by Jean-Emmanuel Allard, Director of *Voix et Couleurs*.¹¹ The mention of this story's link to the PPP, on the final page, no doubt attracts the attention of Internet users.

Frequent Reminders

Posters remind of the number of days before the closing of nominations and / or the end of the voting period. Since 2015, after the winners have been announced, they have been invited to write a short message for peace; these complete texts are then posted in three languages on the website, while the Facebook page invites you to learn more about them by following the link to the web.

Sustained Links with Partners

Throughout the process, the project officers from *Antennes de la Paix* are in communication with the usual exchange network of some forty NGOs in Canada. Messages are sent to partner organizations to help spread the various messages throughout the nomination and voting process. The search for partners seemed essential right from the 1st edition. Thirty international, regional and local NGOs responded to the direct invitation to become dissemination partners, support partners and / or financial partners. However, as the novelty has worn off, maintaining these partnerships has been unpredictable. Messages sent to a few NGOs reaching a large audience triggered some memberships. A lot of work remains to refine and consolidate this strategy of partner mobilization.

A Strategy for Mobilizing Knowledge Among the Media

We have, as is customary, drafted press releases for French and English-language Canadian media; some radio stations relayed them, but we cannot measure the impact of their broadcasts.

Improvements for the 5th edition of the Public Peace Prize (PPP)

In anticipation of the 5th edition, the *Voix et Couleurs* team proposed to *Antennes de Paix* that interviews with the winners of the previous edition be recorded in order to produce short videos that could motivate work for peace and what it means to be recognized as peacemaker on the entire web by the PPP. In addition, in 2018, the calendar has been readjusted to include the PPP in the context of the International Day of Peace that the United Nations has set for September 21st of each year. The general public and the international community are more mobilized at this time of the year than at the World Day of Peace, celebrated on January 1st, and the two events are intended for the entire planet, regardless of cultural or religious affiliation.

In short, without such strategies of animation and public support, nothing is assured. It is no surprise that this involves a considerable number of creative activities and the coordination of the teams of volunteers who contribute to the various activities highlighting the peacemakers: receiving, examining and validating nominations, securing translation services, consulting people and teams working remotely, creating illustrations, images, videos with the help of musicians and editors, and daily monitoring of public contributions.

The Impact of the Image and Message of Peace in the Digital World

Antennes de Paix and *Voix et Couleurs* are two organizations that work well together, complementing each other in their desire to promote peace. By deciding to go ahead with social media, they ensure that the actions of ordinary people who otherwise would remain unknown to the general public are made known. The premise that guides this dissemination of activities, which espouses a strategy of knowledge mobilization¹¹ so

¹¹ Shaxson, L., Bielak, A., Ahmed, I., Brien, D., Conant, B., Fisher, C., ... Phipps, D. (2012). Expanding our understanding of K*(KT, KE, KTT, KMb, KB, KM, etc.): A concept paper emerging from the K* conference held in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, April 2012. Hamilton, Ontario: UNU-INWEH.

popular in the Canadian scholarly milieu, is the inspiration of gestures of peace while remaining aware that it is an ongoing endeavour. *Antennes de Paix* has carried out many activities related to peace, but the capacity to attract attention via the web is unparalleled when compared to that of workshops or participation in symposia. Nothing can replace human-to-human contact, but the response to web initiatives encourages both organizations to continue on this path. Without knowledge and mutual recognition, the culture of peace would be impoverished.

Achieving common initiatives requires another way of working together. Everything is done remotely by email, phone and teleconferences via Skype, Zoom or equivalent media. This requires solid coordination between the actors, who meet about once a year.

There is still much to be improved, including the organizational structure of the PPP website and how the two organizations work together:

- To include a directory of award winners by year, incorporating illustrations and drawings or even a presentation of the volunteers who ensure that the information is disseminated with transparency;
- To make better use of Excel spreadsheets: count candidates, finalists and winners to better compare the number and source of votes as well as the comments from year to year;
- To promote a better understanding with our partners in order to better contribute to the development of our initiatives while gaining more visibility for their own organization;
- To develop a short-term financial strategy to facilitate the management of computer and artistic work, ensure better visibility of the site on a global scale (English, French, Spanish) and ensure a salary for a permanent staff member;
- To explore the possibility of hosting internships for university students in the following programs: Art Therapy, Computer

Science, Engineering, and research centers at ETS, TÉLUQ, and Polytechnique involved in the mobilization of knowledge;

- To develop, through research on one of the artificial intelligence software programs, a modeling of the content of various concepts related to peace - a modeling of the work being done for peace by individuals - and to promote the advancement of these activities by targeted publications sensitizing the general public;
- To put various initiatives in place for university researchers to show how their research contributes to peace in the world.

The new strategic plan of *Antennes de Paix* supports these objectives. *Antennes de Paix* must be able to raise funds in the short term either as a charitable organization capable of issuing charitable receipts or as a Foundation. Finally, *Antennes de Paix*, through its collaboration with *Voix et Couleurs*, is becoming a digital think-tank, which will help fine-tune its mission going forward and in turn, raise its public profile. And lastly, let us remember that the work for peace¹² cannot be achieved without a deep conviction that the actions of one can inspire those of others in their daily lives and that we are all united in a world free of borders.

¹² We would like to recognize the work and openness of Gisèle Turcot, one of the founders of *Antennes de paix*, and the director of *Voix et Couleurs*, and the extraordinary artist-illustrator, Jean-Emmanuel Allard, who are the engines of these great Web initiatives. These comments are from the first author of the article: Dr. Jo Ann Lévesque. We would like to thank Gloria Elizabeth Villamil Galvis, coordinator of *Antennes de paix*, for her various statistical analyses, which are greatly appreciated and Linda Montreuil, a professional translator, who offered to translate for free our article from French to English.

3.

LO ECONÓMICO/CULTURAL DESCOMPONE LA CIUDADANÍA Y LA ESPIRITUALIDAD

DIEGO IRARRAZAVAL¹

Ante la mundializada calamidad del autismo individual y corporativo, se hace más exigente creer en la acción compartida y transcendente. Esto implica -en el acontecer cotidiano- reinventarse como cristianos al ir colaborando con toda persona de buena voluntad en la transformación económico/cultural. No son asuntos secundarios ni deseos retóricos; más bien se trata de hondas inquietudes. En el día a día ¿cómo ser huéspedes de un planeta agobiado, y cómo se gestiona lo genuinamente humano y cósmico? Ante la idolatría secular y seudo-espiritual ¿se suman esfuerzos y creencias contestatarias? La preocupación fundamental, según el sentir bíblico, es estar en sintonía con el Espíritu de Jesús a quien se reconoce como luz del mundo y artesano de libertad.

¹ Diego Irarrázaval, Asesor de organismos sociales y eclesiales en varios espacios latinoamericanos. Académico de la Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez y vicario parroquial en Santiago de Chile. Ha coordinado el Instituto de Estudios Aymaras (Perú, 1981-2004), y la Asociación de Teólogos/as del Tercer Mundo (1996-2006). Autor de Religión del pobre y liberación (1978), Un Jesús Jovial (2003; Itinerarios en la Fe Andina. (2013). Indagación cristiana en los márgenes (2013), Raíces con Alas (2018).

A orillas del mar atlántico, el 8º Foro Mundial de Teología y Liberación,² ha estado ubicado en el ensangrentado y a la vez deslumbrante Salvador de Bahía. Aquí los siglos de discriminación claman al cielo; la indignante esclavitud ha sido sustentada por organismos religiosos; por otra parte, sobresale la admirable resistencia de afrodescendientes y mestizos y migrantes de todo el planeta, y también los clamores por otro mundo posible.

Estamos en medio de la miseria, donde hay flores y mucha resistencia y dignidad de la población. Lo indicaba Jorge Amado: “No hay ciudad como ésta, por más que se busquen los caminos del mundo. En medio de la espantosa miseria de las clases pobres, ahí mismo nace la flor de la poesía, porque la resistencia del pueblo va más allá de toda la imaginación. De él, de ese pueblo bahiano, viene el lírico misterio de la ciudad, misterio que completa su belleza”.³ Hay pues resquicios por donde entra aire fresco, y hay líneas alternativas, que brotan desde heridas milenarias y de oleadas de voces y acciones de protesta. En medio de todo esto resalta la obra de Jorge Amado y otros más. Periódicamente se desenvuelven instancias de emancipación, brotan flores, se genera arte, lo político es reconfigurado como convivencia.

En los conversatorios en el Foro Social (y en su decena de espacios teológicos) cada participante llega con herencias. Quienes venimos de Chile hemos sido regalados por la lucidez del recién fallecido Nicanor Parra, que a su modo recordaba los principios de libertad, igualdad, fraternidad en contextos de dictadura. Decía en 1986: “hay que pavimentar la cordillera, pero no con cemento ni con sangre, como supuse en 1970. Hay que pavimentarla con violetas, hay que plantar violetas, hay que cubrirlo todo con violetas, humildad (¿=libertad?), igualdad, fraternidad. Hay que llenar el mundo con violetas... El colmo de los colmos es ponerse a cantar versos de ciego como si en Chile no ocurriera nada”.⁴ Son herencias de violencias

² He aportado en el Panel Ecuménico en el ISBA (Ondina) y en el desarrollo del 8º FMTL (inserto en un Foro Social Mundial) en Salvador de Bahía, 12-16/3/2018.

³ Palabras del escritor y soñador de Salvador de Bahía: Jorge Amado (1912-2001).

⁴ Nicanor Parra (1914.2018), *El último apaga la luz, Obra Selecta* (selección Matías Rivas), Santiago: Lumen, 2017, 319.

y de violetas. Ya que abunda la soberbia mental y religiosa (en espacios profesionales, y en rincones de iglesia) vale exigirnos humildad individual y profesional. El llamado anti-poeta Nicanor Parra levanta lúcidas banderas de humilde emancipación, igualdad, fraternidad/sororidad. Ojalá, cada reflexión y espiritualidad sea genuinamente humilde y transformadora.

Uno está ubicado en territorios y poblaciones⁵ que cargan crímenes históricos. Uno puede ser cómplice (por acción u omisión), o bien puede resistir y ser portador de flores de esperanza. Hay que agradecer cada posibilidad de insertarse en otras trayectorias humanas y sus teologías. Han sido cultivadas en estas tierras de Orixás, de Olorun y Olokun; hoy es fascinante la existencia de al menos dos mil espacios espirituales (*terreiros*) en Salvador, y de incontables organismos de derechos humanos.

Hoy cabe sumarse a la indignación ante un “cristianismo que ha convivido con la esclavitud y con los intereses capitalistas del sistema colonial” como indica María Cecilia Domezi.⁶ A continuación, primero anotó como lo económico/cultural trastorna y descompone nuestro entorno y hasta cada corazón creyente. Luego anotó deseos actuales e itinerarios de conversión. Existen rutas emancipadoras y alternativas, y unos recursos espirituales en el acontecer histórico. La calamidad y la descomposición de cada día se entremezclan con razonables interpellaciones y con gestaciones de vida compartida a favor de todo ser viviente.

Lo Económico/Cultural desde los Márgenes

Mucho se dice que es bueno estar ‘relajado’ (y se añaden deseos sobre fines de semana y vacaciones). Sanos deseos que se contraponen a tanto que

⁵ Ver Sergio S.D. Vasconcelos, “Tópicos sobre o papel da Igreja em relação a escravidão e religião negra no Brasil”, *Revista de Teologia e Ciencias da Religião*, 1V/4, 2005, 35-51; Eduardo Hoornaert, *O cristianismo moreno do Brasil*, Petrópolis: Vozes, 1991; Cecilia Domezi, *Religiões na História do Brasil*, São Paulo: Paulinas, 2015. Agradezco lo aprendido y compartido en el Congreso de Teología Afroamericana II (Sao Paulo: Atabaque, 2004); el pensar afro-descendiente es una Buena Nueva.

⁶ Domezi, obra citada, p. 110.

deshumaniza. De hecho uno forma parte de una ciudadanía encadenada a absolutos de carácter económico, cultural, religioso, político. Las aspiraciones saludables suelen no corresponder al 'deber ser' mundano en que uno sobrevive. Gran parte de espacios latinoamericanos han estado marcados por un dominio colonial que marginaliza y hace sufrir.

Sin embargo, es incesante e ingeniosa la configuración de ámbitos de relativa libertad y éxito compartido. Esto último se verifica en micro y macro espacios asociativos. Son escasos (y heroicos) los movimientos sociales, pero son incontables los espacios de trabajo y de entretenimiento con protagonismo popular. A pequeña y mediana escala abunda el empleo, el comercio (en especial el ambulatorio e informal), la producción y gestión a favor de necesidades básicas. Así lo evidencian propuestas y redes de 'economía solidaria' y socialización desde abajo. Por ejemplo, en el Chile de los 80 y 90's, con luchas para restablecer derechos civiles, iniciaron ollas comunes y comedores abiertos, producción artesanal de alimentos y artesanías. Esta se muestra la interconexión en la economía solidaria, habilidad tecnológica, en talleres familiares y en emprendimientos pequeños y medianos.⁷ Vale añadir lo que ocurre en muchos otros espacios, como son las fiestas de la población, las terapias propias de sanación, los modos de organizarse en familias extensas y vecindarios.

También la población es beneficiada (y a la vez es subordinada y sutil o abiertamente manipulada) mediante programas públicos. Proyectos de viviendas de bajo costo, alimentación distribuída en el sistema escolar, asistencia dental y médica, pensión para adultos mayores y para madres solteras, donación de tecnología digital en sectores pobres, y tanto más. Además, a nivel teórico y con financiamiento internacional son propagados

⁷ Veáñse escritos teórico-prácticos de Luis Razeto en Chile (*Crítica de la economía, mercado democrático y crecimiento; Empresas de trabajadores y economía de mercado*), en Brazil Luiz Inacio Gaiger (*Economia social y solidaria*, São Leopoldo), en Argentina José Luis Coraggio, (*Trabajo antes que Capital. Institucionalización de la economía social y solidaria en América Latina*), en Ecuador Cesar Carranza (*Economía y Buen Vivir*; y el 2011 la gestación de la Ley de Economía social y solidaria), en Bolivia el pensar del ex ministro Gabriel Loza (*Economía comunitaria y cooperativa, estatal y privada*).

modelos tales como ‘capitalismo democrático’, ‘economía circular’ con un crecer inteligente y sostenible.⁸ Otra realidad ambivalente es la programación asistencial en iglesias y organismos privados con rasgos clientelistas. En ámbitos cristianos se cuestiona cuánto hay de ambigüedad y control sobre la población, y en qué medida es sustentado el orden social discriminatorio.

Ahora bien, las dinámicas de carácter alternativo (con respecto al desorden socio-económico-cultural) tienen características holísticas. Algunos prefieren llamarlas propuestas y vivencias bio-céntricas, y simbióticas. Esto permite mayor dialogo con la reflexión Cristiana, ya que ésta prioriza la vida como regalo de Dios y responsabilidad humana. Esto conlleva replantear el ser Cristiano, ante apremiantes factores políticos (como es la fragmentación de la población, el autismo y la indiferencia en lo político, las señales de una democracia colapsada), ante sacralizaciones económicas (cuando el mercado es absolutizado), y también cuando lo cultural es tratado en forma superficial.

Al respecto, puede contrastarse una asimilación acrítica del intercambio económico, por un lado, y un reconocimiento de la habilidad de sectores marginados que sobreviven y generan su mundo de sentido, por otro lado. En cuanto a lo primero, la adhesión al mercado no es tanto por su eficacia, sino porque “favorece la expansión y el ejercicio de la libertad concebida como la capacidad igual de los seres humanos de decidir el tipo de vida que quiere vivir”, y porque “cada uno escoge el tipo de vida que quiere”.⁹ En cuanto a lo segundo, unas prácticas sociales (en la capital de Bolivia) muestra como la ciudadanía marginal es un ir y venir, un ir y volver, entre mundos diferentes y no excluyentes.¹⁰ Así hay menor domesticación al orden vigente, y puede reconstruirse un mundo propio (dentro de situaciones adversas).

⁸ El caso de la Economía Circular, del *Capital Institute* dirigido por J. Fullerton en EE.UU.

⁹ Carlos Peña, *Lo que el dinero si puede comprar*, Santiago: Penguin Random House, 2017, p.164, 255.

¹⁰ Vease Koen de Munter, *Nayra: ojos al sur del presente*, Latina: Oruro, 2007 (que analiza experiencias marginales de ir y venir andino) y Nico Tassi, *Cuando el baile mueve montañas*, Praia: La Paz, 2010, 145-6 (que desentraña la economía y ritual en la fiesta cristiana del *Gran Poder*, que también afianza la itinerancia social en el mundo andino).

Deseos Actuales e Itinerarios de Conversión

Cada persona hoy puede sentirse atraída tanto hacia imaginarios de bienestar moderno como hacia propuestas de paz espiritual. Éstas dos dinámicas son vistas como compatibles, y lo son en cierta medida. Sin embargo, el abanico de ofertas de felicidad tiene trampas y también tiene rutas confiables; y, por otro lado, lo espiritual está cargado de ambivalencias. Hay iniciativas superficiales y agresivas; hay experiencias amables. Además, desde ópticas cristianas, el ser feliz conlleva procesos de conversión (que sobrepasan el ‘me siento bien’ y el ‘hago lo que deseo’, con sus matices posmodernos).

El sentir común insiste que siendo ciudadano moderno uno es libre y se auto-realiza. En instancias excepcionales así ocurre; pero el día a día de las multitudes es estar coercionado por un ‘progreso’ sacralizado. De modo especial, nos asedian y domestican los medios tecnológicos, el clientelismo político, el mercado omnipotente. Se sufre una incesante invasión de cuerpos y mentalidades. Condiciones de esclavitud física y emocional han golpeado la realidad afro-brasileña, y están golpeando hoy al ciudadano latinoamericano.

En sectores populares, el imaginario de ‘deseos’ es polisémico: seguridad laboral y justicia social, asociación familiar, diversión, salud en todas sus dimensiones y actividad espiritual que incentiva la vida. Hoy sobresale un transcendente consumo de deseos, y una coerción hacia un tipo de felicidad. Bauman anota la cotidiana presión para convertirnos “en consumidores movidos por un número infinito y en expansión de deseos y necesidades, en ciudadanos que aceptan plenamente y sin reservas la versión de que ‘no hay alternativas’... y a encerrarse y ser ciegos a la generosidad desinteresada e indiferentes al bien común si no puede servir para enaltecer su ego”.¹¹ Todo esto es acentuado por vías tecnológicas, con sus ofertas y productos para una imaginaria y virtual, emocional y entretenida itinerancia individual por todo el universo. El ‘roaming’ tecnológico permite moverse sin trabas (supuestamente), y llegar a lo que uno aspira. Sin exagerar, se trata de

¹¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *El arte de la vida*, Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2017, p. 64.

idolátricas aspiraciones de salvación y vida plena (y no sólo con cosas y dinero), en que la libertad se entiende como ‘cada uno lo que quiere’.¹²

Para la vivencia cristiana, lo que ha sido descrito es como un semáforo con luz roja. La comunidad creyente en el Dios de la Vida siente que hay que detenerse, y no equivocar el camino. No ser cooptados por tales deseos ni caer en el transcendente consumo de ilusiones (como las anotadas); y más bien positivamente, reafirmar las sólidas Bien-Mal-Aventuranzas (Lucas 6,20-26). El imaginario hoy es ser ‘iglesia en salida’, que como ha ocurrido en el 14º Intereclesial Latinoamericano da testimonios de fe, y exige “políticas públicas de inclusión social... democracia directa y participativa y la autodeterminación de los pueblos”.¹³ Es un imaginario ‘desde abajo y adentro’, realista y utópico. A fin de cuentas, es una itinerancia libre, guiada por el Espíritu del maestro-profeta Jesús.

Nuestro ‘roaming’ requiere mapas y místicas; mapas para reconocer el tesoro escondido, en el sentido del Reino de los pobres en la tierra. Además es un ‘roaming’ en sintonía con la gracia de Dios que lleva por rutas inéditas y que presupone responsabilidades humanas. La mística se desenvuelve al peregrinar con audacia y gratuidad; al conjugar silencio y acción, al ser contemplativos en la acción.

En general, en América Latina estamos invadidos y golpeados por el armamentismo global, drogas, corrupción, populismo, comercio y consumo, inequidad a todo nivel. Según los informes de Oxfam: 20 porciento de la humanidad posee 95 porciento de riqueza del mundo; esta violencia socioeconómica va de la mano con guerras internas como las que están crucificando en Brazil, Mexico, Centroamérica, el Caribe, Colombia. El mercado neo-liberal parece omnipotente. Las estrategias mediáticas (con millonarias ganancias y a la vez con domesticación de multitudes)

¹² Carlos Peña anota que el mercado permite “el nacimiento de la subjetividad moderna y su idea de libertad” (*Lo que el dinero si puede comprar*, Santiago: Penguin Random House, 2017, 204) y como la autonomía implica que “cada uno escoge el tipo de vida que quiere” (255).

¹³ *Carta del 14º Intereclesial, CEB's y los desafíos del mundo urbano* (son compromisos de comunidades de base de Brasil y representantes de diversos países, Londrina, Paraná, 27/1/2018).

marcan el escenario en Chile, Brazil, y todo el continente. Son privatizados los servicios públicos y las minorías pudientes tienen sus paraísos; las frágiles organizaciones del pueblo están fragmentadas y controladas (con mecanismos de pan y circo, compra de líderes, etc.). Estos contextos conllevan creer en seudo-absolutos, que obstaculizan creer en el Dios vivo.

La ‘omnipotencia’ tanto de tarjetas de crédito y de consumo como de celulares, bienes tecnológicos, y demás (que siendo sinceros ¡a todos nos fascinan!) producen un cierto bienestar concentrado en algunos seres humanos. Cabe pues la profética denuncia de paradigmas de tecnocracia y antropocentrismo (como ha planateado Francisco en *Laudato Si’ # 107, 115*). Con respecto a lo medular del Evangelio: responder al Reino de Dios que transforma el mundo, las iniciativas por parte de gente marginal son signos de las bienaventuranzas, y la lucha contra la maldad social corresponden a los ‘ayes’ del mensaje de Lucas. Por lo tanto, contexto y conversión van de la mano.

Los itinerarios de conversión ciudadana conllevan desapego a la maldad, y fe en la vida. Se trata de una predisposición a la amable gracia de Dios, de un apasionarse por el *kairós* de ser felices (salvados) hoy y mañana. Otro modo de decirlo es que las iglesias sigan ‘reinventándose’ por fidelidad al Espíritu del Resucitado. La conversión a la que invitaba el maestro de Nazaret (y que actualmente es propuesta por la comunidad eclesial) tiene varios sentidos: 1- abandonar la maldad que implica convertirse a vivir bien, y 2- creer en lo nuevo (Mc 1, 15: “convírtanse y crean en la Buena Nueva”). Se nos invita pues a un proceso de conversión que es personal, comunitario, socio-político, eclesial, escatológico, festivo.

La primera dimensión es patente en protestas y propuestas que caracterizan acontecimientos locales y globales. Por ejemplo, en cada Foro Social Mundial (y los Foros de Teología que allí desenvolvemos) examinamos injusticias sistémicas de las cuales hay que desapegarse. Usando lenguaje evangélico se dice hay que cambiar y convertirse. La segunda dimensión va implícita en la primera (¡y de hecho la segunda es lo fundamental!): la vida digna es un derecho universal, y, otro mundo

es posible. Son pues clamores e imaginarios utópicos que brotan en cada pueblo, y que subyacen a lo que sentimos con la fe que nos es regalada.

Con la propuesta jesuánica del Reino de los postergados y silenciados se ha alimentado, durante siglos, la esperanza de pueblos crucificados. Ello no ocurre de modo espectacular. Más bien es algo que parece inexistente pero es más potente que cualquier estructura de maldad. Uno de tantos recursos evangélicos es la parábola de fermento en la masa (Lucas 13,20-21). El Reino de Dios es “semejante a la levadura que tomó una mujer y la metió en tres medidas de harina hasta que fermentó todo”. Acciones de tanta mujer y de tanto varón en el dia de hoy están generando, silenciosa y eficazmente, el afianzamiento de un mundo nuevo. No cabe duda que crece la invasión mediática y la infelicidad humana en un mercado socio-espiritual; nos invaden y corrompen muchas maldades. A veces uno se siente paralizado. No obstante, la constante lucha para vivir, y de recibir el regalo de vida compartida en plenitud, abre los corazones y esfuerzos que forjan el Reino de Dios.

Voy terminando. Conviene conjugar el leer signos de los tiempos (los económico-políticos-culturales-eclesiales), y a la vez revisar y replantear prácticas (FSM, FMTL y lo local). La conversión al Evangelio y al dinamismo del Espíritu hoy nos quema las entrañas. Ello conduce a prácticas simbólica-políticas, a una producción mística-profética. En este sentido, la lectura comunitaria del Evangelio es llevada a cabo con ojos místico-proféticos que conllevan cambios concretos (sanación, educación, organización de base, regeneración familiar, muchos desafíos entre generaciones, etc). La palabra y espíritu de Vida nos convocan a creyentes en general, a católicos y evangélicos, a humanistas y quienes cultivan diversas espiritualidades. Nos desapegamos de ídolos de hoy, y apostamos por la Vida con sus mediaciones.

Algo que commueve e inspira es lo hecho en 1979 por Pedro Casaldaliga y Pedro Tierra (*la Missa da terra sem males*). Unos fragmentos:

Em nome do Pai de todos os Povos,
Maíra de tudo,
excelso Tupã.

Em nome do Filho,
que a todos os homens nos faz ser irmãos.
No sangue mesclado com todos os sangues.
Em nome da Aliança da Libertaçāo.

Em nome da Luz de toda Cultura.
Em nome do Amor que está em todo amor.

Em nome da Terra-sem-males,
perdida no lucro,
ganhada na dor,
em nome da Morte vencida,
em nome da Vida,
cantamos, Senhor.

Existe hoy mucha mística con mapas incentivados por el Espíritu de Jesús; desde frágiles y esperanzadoras vivencias latinoamericanas, florecen recursos místico-políticos.

4. TEOLOGIA DA LIBERTAÇÃO E AÇÃO POLÍTICA DECOLONIAL

PAULO AGOSTINHO N. BAPTISTA^{1 2}

"Chegou o tempo de tanto sangue ser semente, de tanta semente germinar. [...]

A viagem é longa e penosa. Quase tudo está por fazer. [...] [mas] protestamos não admitir que ódio e violência se instalem em nossos corações." (PIRES, 1981).

Dedico essa reflexão a Dom José Maria Pires, que completaria 99 anos nesses dias do Fórum Mundial da Teologia da Libertação.

Introdução

A Teologia da Libertação – TdL nasceu como espaço de voz dos oprimidos e excluídos, a partir dos horizontes abertos pelo II Concílio Vaticano e pela Conferência Episcopal Latino-americana de Medellín. Incorporou ao

¹ Professor do Programa de Pós-graduação em Ciências da Religião da Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Membro da Coordenação dos Grupo de Trabalho - GTs de TdL na SOTER e ANPTECRE. Livros publicados: *Libertação e Ecologia: a teologia teoantropocósmica de Leonardo Boff* (Edições Paulinas, 2011) e *Teologia e Sociedade: relações, dimensões e valores éticos* (Edições Paulinas, 2011). Paulo Agostinho N. Baptista, *Libertação e ecologia: a teologia teoantropocósmica de Leonardo Boff*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2011. E Paulo Agostinho N. Baptista, Wagner L. Sanchez, *Teologia e Sociedade: relações, dimensões e valores éticos*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2011.

² Revisão textual: Karoline Broll.

seu fazer teológico o método desenvolvido pelo Pe. Joseph Cardijn, no trabalho com jovens operários, também conhecido como “método de revisão de vida da Ação Católica”, e presente em documentos conciliares do Vaticano II, particularmente na *Gaudium et spes*, e agora com o Papa Francisco na *Laudato Sí*, o Ver-Julgar-Agir.

Essa Teologia se construiu a partir da experiência espiritual de encontrar Jesus na face desfigurada de tantas e tantos irmãos e irmãs que sofrem e gritam por vida ao Senhor da Vida. E se pôs em ação de libertação, portanto, como ação política de descolonizar as relações de toda ordem.

No contexto atual há um crescimento da visão conservadora, e até fascista, em diversos lugares do mundo, inclusive nas Igrejas, com grupos enfrentando e se opondo ostensivamente àqueles que lutam por um cristianismo efetivamente evangélico, de saída e que vá ao encontro das pessoas excluídas. Também crescem os opositores das políticas públicas republicanas e democráticas, os golpes políticos e a criação de leis que retiram direitos históricos dos trabalhadores, que destroem o meio ambiente e que produzem miséria, violência e mais exclusão.

O que essa realidade e esses “sinais dos tempos” dizem para a TdL? O objetivo desta reflexão é discutir a respeito das perspectivas de articulação entre a Teologia da Libertação e a ação política decolonial, apresentando a urgência da TdL retomar o trabalho de formação política e de lideranças populares, especialmente da juventude. A metodologia da pesquisa é de natureza qualitativa, através de investigação bibliográfica e utiliza também da observação crítica de eventos que tratam dessa temática.

Recuperando a Memória

As décadas de 1970 e 1980 foram muito ricas para a TdL. Além do surgimento e crescimento das CEBs e de diversas pastorais sociais e entidades como PJ, CIMI, CPT, CEBI, Movimento Fé e Política, foram produzidos diversos livros e instrumentos de formação de lideranças e de formação política. Pode-se citar um número ilimitado de cartilhas e livretos, como os Círculos Bíblicos

e a coleção “Fazer”, com os livros “Como trabalhar com o povo” (BOFF, Clodovis, 1984), “Como se faz a Luta de Bairros” (Rezende, 1985), “Como fazer Teologia da Libertação” (BOFF, Leonardo; BOFF, Clodovis, 1986), “Cristãos: como fazer política” (BOFF, Clodovis et al, 1987), e tantos outros.³ Os livros da coleção tratavam de temas como: análise de conjuntura, sobrevivência com o salário e sobreviver sem emprego, CEBs, cuidado de crianças, medicina popular, trabalho com o povo, jornal comunitário, autonomia e liberdade sindical, presidente da república, movimento ecológico, a defesa dos direitos humanos, a montagem da informação, golpe de estado, a luta no campo, etc.

A despeito de muita coisa que ainda se faz pelo Brasil afora – cursos do CESEP, das diversas pastorais e movimentos, os Encontros Nacionais das CEBs e do Movimento Nacional Fé e Política – MF&P – pode-se perguntar se não houve uma certa acomodação na formação de lideranças, pelo menos no Brasil. Alguns defendem a hipótese de que, com a chegada do PT ao poder, partido que mobilizou de forma bastante forte a esquerda cristã, ao lado das diversas mudanças culturais, políticas, eclesiásticas e eclesiais, houve uma desmobilização nessa formação. Mas se houve algum avanço, mesmo que modesto, nas condições de vida da população durante esse tempo de governo, nos últimos dois anos estamos voltando às péssimas condições de 12 anos atrás. O que dizem os dados?

Os Dados Crescentes da Opressão e da Violência

O Brasil vive uma das suas maiores crises. Não bastasse o problema socioeconômico que cresce com o desemprego e o subemprego e suas implicações, a desigualdade também só aumenta, ainda mais com a mudança na redução dos direitos dos trabalhadores que agrava ainda mais a tragédia. A taxa de desemprego alcança 13% e há mais de 26 milhões de trabalhadores subutilizados (IBGE: PNAD Contínua, 2017). Como mostra

³ Clodovis Boff, *Como trabalhar com o povo*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1984. Jó Rezende, *Como se faz a luta de bairros*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1985. Leonardo Boff, Clodovis Boff, *Como fazer teologia da libertação*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986. Clodovis et al., *Cristãos: como fazer política*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1987.

um estudo do economista Thomas Piketty (World Wealth Income Database, 2017), “os 10% mais ricos da população aumentaram sua fatia na renda nacional de 54% para 55%, enquanto os 50% mais pobres ampliaram sua participação de 11% para 12% no período”, crescimento que aconteceu com a queda de 2% entre os 40% que estão entre os dois extremos (de 34% para 32%). Além disso, o Brasil despencou 19 posições no IDH quanto à desigualdade social, estando o país entre os 10 mais desiguais do mundo.

Se a TdL nasce no contexto dos anos de 1960, diante da indignação ética que leva à práxis libertadora, a realidade latino-americana e global não mudou desde então. Ao contrário, a precarização das condições de vida da maioria, os preconceitos e a violência contra mulheres, negros, indígenas, religiões afro, meio ambiente e comunidade LGBT só aumentam.

O quadro é desolador para quem não tem esperança. A continuidade e o crescimento do número de assassinatos seletivos de lideranças políticas, sindicais, de ambientalistas, etc., de todos os que lutam em defesa da vida e da dignidade é alarmante. Assim, segundo a ONG Global Witness, o Brasil lidera o ranking de países com maior número de assassinatos de ativistas ambientais em 2017: foram 46 mortes, dentre 197 assassinados de ativistas ambientais em todo o mundo, a maioria na América Latina. Vimos no Brasil, recentemente, o assassinato da vereadora Marielle Franco e seu motorista Anderson Gomes, ocorrido há mais de 120 dias e ainda não solucionado.

Tomamos como exemplo a taxa de homicídio de mulheres que é alarmante: entre 1980 e 2013, no Brasil, teve um aumento de 252%. Ou seja, foram assassinadas, neste período, 106.093 mulheres. No México foram 44.646 mulheres assassinadas entre 1985 e 2013. No Brasil, o homicídio de jovens e adolescentes (15 a 29 anos), marcados pela condição masculina, a cor da pele e o estado e lugar de residência é epidêmico. Mortes acima de 10 por 100.000 são consideradas epidêmicas. A taxa de morte de jovens de 19 anos está em 62,9. Em Alagoas essa taxa é de 123,6.⁴

⁴ Julio Jacobo Waiselfisz, *Mapa da Violência 2015: Mortes matadas por armas de fogo*. Brasília: Brasil - Secretaria Nacional de Juventude, 2015a. Disponível em: <http://www.mapadaviolencia.org.br/pdf2015/mapaViolencia2015.pdf>. Acesso em 20 jun. 2016.

Segundo os dados do Atlas da Violência publicado pelo IPEA (2018), em 2016, foram assassinadas 62.517 pessoas no Brasil. Mais da metade de jovens (33.590), o que registra uma taxa epidêmica de 65,5%. Estamos matando nossa juventude e nosso futuro. E o processo é seletivo: jovens, negros (taxa de 40,2), pobres, que moram em periferias ou cidades periféricas, em estados pobres, como nas regiões Norte e Nordeste.

A situação das mulheres e a desigualdade de gênero e racial, para o IBGE (2015), diminuíram em uma década, mas “em relação aos homens, permanecem significativas”: as mulheres ganham, conforme dados de 2014, 74% do que ganham os homens (em 2004 era 70%). Já a situação da Comunidade LGBT é também grave, sendo o Brasil um dos líderes de assassinatos dessa população. Quanto à concentração de riqueza mundial, ela também cresce assustadoramente. Como é possível que uma pessoa tenha patrimônio de 2,96 milhões de dólares, fazendo parte de 1% da população mundial, e esse pequeno grupo concentre o equivalente a 99% da renda? Ou que 62 pessoas tenham patrimônio de 1,74 trilhão de dólares, equivalente à metade (3,5 bilhões de pessoas) dessa população mundial?⁵ Ou ainda, que dentre as 50 cidades mais violentas do mundo, a partir de 300.000 habitantes, não há nenhuma da Europa, há quatro dos Estados Unidos (8%), e 88% do terceiro mundo? O Brasil se destaca nisso: tem 42% dessas cidades, ou seja, 21 cidades, se forem incluídas as regiões metropolitanas de Salvador, Goiânia (Aparecida de Goiânia) e de João Pessoa.

Ainda no Brasil, as propriedades rurais a partir de mil hectares ($10.000.000\text{ m}^2$) representam menos de 1% (0,91%), mas concentram 45% de toda a área de produção agrícola, de gado e florestal. Já as propriedades

⁵ Ignacia Fariza, 1% da população mundial concentra metade de toda a riqueza do planeta. *El País – Economia*. 17 out. 2015. Disponível em: http://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2015/10/13/economia/1444760736_267255.html. Acesso em: 22 out. 2015. Ver também BBC. 1% da população global detém mesma riqueza que 99% restantes, diz estudo. *BBC-Brasil*. 18 jan. 2016a. Disponível em: http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2016/01/160118_riqueza_estudo_oxfam_fn. Acesso em: 30 jan. 2016. E ainda: BBC. Quem são as 62 pessoas cuja riqueza equivale à de metade do mundo. *BBC-Brasil*. 21 jan. 2016b. Disponível em: http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2016/01/160121_62_mais_ricos_forbes_rp. Acesso em: 30 jan. 2016.

com menos de 10 hectares (10.000 m^2) representam cerca de 47% do total das propriedades do país, mas ocupam menos de 2,3% da área rural total. Além desse escândalo há outro: mais de 70% dos alimentos que chegam à mesa do brasileiro são produzidos em 2,3% da terra.⁶

A desigualdade é imensa. Existem quase 7 milhões de famílias sem teto e mais de 6 milhões de imóveis vazios, com um déficit de 7,7 milhões de moradias. A taxa de desemprego no país em 2018 já ultrapassa 13%, ou seja, mais de 13,5 milhões de pessoas não têm emprego. E com a precarização do trabalho pela reforma trabalhista, a renda do trabalhador caiu ainda mais.

No contexto deste Fórum Social Mundial, não se pode esquecer ainda da tragédia das migrações forçadas, o drama de milhões de pessoas refugiadas. Segundo a nova edição do relatório Tendências Globais, da ACNUR 2017, “ao final de 2016 havia cerca de 65,6 milhões de pessoas forçadas a deixar seus locais de origem por diferentes tipos de conflitos”. A metade desses refugiados são crianças. Os números anteriores já eram catastróficos: em 2013 havia 51,2 milhões de pessoas, o número mais alto desde a Segunda Guerra Mundial. Em 2014 chegou-se a 59,5 milhões de pessoas, um aumento de 8,3 milhões de pessoas forçadas a fugir.

Há hoje mais refugiados ambientais que refugiados de guerra: em 2009 houve 15 milhões de refugiados “ambientais” e em 2010 a cifra subiu para 38 milhões. Segundo o Secretariado da Convenção das Nações Unidas de Luta contra a Desertificação, até 2030 estima-se que 135 milhões de pessoas correm o risco de deslocamento por causa da desertificação.

E poder-se-ia continuar a trazer dados sobre degradação ambiental; sobre a situação da violência e preconceito racial; a violência e invasão das terras dos índios no Brasil; o narcotráfico, o tráfico de órgãos, de mulheres e crianças e suas implicações; sobre a degradação e os problemas ambientais; a crise econômica mundial; e ainda as intervenções e conflitos militares e seus

⁶ AGÊNCIA BRASIL. Menos de 1% das propriedades agrícolas detém quase metade da área rural no país. Agência Brasil - 01/12/2016, Rio de Janeiro. Disponível em: <http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/geral/noticia/2016-11/menos-de-1-das-propriedades-agricolas-detem-quase-metade-da-area-rural>. Acesso em: 10 abr. 2018.

genocídios em diversos países, especialmente no Oriente Médio e África. E o pior, ao lado de tudo isso, é o aumento da desesperança e da perda de perspectiva.

E deve-se perguntar hoje: não estaria na hora de uma retomada ou incremento do trabalho de formação política de lideranças populares, especialmente dos jovens?

A TdL e a Ação Política Decolonial

A crise brasileira, desde setembro de 2016, é uma das mais sérias, não só do ponto de vista econômico e social, mas também político. Um golpe legislativo, que aliou diversos partidos e empresários nacionais e internacionais, o judiciário e mais a mídia, criou as condições propícias para reformas da Legislação trabalhista, do Ensino Médio, do meio ambiente e da Previdência, dentre outras, retirando direitos e provocando a volta da imensa desigualdade histórica, que teve pequena redução a partir de 2002, reintroduzindo um processo colonizador.

Como transformar esse processo? Como resistir criando e transformando? O que podemos sonhar e lutar para construir?

Em primeiro lugar, urge que haja uma articulação dos diversos movimentos que comungam da espiritualidade e da práxis libertadoras e que se comprometem com a transformação do país, da América Latina e Caribe, da África, da Ásia e demais continentes. Precisa-se articular as agendas, de acesso a todos, que circule entre todos os movimentos de libertação e de luta decolonial.

Essa articulação é fundamental. A TdL, através de seus teólogos, teólogas e militantes, precisa participar desse processo, seja em eventos como o Fórum Mundial da Teologia da Libertação, os Congressos Continentais (2012, em São Leopoldo-RS, e 2016, em BH); eventos da Ameríndia, da SOTER e GTs da TdL, de Gênero e Comunidade LGBT, Negritude, Indígenas, Trabalhadores Rurais, do Povo da Rua, de Sem Casa e Sem Terra, Ecologia, Juventude e temáticas libertadoras afins em diversas instituições, como na Associação Nacional de Pós-graduação e Pesquisa em Teologia e Ciências da Religião – ANPTECRE entre outras. Em 2017, aconteceu em São Paulo

o 2º Encontro Nacional de Juventudes e Espiritualidades libertadoras com o tema “O Bem Viver como caminho de integração das dimensões socio-políticas, econômica, ambiental, espiritual e relacional”. E o grupo, através da Rosemary Costa, já se movimenta para a continuidade dos eventos.

Para isso, precisamos de canais de comunicação que promovam essa articulação, além de apoio aos canais alternativos, enfrentando a grande mídia que manipula as informações e contribui para a subalternidade. Precisamos de formas comunicativas criativas, interativas, belas e críticas de levar a boa nova libertadora e envolver os jovens nesse processo.

Um dos sérios problemas do golpe político no Brasil, mas que também acontece na África, na Índia, entre outros lugares, é a manipulação da informação. Crescem as *fake news* e fala-se hoje em “pós-verdade”. As instituições religiosas têm diversos canais, geralmente enfadonhos e que só comunicam para os de dentro. Temos que ser ousados e criativos.

Além disso, é preciso articular movimentos, instituições escolares e demais grupos para criar cursos de formação teológica e política, de formação de lideranças, especialmente, da juventude. Avançar na criação de comunidades e de uma rede de comunidades. Deve-se apoiar e incrementar o que já existe. Mas é urgente repensar os modelos de escolarização e formação. As instituições religiosas têm forte presença nesse setor educativo e os educadores precisam de apoio, de uma formação mais ampla e sólida. E os jovens devem também ser sujeitos desse processo formativo.

Além da formação teológica, política e de lideranças, urge que haja o trabalho para que as leigas e leigos assumam seu papel nas instituições religiosas e que haja um forte trabalho de fomento na criação de comunidades, ou melhor: de uma rede de comunidades. Na questão da escolarização, é preciso atuar junto aos educadores, a maioria está defasada e sem apoio teórico e material.

Através das comunidades e lideranças, a atual crise exige que se invista em formas alternativas de economia para a sobrevivência das pessoas e comunidades excluídas do processo produtivo. A geração 5 G trará mais robotização do trabalho e desemprego. Já existe muita coisa nesse sentido

da economia solidária, mas vivemos uma sociedade do pós-trabalho e a promessa e expectativa da entrada em funcionamento da geração 5 G trará um impacto enorme no mundo do trabalho, com o crescimento da robotização. Que futuro terão os jovens nessa sociedade?

Precisamos articular os diversos movimentos, teólogas e teólogos, leigas e leigos, educadoras e educadores na produção de publicações sobre diversos temas de urgência, em linguagem e acesso simples, impresso e digital, para que haja formação crítica e contínua. Para isso, é preciso antes, atacar o analfabetismo e o analfabetismo funcional. Nesse sentido, as produções podem também ser criadas em vídeos e como programas de rádio. Em média, quase 10% da população brasileira, em torno de 12 milhões, é analfabeta. O Brasil é o 8º país em analfabetismo. Porém, o analfabetismo funcional atinge, segundo alguns estudos, entre 50 e 75% da população. A questão é a formação crítica. É preciso recuperar a experiência da Movimento de Educação de Base e a pedagogia de Paulo Freire.

Enfim, sem um trabalho de articulação, de rede, com todas e todos que lutam pela libertação e pela decolonização, não será possível enfrentar os desafios que crescem a cada dia. A ação política precisa de estratégias e do planejamento para que seja eficaz.

Conclusão

É urgente que nos articulemos mais e criemos processos de formação de maneira compartilhada e com meios de comunicação mais eficazes. Como cantava Mercedes Sosa, “Todo cambia”, seja o modo de pensar, sejam as pessoas, mas a canção segue: “Pero no cambia mi amor por lejos que me encuentre, ni el recuerdo ni el dolor de mi Pueblo y de mi gente”.

Realmente, a dinâmica da vida é de mudança e isso envolve todos os processos, seja a vida humana ou da natureza. Dessa forma, a cultura e a teologia vivem sob um contínuo processo de transformação. A TdL, na perspectiva decolonial, como teologia contextual, busca sua universalidade respondendo aos clamores específicos das pessoas e populações oprimidas,

e tem que continuar avançando na luta pela libertação e decolonização. Como diz Paulo aos Gálatas: “Foi para a liberdade que Cristo nos libertou. Portanto, permaneçam firmes e não se deixem submeter novamente ao jugo de escravidão.” (Gl. 4,1). Isso exige vigilância contra a violência e toda forma de colonialidade: do poder, do saber/conhecer (epistêmica), do ser e da natureza, como formula o pensamento decolonial. Romper com a tradição encrustada não é fácil e, na perspectiva crítica de Juan Luis Segundo, deve-se libertar e decolonizar a teologia e a própria teoria decolonial.

Não há teologia sem fé. E a fé é alimentada pelo amor e a esperança, mesmo diante do martírio, realidade vivida pela TdL. Na fé não há lugar para o medo, como está escrito na primeira epístola de João: “Não há medo no amor; o perfeito amor lança fora o medo” (1 Jo 4,18). O medo é a negação da fé e deve-se estar preparado para as resistências às mudanças, que são grandes, em todas as instituições, especialmente no cristianismo e suas igrejas. E as novas formas de controle são alimentadas pelos processos que produzem o medo e “pânico”, por exemplo, do terrorismo, terror que é dos ‘outros’ e não das nações que sempre o produziram, como a colonização latino-americana, mas também africana e tantas mais. Colonialidades que se tornam muito mais perversas e destruidoras a cada dia.

Francisco, bispo de Roma, faz uma pergunta fundamental em sua Carta *Laudato Sí* (n. 160): “*Que tipo de mundo queremos deixar a quem vai suceder-nos, às crianças que estão a crescer?*”. Essa pergunta, ao lado da indignação ética às formas de colonialismo e de colonialidade, deve continuar a ser horizonte e meta da TdL e de uma TdL Decolonial – TdLD que se articula politicamente numa ação que busca a eficácia.

5.

RESISTANCE AND COUNTER-RESISTANCE IN AFRICA DEMOCRACY: THE IMPACT AND IMPLICATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

ADAM K. ARAP CHEPKWONY¹

Introduction

KENYA - Trying to vote to have a President

UGANDA- Tired of their President

SOUTH AFRICA – Voting to remove a President

RWANDA – pretended to have voted for a President

NIGERIANS – Don't even know the whereabouts of their President

ZIMBABWEANS – are waiting for their President to kick the bucket

LIBERIA – Still not sure who is the President

BURUNDI – President, cannot leave the country scared of someone else taking over

DR. CONGO – Government, says they do not have money to conduct election of new President

WELCOME TO AFRICA (Social Media –WhatsApp, Oct, 2017).

¹ Adam K. arap Chepkwony is a Professor of Comparative Religion at the University of Kabianga, Kenya. He holds a D. Phil in Religion from Moi University, Master of Arts in Religion from Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, Postgraduate Diploma in Education from University of Nairobi and BA from Houghton College, NY. His research is in the areas of Religion and Science with special interest in African Religion and culture.

The question of what ails African democracy is the most recurrent since the inception of the ideology of democratisation in Africa. In the 1990's the in-word in the political scene in Africa was democracy. The survival of any government was determined by whether they adhered to democratic values. Dambisa Moyo in her book, *Dead Aid* notes that the foreign aid agenda to Africa in the 1990's was a question of governance in the sense that aid would only be available to the countries that subscribed to principles of democracy.² Due to this requirement and the wave of acceptance of democratic ideals across the globe, African nations adopted democracy. The significance of democracy then and indeed now can be summarised in what I wrote elsewhere thus:

Indeed, to subscribe to 'democracy' does not only imply modernity, but it also suggests respect for human dignity and individual rights. At the same time, and more importantly, 'democracy' is associated with 'development'.³

The proponents of democracy envisioned a system of good governance that would spur development in all spheres, but twenty years down the line; it is not clear if the enthusiasm applauded then is still alive. In some parts of Africa, there is resistance to democratic values by some leaders who are reluctant to embrace the virtues and values embedded in democracy. The "Welcome to Africa" post caption above is telling. The post was prompted by the challenges faced in Kenya after the nullification of the results of the 2017 election by the Supreme Court.

The picture painted by the captions shows that Africa is struggling with democratic values and that there is resistance among some of its leaders.

² Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is A Better Way For Africa*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

³ Adam K. arap Chepkwony, "Religion and Democracy in Kenya." In *Democracy and Reconciliation: A challenge for African Christianity*, edited by Laurenti Magesa, & Zablon Nthamburi, 98-115. Nairobi, KE: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 98.

On the other hand, there has been a counter-resistance from the people themselves as well as from human rights and religious bodies and institutions that believe and cherish the values of democracy. In this paper, I shall survey the resistance to democracy in Africa and the resultant impact on the society.

What Ails African Democracy?

Gilbert Muyumbu, a writer for Standard Media Kenya writes: "Africa does not literally need democracy but something else and urgently".⁴ The state of African democracy is one of the toughest and controversial questions in the world today.⁵ Sarsar & Adekunle points out that African countries have had a democratic experience which is far much less than satisfactory.⁶ Some scholars have laid the blame on colonial masters who did not do what they preached. Lee and Paine pose a question on whether the colonial master promoted democracy in Africa.⁷ Can the democratic quagmires and uncertainties depicted in the African continent be attributed to the legacy of the colonial masters? This question I believe significantly elucidates what ails the African democracy. Lee and Paine further argue that despite the primarily held notion that colonialists promoted democracy in African states, the statistical data evident today dismiss the argument.⁸ The legacy the African continent inherited from the colonial masters was a manipulative manner of governance and politics.⁹ Colonial structures

⁴ Gilbert Muyumbu, "Africa doesn't need democracy, it requires something else, urgent." 30 August 2017. *Standard Group Limited*. 4 Dec 2017.

⁵ Nic Cheeseman, "The state of democracy in Africa." 14 Aug 2015. *Democracy in Africa*. 4 Dec 2017.

⁶ Saliba Sarsar and Julius O Adekunle, *Democracy in Africa: Political Changes and Challenges*. Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2012, p. 1.

⁷ Alexander Lee and Jack Paine, "Did British Colonialism Promote Democracy? Divergent Inheritances and Diminishing Legacies." *Working Paper Series*. 2016, p. 1-65.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Joy Asomazung Alemazung, "Post-Colonial Colonialism: An Analysis of International Factors and Actors Marring African Socio-Economic and Political Development." *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 3, no. 10, 2010, p. 61-84.

stripped and criminalised African leadership that was truly democratic and replaced it with sycophants and leadership that reflected colonial aspirations. Elijah Okon John argues that:

Another problem with colonialism is that it imposed a hybrid and confusing structure on a people who were hitherto used to a different type of relationship. ... traditional seat of authority, for instance, was wrestled from the traditional rulers. And the traditional contact and understanding, which the traditional rulers maintained with their people were replaced by an impersonal bureaucracy whose source of authority was derived from legal pattern of titles, enshrined in the constitution and which did not augur well with traditional African rulers whose powers were derivative of the special ties they possessed with the ancestors, spirits, and God, in line with traditional beliefs.¹⁰

One evident element in the governance of the colonists was manipulation resulting in dogmas such as “divide and rule” which many politicians in Africa have continually used to divide the electorate and push their agendas of staying in power.¹¹

Kenyan politics presents a clear picture of the legacy as depicted in the 2007/2008 post-election violence and the progressive division of the country on ethnic lines. The electorate were divided in their tribal groups and supported politicians from their own group. The Rwanda Genocide, the militia fights from DR. Congo to South Sudan, the division of the citizens on ethnic grounds is the same. Using this strategy, democracy has been illusive and becomes elusive. Many colonists used the divide

¹⁰ Elijah Okon John, “Colonialism in Africa and Matters Arising – Modern Interpretations, Implications and the Challenge for Socio-Political and Economic Development in Africa.” *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 4.18, 2014, p. 24.

¹¹ Michael Bernhard, Christopher Reenock, and Timothy Nordstrom, “The Legacy of Western Overseas Colonialism on Democratic Survival.” *International Studies Quarterly* 48, 2004, p. 225–250.

and rule strategy to conquer and rule Africa. Wars and divisions would be engineered among the African leaders and as they fight and argue, the colonial agenda spread across the land. Bayeh elucidates that:

... the notion of ethnicity left behind by the colonial powers has posed an adverse impact on the overall political system of African states. Ethnic division, which was multiplied by the colonial system, left persistent rivalry and conflict in the continent and thereby resulted in exclusion and marginalisation in African political societies. ... what African states inherited from their colonisers is their undemocratic and authoritarian rule.¹²

The colonial masters used assassinations and manipulative means to silence African leaders who proved a hindrance to their rule. Today assassinations and holding captive of the leaders opposing the ruling government is prevalent in Africa. Patrice Lumumba, a Congolese Prime Minister; Felix Moumie, a Cameroonian opposition leader; Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Sylvanus Olympio of Togo among other great African revolutionaries during the colonial period are believed to have succumbed to brutal deaths at the hands of their former colonial masters. This art of suppressing democratic revolutionaries was transferred exceptionally well to the African leaders.¹³ J.J. Ongong'a further helps us answer the question on what ails African democracy'.¹⁴ Ongong'a as well as Ibrahim and Cheri posit that for the concept of democracy to be understood, its definition must be revisited.¹⁵ Typically, democratic ideology refers to 'a

¹² Endalcache Bayeh, "The Political and Economic Legacy of Colonialism in the Post-Independence African States." *International Journal in Commerce, IT & Social Sciences* 2, no. 2, 2015, p. 90.

¹³ Usman A. Tar, "The challenges of democracy and democratization in Africa and Middle East." *Information, Society and Justice* 3.2 (2010): 81-94.

¹⁴ J.J. Ongong'a, "Challenges towards democratization in Africa." *Democracy and Reconciliation: A challenge for African Christianity*. Ed. Laurenti Magesa and Zablon Nthamburi. Nairobi, KE: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 9-14

¹⁵ Alhaji Ahmdu Ibrahim and Lawan Cheri, "Democracy, Political Instability and the African Crisis of Underdevelopment." *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance* 1.1, 2013, p. 59.

government of the people by the people and for the people” which etymologically is the ‘rule of the people.’ The “rule” component refers to the exercise of power, authority and influence is unequivocally understood and well interpreted by people. The difficulty lies in the component “people.” Democratically, “people” refer to the cumulative inclusion of all the citizens of a country in decision making and governance without any form of marginalisation, victimisation or favour. To most African politicians, the ‘people’ component is defined as a set of few privileged individuals making discriminative decisions at the expense of the general public. Democracy is thus redefined to mean ‘rule by the privileged few.’ This has been the heart of the problematic incidences of failed democracy more so when it comes to succession and transition of government.

For instance, in Kenya, two presidential elections were conducted in 2017. The Kenyan Supreme Court annulled the presidential election held on August 8, 2017 over election malpractice by the incumbent ruling party and the election commission body. Unbelievably, the fresh presidential polls held on October 26, 2017 were alleged to have malpractice, the result of this was to tear the country into two distinct fronts drawn on the bases of ethnicity. In DR. Congo, President Joseph Kabila created a crisis by rescheduling elections to 2018. Similarly, the Ugandan parliament was in a rage over a presidential age bill aimed at removing the age limit for president, which would allow President Yoweri Museveni to rule for life. In Burundi, a democratic crisis emerged over President Pierre Nkurunziza running for a third term regardless of controversy over its eligibility. In all cases, the opposition, NGOs, religious bodies and individuals who uphold the values of democracy were scorned, manhandled, some assassinated, and unjustly treated.

These few examples denote the perverseness in the definition of the “people” component in democracy by the majority of African politicians. Therefore, African democracy is ailed by the manner in which decisions are made. Ongong'a quotes John Lucas who said that:

A decision is democratically taken if the answers to the question ‘who takes it?’ is more or less everybody; in contrast to the decision taken by only those best qualified to take them as in a meritocracy. Democracy describes how a decision is reached. A decision is taken democratically when it is reached by discussion, criticism, and compromise. Democracy is the spirit in which a decision is made, namely, being concerned with the interest of all, instead of only a fraction or a party.¹⁶

African Politics: Democracy or Meritocracy

Decision-making is the backbone of democracy for it decentralises decision making from a central authority bestowing it to the people. The exercise of the rule should be by the people, meaning it is the general public that should decide on how they are governed. In a number of African states, the government and the opposition as well as the public and civil organizations are in a constant state of conflict over decision-making. Democracy and justice can only prevail if the will of the people is respected and adopted by those in authority.

Tony Leon notes that Felix Houphouet-Boigny who reigned over 29 years with authoritarian rule in Côte D'Ivoire was quoted in 1991 as saying “*There's no number two, or three or four... in Côte D'Ivoire... There's only number one, that's me, and I don't share my decisions.*”¹⁷ The words of Houphouet-Boigny echo across Africa such that ‘number twos, threes, fours *et cetera*’ are not allowed to freely operate in the states. In Tunisia and Algeria, the public decided to take matters into their own hands toppling the ruling authoritarian and dictatorship governments. Kizza Besigye, the opposition leader of Uganda, has been detained and mishandled by the government for his

¹⁶ J.J. Ongong'a, “Challenges towards democratization in Africa.” *Democracy and Reconciliation: A challenge for African Christianity*. Ed. Laurenti Magesa and Zablon Nthamburi. Nairobi, KE: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 12.

¹⁷ Tony Leon, “The State of Liberal Democracy in Africa: Resurgence or Retreat?” *Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity Development Policy Analysis No. 12* 26 Apr 2010, p. 1-32.

efforts to fighting for inclusivity and adoption of democracy and the rule of law. In Kenya, riots and deaths have been recorded across the country over the claim that elections were rigged by the ruling party. Many African political leaders cannot be held accountable. Indeed, many governments resist collective decision making as meritocracy and dictatorial decision making depicted through election rigging have decorated Africa red with the blood of innocent citizens who come out to protest over exclusive decision-making. Ongong'a points out that most Africans have a right to:

... actively take part in decisions that affect their lives and not leave it to only few individuals. The majority of Africans do not have a chance to determine their political destiny.¹⁸

Several governments in Africa face questions of political legitimacy because most of them do not give the public a chance to determine their political destiny as alluded by Ongong'a. The electorate only matters when it comes to an election where they are used as rubber stamps to give a political class more terms in government.¹⁹ Unless the ruling parties, the opposition and general public opinions and decisions are harmonised and respected, democracy shall remain abstract in Africa. I have noted elsewhere, that for democracy to prevail:

- a) People (politicians and the electorate) should have respect for one another.
- b) People should accord each other the right to full human dignity, and
- c) People should cultivate healthy attitudes towards each other.²⁰

¹⁸ J.J. Ongong'a, "Challenges towards democratization in Africa." *Democracy and Reconciliation: A challenge for African Christianity*. Ed. Laurenti Magesa and Zablon Nthamburi. Nairobi, KE: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 14.

¹⁹ J.J. Ongong'a, "Challenges towards democratization in Africa." *Democracy and Reconciliation: A challenge for African Christianity*. Ed. Laurenti Magesa and Zablon Nthamburi. Nairobi, KE: Acton Publishers, 1999, 9-21

²⁰ Adam K. arap Chepkwony, "Religion and Democracy in Kenya." In *Democracy and Reconciliation: A challenge for African Christianity*, edited by Laurenti Magesa, & Zablon Nthamburi, 98-115. Nairobi, KE: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 102.

A Question of Discussion and Christianity

The principles of democracy are embedded in its definition and as alluded to by John Lucas, for a decision to be termed as democratic it is subject to discussion, criticism, and compromise. No action and decision taken by those in authority should be considered as collective if it is unilateral. The Christian teachings about decision-making should be done in consultation with God through prayer. The book of Proverbs notes that:

Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom. A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself. When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach. The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook. It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment. A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.²¹

In the above scripture, it is evident that the actions of man are subject to discussion, criticism, and contention. The country's constitution and the rule of law are instruments institutionalised by God to help govern the people, and it is a fool who prides in his/her own understanding sidelining the thoughts of others. God gave human beings a free will to make their own decisions consciously but with consideration to its implication for others. Harmony and justice prevail in a system where respect must be given to opinions whether in favour or against one's opinion. Most African politicians

²¹ Proverbs 18:1-15 (KJV)

fall short of respect to criticism; they believe their decisions are final and free from discussion. Whoever tries to compromise is labelled an enemy of the state and mechanisms to silence them are immediately initiated.

It is hard to convince anyone that decisions made in African states are democratic in the sense that they are open to rational discussion and criticism. Jalloh quotes President Yoweri Museveni in 1986 after taking power from General Tito Kello that "Africa is tired of leaders who cling to power against the wishes of the masses."²² "Today the same Museveni wants to cling to power in spite of the criticism and resistance by the people. For an authority to be considered democratic it is imperative for them to acknowledge and positively take in criticism. It is the fundamental step of ensuring participation of people and works as a check and balance. Once criticism and room for dialogue is shuttered, the resultant forces are riots and demonstration on the streets that always culminate in bloodshed and destruction of property.

Deliberative democracy strengthens the voice of the citizens by ensuring all people are included in the decision-making that directly affect them. In Africa, decision-making is valued during electioneering periods when most politicians pretend to rally and align with the needs of the electorate. Once elected the room for dialogue becomes an illusion. Even the representatives of the people in parliament are often bribed and become the puppets of the president. The result is that they are then used to rubber stamp motions in parliament that are in favour of the politicians rather than the common good. J. J. Ongong'a laments that until African leaders: "...learn to accommodate constructive criticism, be it political or otherwise, most of our socio-economic problems will not end."²³

²² Abu-Bakarr Jalloh, "Democracy in Africa: Has democracy failed in Africa?" 14 Apr 2017. *Deutsche Welle*. 4 Dec 2017.

²³ J.J. Ongong'a, "Challenges towards democratization in Africa." *Democracy and Reconciliation: A challenge for African Christianity*. Ed. Laurenti Magesa and Zablon Nthamburi. Nairobi, KE: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 19.

Inclusivity in Democracy

Miloš Brunclík explains that democratic political systems should be based on the principle of inclusivity.²⁴ It is imperative for the polls projected at establishing the government and parliament to ensure that decisions are inclusive and free from coercive and tampered voting. The principles of democracy demand for a racially and ethnically inclusive system. The Rwanda genocide, Kenyan 2007/2008 postelection violence and the disengagement of South Sudan from Sudan is a manifestation of unconsolidated inclusivity. When decisions prove to be made by a selected few, the oppressed succumb to the use of violence to remove the government and its sympathisers. Shola Omotola explains that issues of inclusivity have resulted in power-sharing governments more in circumstances where the incumbent parties fail to concede power to winning parties.²⁵ The case of the 2007/2008 power-sharing in Kenya and Zimbabwe is a manifestation of perverse inclusivity. In order to halt the postelection violence engineered by election rigging the parties accepted to take part in power-sharing arrangements: J. Shola Omotola wonders:

...the popularity of power-sharing among its promoters and negotiator after electoral conflicts in Africa has made some analysts wonder if power-sharing has become the “new” democracy in the continent.²⁶

It is undeniable that inadequate inclusivity is a prime problem faced by African democracy. The power-sharing government of President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Amolo Odinga in 2008-2012 in Kenya was plagued by lack of inclusivity issues. This derailed decision-making

²⁴ Miloš Brunclík, “Peter Emerson: Defining Democracy. Voting Procedures in Decision-Making, Elections and Governance.” *Central European Political Studies Review* XV, no. 4, 2012, p. 342–345.

²⁵ J. Shola Omotola, *Unconstitutional changes of government in Africa. What implications for democratic consolidation?* Uppsala, UK: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2011.

²⁶ Ibid.

significantly. Inclusivity as a pillar of democratization is projected at creating a pluralistic government where government transitions are through peaceful voting but not through bullets as exhibited in most African elections. Inclusivity is a measure of the quality of democracy in any country.

Counter-Resistance in African Democracy

Counter-resistance here refers to the will of the citizens and other interested parties at individual levels or through groups, be it church-based, humanitarian, NGOs, or foreign envoys, among others, to rally with an agenda of forcing the ruling regimes to be democratic in their approach and to follow the constitution and the rule of law. According to Douglas Badgett, this world is not broken by people who try to change it but by people who are willing to see vices and keep silent about it.²⁷ Counter-resistance to perverse, authoritarian and dictatorial regimes in Africa has been evident ever since the struggle for African independence commenced. Many leaders across Africa perished at the hands of the colonial masters fighting for the disintegration of the brutal regimes of the colonists. For more than five decades, the struggle continues to liberate Africa from leaders who seize power and personalise national resources. The Arab Spring wave that hit Northern Africa in 2011 to the most recent resistance by opposition parties in several countries in Africa, all associated with regimes that have run short of democratic sanity.²⁸

Ongong'a noted that the climax of most elections in Africa is bloodshed over protests due to election rigging.²⁹ People are willing to put their lives at stake to demand their constitutional rights. According to Sekou Toure

²⁷ Douglas K. Badgett, *Doctrinal Insights to the Book of Mormon Vol. 1: 1 Nephi through 2 Nephi*. Springville, UT: CFI, 2007, p. 121.

²⁸ Kamal Eldin Osman Salih, "The roots and causes of the 2011 Arab Springs." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 35.2 (2013): 184–206.

²⁹ J.J. Ongong'a, "Challenges towards democratization in Africa." *Democracy and Reconciliation: A challenge for African Christianity*. Ed. Laurenti Magesa and Zablon Nthamburi. Nairobi, KE: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 9–21.

Ottondi, the one leader the Kenyan democracy shall ever be indebted to is Raila Odinga, who has tirelessly fought for democracy, upholding the rule of law and good governance.³⁰

Besides the opposition from political movements and mass demonstration from citizens, churches, civil societies and foreign envoys have also taken on the reforms mantle. Nonetheless, their efforts, just like the opposition parties and mass resistances, have been countered by the ruling regimes. The Kenya Churches association took an active role in 2002 that ended the 24-year reign of Daniel arap Moi but after that, the church has been accused of taking stands in favor of the ruling governments. Once the church takes such stands and sympathizes with the regime accused of victimisation, the struggle for good governance often collapses. The church is expected to side with the oppressed as a virtue exhibited by Jesus Christ and not to favor the oppressors. Since the church commands millions of citizens, if she is dedicated to counter and expose the impunity in the government, good governance and the rule of law have a chance to prevail.

Democracy Development and Transformation

Nelson Mandela once said, “*Freedom is meaningless if people cannot put food in their stomachs.*”. Democracy can make significant contributions to the development and transformation of the African continent; on the other hand, it has equally resulted in a stagnated development due to authoritarian and dictatorial regimes.³¹ Very few African states can confidently record and celebrate development bound to democratic governance. Socio-economic development and growth have been retarded by recurrent political instabilities and vendettas among current governments, oppositions, the civil society and the public. Violent demonstrations and

³⁰ Sekou Toure Ottondi, “Why ‘resistance’ could be important for Kenya democracy.” 5 Nov 2017. *The East African*. 5 Jan 2018.

³¹ Katherine Amanda Long, *The Cost of Political Instability: Why Gabon’s Development has Outpaced Congo-Brazzavile’s* (*Undergraduate Honours Thesis*). Austin: University of Texas, 2011.

bloodbath protests have been registered across the continent, halting and considerably limiting the capabilities of both internal investments and development as well as foreign investments.

Kenya will serve as good example here on how violence in 2017 retarded development. According to a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Policy Brief of October 2017, the cumulative uncertainties of the August 8 and October 26, 2017 elections in Kenya, have significantly affected the country's economy by derailing both national and foreign-based development initiatives.³² According to the UNDP policy brief, the political uncertainties and fiasco in Kenya negatively affected investors' confidence resulting to a sharp downturn in industrial output and the consumption rate of the private sector. The Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) noted that due to the political state, a majority of investors postponed their investments plans awaiting the calming of the political situation in the country resulting in inhibited spending and consumption of goods and services by the private sector.³³ Consequently, the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) noted reduced Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) due to the reluctance of foreign investors' participation in the Nairobi Stock Exchange, the most prominent stock market in East Africa following. From June 2017, the FDI was below 60%.³⁴

The NSE had to halt trade due to the political pressures in the country where over US\$ 0.5 billion were recorded to have been lost over a few hours while the public transport sector lost over KSh 75 million from September 1, 2017 to the time the policy was published. The Kenya National Chambers of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) approximated a loss of over US \$ 0.21 billion due to the political agitations.³⁵ The national economic growth estimate rates by the National Treasury were decreased from 5.9% to 5.5%

³² UNDP. "Unravelling the Impact of the Political Impasse on the Kenyan Economy." *United Nations Development Program Policy Brief (Issue No: 2/2017)* Oct 2017: 1-5. 5 Jan 2018.

³³ UNDP. "Unravelling the Impact of the Political Impasse on the Kenyan Economy." *United Nations Development Program Policy Brief (Issue No: 2/2017)* Oct 2017: 1-5. 5 Jan 2018.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

following the uncertainties and high political pressures. Data by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) recorded a 5% economic growth in the second quarter of 2017 compared to 6.3% in 2016 in the same quarter.³⁶ The National Treasury recorded a revenue target shortfall of US \$ 276.2 million in the first quarter of 2017/2018 fiscal year because business was not as usual. The collection of insufficient revenue put much pressure on fiscal budgets. The Ksh. 12 billion that was required to service the fresh presidential election further constrained the 2017/18 fiscal budget. This supplementary budget would have been directed to other development projects, which would have transformed and empowered Kenyan citizens.³⁷ The Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) report in the Mid October 2017 indicated that industries were expected to cut jobs by 47% in the next six months, and 64% of the industrial manufacturers were expected to record either a zero or negative revenue growth following the political vendetta. The political instabilities result in many resources being under and mis-managed, properties worth billions destroyed, the normal running of activities halted and disrupted, opportunistic criminals and corrupt persons taking advantage of the situation and limiting the socio-economic growth of the country. This is replicated in many other countries of Africa that have failed to comply with democratic principles.

The Future of Democracy in Africa

Having said the above, not all has been lost. Many cases of democratic pursuits have culminated in demonstrations when resisting oppressive governments. When I started this chapter, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Jacob Zuma of South Africa were presidents but as I complete it they have been forced out of government through democratic channels. Mass revolutions recorded in Africa depict a community of people tired of

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

oppression and yearning for liberation. Mass revolution is increasingly the method of demand for political freedom and reform in Africa.

Unfortunately, many revolutions come with violence, massive destruction of property and thus impeding community cohesiveness and development agendas. The solution to this is education. For democracy to survive, the rulers and the ruled must amicably understand and practice acceptable democratic ideals. It is only through comprehensive and constructive education about the dynamics of politics, the constitution, the rule of law, human rights and the rights of the electorate that democracy can fully be exercised. In the forefront of providing this kind of education should be the voices of scholars and learned minds capable to driving coherent developmental agendas. To change the democracy and dependency narrative about Africa, African scholars must seriously take the mantle of accountability and selflessness to deliberately and proactively conscientize citizens.

Conclusion

Throughout the paper, it is crystal clear that the state of African democracy and underdevelopment stretches from the colonial period whose vices still exist in today's African politics. The legacy of the colonial masters significantly stained the understanding and definition of democracy and democratic principles by African leaders. Nevertheless, despite the legacy and African leaders who are allergic to democratic transition and transformation of the masses, opposition groups and individuals, the religious, civic and foreign envoys have proved dedicated to countering resistance and propelling the continent into the right direction. African scholars have an insurmountable responsibility to advocate and undertake development projects and enlighten their fellow citizens on their democratic rights.

6.

RELIGION ET POLITIQUE EN AFRIQUE NOIRE: QUELLES PERSPECTIVES AFRICAINES DE LIBÉRATION?

IGNACE NDONGALA MADUKU¹

Depuis 2012, récusant toute alternative, plusieurs chefs d'État africains ont tenté une fraude à la Constitution afin de garder le pouvoir. Alors que ceux du Bénin et de l'Angola ont renoncé à cette pratique éhontée, les présidents du Congo, du Cameroun, de l'Ouganda, du Tchad, du Gabon, du Togo, du Rwanda et du Burundi ont réussi leur forfaiture, tandis que celui du Burkina Faso a été balayé comme une chiure de l'histoire. Faisant fi de cette leçon historique, le président de la République démocratique du Congo qui s'est choisi un dauphin multiplie les manœuvres dilatoires pour garder la mainmise sur l'organisation des élections.

Les différentes tentatives de continuisme évoqués supra s'accompagnent d'une répression de la population et se soldent par des pertes en vie humaine. Elles s'ajoutent aux hypothèques des pays jadis colonisés, puis prétendument libérés, mais toujours asservis par les puissances occidentales. Hier soumis au redressement structurel, aujourd'hui fragilisés par le néolibéralisme, ces pays se retrouvent sacrifiés aux exigences de la

¹ Ignace Ndongala Maduku est professeur adjoint à l'Institut d'études religieuses (Université de Montréal) au Canada. Co-coordonnateur du Groupe de théologies africaines et afrocaribéennes, il a publié aux Éditions Karthala en 2016 un ouvrage intitulé *Religion et politique en RD Congo. Marche des chrétiens et parole des évêques catholiques sur les élections*.

mondialisation, embrigadés dans des discours et dans des technologies de développement imposés de l'extérieur. Les puissances occidentales et leurs multinationales maintiennent dans les rets de la dépendance, de la domination et de la recolonisation les pays qui succombent aux sirènes d'un modèle néolibéral de développement aux conséquences désastreuses tant pour les Africains et pour les Africaines que pour leur flore, leur faune et leur sous-sol. Ces formes d'autoritarisme sont encouragées par une structuration raciste, capitaliste et occidentalocentrique du pouvoir. Disons à la suite d'Annibal Quijano, que cette structuration relève d'une colonialité du pouvoir, une articulation planétaire d'un système de pouvoir « occidental » dont les savoirs et les subjectivités, érigés en modèles, sont imposés aux pays africains au gré des intérêts des puissances punitives.

L'embrigadement des pays africains ne laisse pas les organisations religieuses africaines indifférentes. Alors que certaines parmi elles servent de béquilles aux pouvoirs en place, d'autres, dépassant tout accommodement, s'inscrivent dans la ligne de la confrontation et de la résistance. Cette dernière épouse plusieurs formes notamment une constellation d'actions dénonciatrices des révisions constitutionnelles. Elle donne une visibilité et une lisibilité aux organisations religieuses engagées désormais dans la moralisation de la vie publique.

Quelles pratiques religieuses et théologiques faudrait-il inventer pour ces pays qui excellent dans la prière, dans les chants et dans les danses en l'honneur de Dieu, mais qui, réduits en vaches à lait des multinationales occidentales, soumis aux dictats des puissances punitives occidentales et asservis par les appétits des organismes du système financier international (Bretton Woods, FMI, Banque mondiale), voient leur population végéter et croupir quotidiennement dans la misère ?

Je réponds à cette question en me plaçant du point de vue de la mission de l'Église, avant de dégager quelques exigences pour la théologie à partir du parcours du théologien camerounais Jean-Marc Ela.

L'Église et sa mission en Afrique

Pour de nombreuses personnes catholiques africaines, l'Église est une famille, la famille de Dieu². C'est par ailleurs la désignation consacrée depuis le premier synode africain. Reste à savoir de quel Dieu il s'agit. Le déterminant « de Dieu » devrait renvoyer, à mon avis, à ce Dieu dont la geste créatrice est à la fois rédemptrice et libératrice. Cette geste est merveilleusement rendue par la clause du livre de la Genèse : « Dieu vit que cela était bon » (Gn 1, 31). Sacrement du Christ, l'Église a dès lors pour mission de conjuguer au présent et d'articuler dans l'histoire présente la clause que l'auteur inspiré impute au Créateur. Arrimer la mission à la vision de Dieu et à cette bonté qui dit non seulement la qualité de la créature, mais aussi l'essence du Créateur, c'est pour l'Église veiller, préserver et cultiver cette bonté originale accolée à la création. C'est cette bonté que Jésus a prêchée, celle qu'il a pratiquée dans ses interactions avec les femmes et avec les hommes de son temps, les personnes marginales, les « hors-chemin », les « hors-Dieu »³ et au nom de laquelle il est monté à Jérusalem pour y mourir. Être Église au milieu des tribulations d'un peuple en quête de démocratie, de bien-être et de « vivre mieux »,⁴ c'est agir comme et à la suite de Jésus, pour relever l'humain courbé, prostré, assis, couché, bref pour le redresser, le mettre en route (Jn 5, 8) et le rendre vivant (Jn 10, 10). C'est donc devenir une Église qui voit, une Église qui a une bouche et qui parle (Ps 135, 16), une Église qui clame la bonté libératrice de Dieu, et qui agit comme un signe et un instrument de la vision et de la bonté de Dieu. Une telle Église ne saurait s'enfermer dans la sacristie

² Marquant mes réserves sur la fécondité de cette image ecclésiologique, je vois plutôt en l'Église une fraternité des enfants de Dieu. Lire Ignace Ndongala Maduku, *Une fraternité des enfants de Dieu, Mission de l'Église* 180, 2013, p. 40-44; *Idem*, L'Église de Dieu qui est à Kinshasa (1979-1989). Contribution à l'étude de l'image d'Église-fraternité, dans Maurice Cheza, G. van't Sijker (dir.), *Théologiens et théologiennes dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Yaoundé: Karthala, Clé, 2007, p. 183-202; *Idem*, *Pour des Églises régionales en Afrique*, Paris: Karthala, 1999, p. 59-67.

³ Je reprends ces expressions d'André Myre, *Maintenant la Parole. Propos inspirés de la Bible*, Montréal: Paulines, (2004), p. 165.

⁴ Selon J.-M. Ela, vivre mieux est le cri de ralliement de tous les exclus de la croissance dans un contexte socio-économique où le luxe insolent d'une minorité privilégiée ne saurait faire oublier la misère de beaucoup.

ni passer son temps à spéculer sur des questions relatives à l'au-delà⁵ ni se complaire dans des discussions interminables et infécondes sur la morale sexuelle. A la suite de A. Myre, je soutiens que pour cette Église,

...annoncer la bonne nouvelle [...] ce n'est pas d'abord parler de Dieu ou de Jésus [...] Ce n'est pas discourir sur le religieux. C'est être aux côtés des personnes âgées, des assistés sociaux, des jeunes et des chômeurs à qui on fait porter le poids des déficits gouvernementaux. C'est poser des gestes qui feront naître l'espérance que l'Empire de la mondialisation, de la compétitivité, de la globalisation et d'autres monstres responsables de la misère des pauvres ne durera qu'un temps et que sa chute est proche ».⁶

Une telle Église déploie la tente de son Dieu dans ces non-lieux où l'humanité de ses filles et de ses fils est niée, leur histoire tronquée et leurs vies bafouées au nom des intérêts politiques, économiques ou religieux adossés à une quête d'hégémonie. Concrétisant la subversion du Dieu de Jésus, elle demeure, pour reprendre le pape François, « une Église en sortie ».⁷ Sa pérégrination dans les marges la fait sortir des sentiers battus et imprime à sa mission les harmoniques d'un faire qui dit le sens d'un Dieu qui voit et qui déploie la bonté de sa création comme son dessein tel que contenu dans la révélation. Une telle Église dérange autant par son discours que par ses pratiques, car ceux-ci anticipent l'agir libérateur de Dieu dans l'histoire présente et sèment la bonté de Dieu dans le concret de la vie de ses contemporains. Cette Église annonciatrice de la bonté de Dieu a comme agent le peuple de Dieu et comme héraut le théologien ou la théologienne⁸ qui n'échappe pas à la « colonialité » du savoir.

⁵ Jean-Marc Ela, *De l'assistance à la libération. Les tâches actuelles de l'Église en milieu africain*, Paris: Centre Lebret, 1983, p. 15-16.

⁶ André Myre, *Maintenant la parole*, op. cit., p. 46-47.

⁷ Pape François, *Une Église en sortie*, Paris: Parole et Silence, 2016.

⁸ Cette catégorie ne s'enclot pas dans les limites de la théologie académique. Elle étreint tout être humain qui élaboré un dire déployant un sens relatif au Dieu de la révélation.

Pour une décolonisation de la théologie

Engluée dans le mythe eurocentrique de la modernité et pataugeant dans les mares de la colonialité, une certaine théologie hégémonique dénie aux discours et aux connaissances qui émergent des marges la capacité de dévoiler l'inédit, de postuler l'improbable, de déployer l'impossible et d'inscrire la novation dans les savoirs théologiques. Elle n'entrevoit ces derniers que selon l'épistème occidentale, elle les relègue au rang des savoirs soumis,⁹ des savoirs subalternes à normaliser et à configurer selon un paradigme unique : le paradigme occidental.¹⁰ L'apport spécifique de ces savoirs minorisés, mais exaltés à des fins idéologiques, est d'ajouter un peu d'exotisme au savoir paradigmatic occidental et de confirmer par-là l'ouverture de ce dernier à l'universel. Une ouverture discréptionnaire et intéressée, bien sûr, car elle instrumentalise la production et la circulation des savoirs subalternes. Il s'ensuit des subjectivités rompues à la reproduction du savoir présenté comme la référence ultime et des pratiques institutionnalisées qui subordonnent la pensée personnelle à la conformité avec les *auctoritates*.

La théologie devient dès lors une répétition patentée des *auctoritates*. La formation à la théologie inculque au théologien et à la théologienne un *habitus* qui les conforme à une fidélité qui est morne répétition plutôt qu'une répétition inventive, ressourcement exclusif dans la pensée occidentale qu'arrimage à la pensée native. Souvent en marge des lieux de vie des subalternes, cette formation eurocentrée a lieu dans des institutions régies par une élite elle-même formée en majeure partie hors Afrique. En reproduisant les canaux de sa formation, cette élite déracine de leurs cultures et de leurs traditions les jeunes en formation. Ainsi se consolide l'hégémonie du savoir théologique occidental au détriment de sa mise en dialogue avec le savoir théologique autochtone. L'inexistence des lieux

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Genealogía del racismo*, Madrid: La Piqueta, [1976], 1992, p. 21.

¹⁰ A ce jour, la *ratio studiorum* des lieux où sont formés les experts et les expertes en théologie africaine vient de l'extérieur de l'Afrique.

de *disputatio*, de débats entre individus formateurs et formés¹¹ confortent l'autorité mimétique, indiscutée et indiscutable du corps formateur et confine à l'exil l'originalité et l'inventivité des personnes formées. Faut-il rappeler ici que l'apprentissage se fait dans une langue étrangère, selon une grille d'argumentation aux antipodes de leur système de pensée?

L'une des tâches les plus stimulantes de la recherche théologique à l'heure actuelle en Afrique consiste à rompre avec la théologie hégémonique. On doit à J.-M Ela des élaborations les plus éclairantes sur cette rupture. En effet, son œuvre théologique renonce à dire le sens avec des mots d'emprunts, un langage étrange et une épistème étrangère. Elle déconstruit la colonialité épistémique qui, en dévaluant la différence et en la ravalant au rang de l'inégalité, consacre la supériorité des savoirs théologiques occidentaux et maintient le christianisme dans l'insignifiance.¹² Au regard du psittacisme doctrinal qui, d'une part, condamne la théologie africaine à reproduire les classiques de ses maîtres occidentaux, et d'autre part, réduit un théologien à être « un répétiteur patenté, un démonstrateur autorisé, un producteur d'une écriture captive d'un ordre qu'il reproduit »,¹³ J.-M. Ela entreprend des ruptures épistémologiques, des déplacements herméneutiques et des novations méthodologiques qui déconstruisent les relations coloniales de pouvoir, de savoir et de l'être.

La théologie de J.-M. Ela développe une herméneutique de la parole ancrée dans le souci du terrain et adossée aux dimensions de la vie sociale. Elle déploie une épistémologie qui entend réorganiser la manière de faire la théologie, décoloniser le discours théologique et réhabiliter le magistère d'une théologie africaine. La réflexion de J.-M. Ela organise le savoir et le travail théologique en développant une grammaire de la décolonialité.¹⁴ Sa

¹¹ Je pense au Cercle de Kinshasa et au débat entre l'étudiant T. Tshibangu et le professeur A. Vanneste, débat qui a abouti à la thématisation de la théologie africaine.

¹² Jean-Marc Ela, *Représenter la théologie africaine. Le Dieu qui libère*, Paris: Karthala, 2003, p. 18.

¹³ Marc Michel, *Voies nouvelles pour la théologie*, Paris: Cerf, 1980, p. 60.

¹⁴ W.D. Mignolo, *La désobéissance épistémique. Rhétorique de la modernité, logique de la colonialité et grammaire de la décolonialité*, Bruxelles, Bern, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2015.

grille d'énonciabilité donne à la contextualisation de la théologie les contours d'une intelligence de la Parole de Dieu, du monde et de l'humain¹⁵ à partir du point de vue africain. Pérégrinant aux confins des savoirs non-académiques et non-experts, cette intelligence se coltine avec les questions sociopolitiques. Elle arrime le discours théologique à l'expérience des communautés chrétiennes africaines. J.-M. Ela ne cantonne pas le problème de la théologie africaine au niveau du discours, mais l'élargit au niveau d'un engagement concret, là où des femmes et des hommes s'attellent à des tâches par lesquelles l'Église décide à rejoindre l'humanité embourbée dans l'histoire.¹⁶ En conséquence, son discours sur Dieu se nourrit des investigations empiriques et instaure une relation de circularité qui lie l'intelligibilité à l'action, les discours aux pratiques. J.-M. Ela se démarque « des théologies d'État qui pactisent avec les régimes qui dépouillent et massacrent les gens ».¹⁷ L'enjeu est de taille : la théologie devient un discours de la dissidence, de la résistance et de l'insoumission qui ouvre sur des engagements concrets en gardant pour horizons de significations la libération¹⁸. Elle se situe dans « la dynamique du témoignage des hommes et des femmes qui risquent leur vie pour défendre les droits humains au nom de l'Évangile ».¹⁹

La fécondité heuristique de cette manière de faire la théologie que le théologien de Tokombéré qualifie de « théologie sous l'arbre » mérite sans doute d'être quelque peu précisée. La proximité de J.-M. Ela avec le monde d'en bas et sa familiarité avec les communautés chrétiennes de Tokombéré et de Melen assignent comme matière première à sa théologie la Parole de Dieu certes, mais corrélée à l'histoire et au vécu

¹⁵ Claude Geffré, "Les courants actuels de la recherche en théologie," dans François Refoulé, Claude Geffré, Jean-Marie Pohier et Christian Duquoc, *Avenir de la théologie*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1968, p. 66.

¹⁶ Jean-Marc Ela, "Identité propre d'une théologie africaine," in Claude Geffré (éd.), *Théologie et choc des cultures. Colloque de l'Institut catholique de Paris*, Paris: Cerf, 1984, p. 49.

¹⁷ Jean-Marc Ela, *Représenter la théologie africaine*, op. cit., p. 87.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

des femmes et des hommes concrets. La banalité de leur existence faite d'espoirs différés, de bonheur éconduit, d'aspirations déçues et de promesses non-tenues lui inspire une heuristique renouvelée qui génère une « théologie de l'insoumission » et de la « dissidence évangélique », ainsi qu'une « éthique de la transgression ». Elles suggèrent toutes une « pastorale des mains sales »,²⁰ « une pastorale des mains vides »,²¹ « celle qui, à partir de la solidarité avec les pauvres et les opprimés, libère la force provocatrice et libératrice de l'Évangile ».²² Dans la perspective de cette théologie que professe et pratique J.-M. Ela, l'Église ne devrait pas être complice du système de domination ni s'accommode du processus de recolonisation.²³ Elle devrait s'inscrire dans une dynamique de sortie des sphères religieuses pour actualiser la mission de libération de Jésus-Christ.²⁴ Comme il le dit, il s'agit pour l'Église de se « redéfinir à partir de la 'péphérie', dans une solidarité effective avec un peuple de parias ».²⁵

Au risque de trop insister, on mesure bien que pour J.-M. Ela, la mission de l'Église en Afrique rime avec la liberté et avec la libération. Il s'agit d'une libération du système de référence unique du discours théologique et du système de pouvoir qui légitime ce discours. La libération prend entre autres les contours d'une thématisation des rapports entre Rome et les Églises d'Afrique et d'une problématisation de la place des femmes et des laïcs dans l'Église.²⁶ Elle questionne le poids des traditions séculaires ou ancestrales et innervé le statu quo de nouveauté. Elle adopte aussi la forme d'une insurrec-

²⁰ Jean-Marc Ela, *Christianisme et libération en Afrique*, Dossiers de Mbengu, 7, (1984), p. 28-29.

²¹ *Idem*, p. 28-29.

²² *Idem, Ma foi d'Africain*, Paris, Karthala, 1985, p. 213.

²³ Jean-Marc Ela, et René Luneau, *Voici le temps des héritiers. Églises d'Afrique et voies nouvelles*, Paris: Karthala, 1981, p. 223 s.

²⁴ On retrouve ici le thème d'Église en sortie cher au pape François. Cf. Pape François, *Une Église en sortie*, Paris: Parole et Silence, 2016.

²⁵ Jean-Marc Ela, *De l'assistance à la libération. Les tâches actuelles de l'Église en Afrique*, op.cit., p. 25.

²⁶ Lire en ce sens, Jean-Marc Ela, *Le cri de l'homme africain. Questions aux chrétiens et aux Églises d'Afrique*, op.cit., p. 101-127.

tion contre les dictateurs africains et se décline comme une dénonciation de l'injustice et de toute pérennisation arbitraire et autoritaire du pouvoir. Nourrie par la sève de l'éthique de la transgression, l'épistèmè qui se découvre dans l'œuvre de J.-M. Ela rejette la catholicité monotopique, se déprend des postulats hérités et ensemence uniquement la pensée de cette liberté et de cette libération qui insèrent la nouveauté dans le savoir théologique.

En défaisant le particularisme hégémonique et en critiquant l'universalisme singulier, abstrait et eurocentré, la théologie africaine, telle qu'elle se découvre chez J.-M. Ela, se forge une écriture, une épistèmè non-exclusive qui se reconnaît particulière et en quête de dialogue avec d'autres épistèmès. C'est une épistèmè dialogale qui se ressource dans le paradigme décolonial et se nourrit de l'espérance et des problèmes de l'Afrique d'en bas. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'exotisme ajouté au savoir paradigmatic occidental ni d'un semblant d'ouverture à l'universel, mais d'une énonciation interactive qui permet à la théologie d'intégrer les discours de la communauté et d'entrer en interaction avec elle. La théologie en résonance, en écho s'enrichit des reflets et des traces des énoncés des marges. Telle la tisseuse de nattes du village, le théologien-ne que j'assimile à l'intellectuel de Michel Foucault,²⁷ tisse la natte de sa théologie avec des fils aux couleurs bigarrées faites des histoires, récits, aphorismes, maximes, proverbes et expériences qui circulent dans sa communauté.

La posture théologique ici évoquée est celle de l'entrelacement. Je conviens de la désigner du nom de posture dialogale de coresponsabilité. J'emprunte cette expression dialogale à M. Bakhtine²⁸ et je la laisse travailler librement la théologie sous forme de pérégrination dans les marges à la rencontre de Dieu qui s'y révèle. De cette manière, la théologie africaine se place dans l'interstice entre théologie et sciences humaines, recherche érudite et vulgarisation. C'est ainsi qu'elle balise des territoires épistémologiques qui travaillent la suture entre la théorie et la pratique, la révélation et la domination, la foi et l'évangélisation, l'eucharistie et la libération, la religion et la politique.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits. 1976-1988*, Paris: Gallimard, p. 799.

²⁸ Michaël Bakhtine, *Esthétique de la création verbale*, Paris: Gallimard, 1984.

J.-M. Ela enrichit la compréhension de la théologie africaine. Tout comme lui, je suis d'avis que dire Dieu dans la voie de la « dissidence évangélique », c'est faire une théologie qui est à la fois discours et praxis, praxis et *poïesis*. Donner une forme poétique à la théologie, c'est rejoindre les gens là où ils se tiennent en utilisant un langage adéquat, celui qui structure leur imaginaire. Dans le contexte de l'Afrique, c'est proférer un discours subversif et engagé qui incite à l'engagement.

Que l'on juge plutôt. Dans un contexte d'autoritarisme politique qui monopolise les arènes judiciaires, législatives, électorales et les médias, l'espace public congolais est saturé des dires et des dits sur un Dieu garant de l'autorité du dictateur congolais. La théologie qui émerge des lieux de culte qui pullulent au Congo reconduit le statu quo au nom du respect dû aux autorités, entendu que toute autorité vient de Dieu (Rm 13, 1). La lecture de J.-M. Ela rend problématique cette théologie partisane et permet de comprendre les possibles ouverts par une théologie engagée. Se comprend alors l'émergence des nazar et déterminés à annoncer l'Évangile de liberté, renoncer à la neutralité, dénoncer l'imposture, refuser la duplicité, démasquer le mensonge, décrier l'arbitraire, décourager la tricherie, se défaire de l'incivisme, bref, combattre l'autoritarisme de l'État et conjurer les élections sans choix.²⁹ Sans souscrire à une néo-politisation de la foi, ces intellectuel-es organisent aujourd'hui des marches qui construisent une forme de souveraineté du peuple opposée à toute fraude à la Constitution. Elles et ils sont cette Église qui annonce la bonté d'un Dieu qui « a vu que cela était bon » (Gn 1, 31) et dont la bonté créatrice renouvelle toutes choses (Is 43, 19; Ap 21, 5).

Conclusion

Pour résumer ma réponse à la question initiale, je dirai en conclusion que les pratiques religieuses et théologiques à promouvoir pour l'Afrique des fraudes à la Constitution sont celles qui disent Dieu en ne méconnaissant

²⁹ Ignace Ndongala Maduku, *Religion et politique en RD Congo. Marche des chrétiens et parole des évêques catholiques sur les élections*, Paris: Karthala, 2016, p. 350.

pas le point de vue des marges. Ce sont celles qui annoncent un Dieu bon qui voit et déploie dans l'histoire présente sa bonté (Gn 1, 31), un Dieu qui rend l'humain vivant (Jn 10, 10). Elles engagent l'Église à descendre dans l'arène politique à travers un « faire Dieu »³⁰ qui, au regard de l'actualité récente en Afrique, inscrit la mission de l'Église dans la sphère sociopolitique et imprime à l'engagement chrétien une dimension subversive.

L'Église qui se reconnaît envoyée par le Nazaréen est celle qui a une bouche et qui parle, des mains et qui agit. C'est celle qui va vers les marges à la rencontre des parias de l'histoire présente, celle qui affronte les héroïdiens noirs et leurs mentors occidentaux ; celle qui dénonce les dérives d'une religion désincarnée, aseptisée et dépolitisée qui fait le lit des dictatures en Afrique. C'est celle qui renonce à toute instrumentalisation de la part des politiques. Annoncer, dénoncer, renoncer, discourir, agir... est une mission ecclésiale qui transforme la théologie. Celle-ci devient porte-voix des personnes opprimées et des pauvres, d'un discours engagé et engageant, initiateur des pratiques libérées et libératrices. Les perspectives africaines de libération à l'heure de la rémanence de la colonialité et de la résurgence des dictatures sollicitent l'exigence critique et l'audace théologique africaine comme l'illustre l'œuvre théologique de J.-M. Ela. C'est peu dire qu'elles requièrent outre une épistème assortie, un ressourcement chez les figures tutélaires de la théologie africaine,³¹ des formations discursives et des pratiques institutionnelles adaptées au contexte particulier et spécifique d'une Afrique sous-tutelle qui ploie sous le joug d'une religiosité démobilisatrice et aliénante.

³⁰ Je m'inspire ici de Anne Fortin-Melkevik, "Quand dire Dieu, c'est faire Dieu: Les *Confessions* d'Augustin comme modèle d'écriture pragmatique sur Dieu," dans Camil Ménard et Florent Villeneuve (dir.), *Dire Dieu aujourd'hui*, Montréal: Fides, 1993, p. 63-75.

³¹ Parmi les auteurs les plus représentatifs d'une théologie africaine qui rompt avec les discours répétitifs, je renvoie aux travaux de Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, Oscar Bimwenyi Kweshi, Meinrad Pierre Hebga, Jean-Marc Ela et Engelbert Mveng. On aura constaté, pour le déplorer, qu'à l'origine, la théologie africaine s'est développée comme une affaire des hommes, et parmi ceux-ci, des prêtres. Du côté francophone, l'historiographie ne recense, aux premières heures de la théologie africaine, aucun nom de femme ni de laïc.

7.

MEDELLÍN: DEL CRISITANISMO COLONIAL AL CRISTIANISMO LIBERADOR CAMINO HACIA LAS TEOLOGÍAS DEL SUR

JUAN-JOSÉ TAMAYO¹

Medellín: Cambio de Paradigma Eclesial

¿Acontecimiento Perdido en la Noche de los Tiempos?

Han pasado cincuenta años de la celebración de la II Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, que tuvo lugar en Medellín (Colombia). Algunos pensarán que se trata de un acontecimiento del pasado, perdido en la noche de los tiempos, que nada tiene que aportar o decir hoy, y menos aún de cara al futuro. Y lo mejor que puede hacerse es dejarlo en manos de los historiadores para que lo incluyan en sus historias de la Iglesia latinoamericana como momentos puntuales de su itinerario, pero nada más. Quienes así opinan creen que hay que olvidarse de dicha efemérides y mirar hacia adelante intentando responder a los nuevos desafíos que nos depara el cambio de época que estamos viviendo. Así piensan algunos sectores cristianos *posmodernos*.

¿Pesadilla de la que hay que liberarse Habrá quienes crean que Medellín fue una pesadilla que ha durado demasiado tiempo y de la que ya es hora de liberarse, o de una página incómoda del calendario “liberacionista” que

hay que arrancar o pasar deprisa, para volver a la Iglesia de Cristiandad, donde todo estaba en su sitio: los religiosos y religiosas practicaban la obediencia; los teólogos seguían las orientaciones del magisterio eclesiástico; los cristianos acataban sumisamente las directrices de sus pastores hasta en sus más mínimos detalles; las verdades de la fe eran incontrovertibles; la Iglesia se dedicaba a cultivar su parcela religiosa, sin injerirse en la vida política y social, y menos aún en la economía, como hace ahora sin ton ni son. Así pensarán algunos sectores cristianos que identifican –o al menos asocian- el cristianismo con el modelo de cristiandad.

¿Control de la Aplicación de Medellín?

No faltarán quienes sigan recordando y citando a Medellín con profusión, pero haciendo de dicho acontecimiento una interpretación preconciliar y antiliberadora y controlando su aplicación para evitar -dicen- que se vaya más allá de donde quiso llegar aquella Conferencia. Es una posición netamente eclesiástica, que consiste en citar los documentos reformadores del magisterio papal y episcopal, pero dándoles hábilmente la vuelta y haciéndoles decir justamente lo contrario a lo que dicen. Así opera un importante sector conservador dentro de la Iglesia hoy.

Importancia de Medellín, ¿Solo para América Latina?

Otros reconocerán la importancia y significación especiales de Medellín, pero limitándolas a América Latina y creyendo que sus planteamientos poco o nada pueden aportar a otros continentes donde la problemática y los desafíos son diferentes. En el fondo se trata de una postura autosuficiente que no admite lecciones de nadie, porque cree que las suyas son las mejores. Y, en el caso de América Latina, con más motivo, ya que -se dice- fue un continente “descubierto” (?) y “evangelizado” por nosotros (?). Además, es pobre en todos los aspectos y poco puede enseñarnos en ninguna materia. Vuelve a repetirse la reacción de sus conciudadanos ante Jesús: “¿De Nazaret puede salir algo bueno?”.

Medellín, Entrada en la Mayoría de Edad de la Iglesia Latinoamericana

Mi punto de vista difiere sustancialmente de las posiciones que acabo de describir. Medellín es uno de los acontecimientos más relevantes del cristianismo latinoamericano en toda su historia. Es la entrada en “la mayoría de edad de la Iglesia latinoamericana”..., el acta de nacimiento de una Iglesia adulta. Las viejas cristiandades protectoras deberán tomar nota de este acontecimiento. América Latina se ha descubierto a sí misma, ha comprobado el vigor interno y la radical originalidad que ya intuía, y es de esperar que en adelante querrá ver respetado el gozoso descubrimiento de su propia personalidad”.¹

Cambio de Rumbo

En Medellín se pasó del paradigma de una Iglesia colonial a una Iglesia liberadora. A ello cabría añadir como elemento fundamental de su significación histórica que tuvo importantes repercusiones en todos los ámbitos de la vida de ese continente más allá de la esfera religiosa: social, político, económico, cultural, étnico, y en otros entornos religiosos geoculturales y políticos, más allá de América Latina.

En otras palabras, cambió el rumbo de la Iglesia latinoamericana, que venía de una larga etapa de cristiandad colonial, orientándola hacia la liberación y el diálogo interreligioso en un continente caracterizado por un amplio pluriverso étnico y religioso. La liberó de la vieja hipoteca colonial y le devolvió la faz profética de los grandes evangelizadores defensores de las comunidades indígenas: Bartolomé de Las Casas, Antonio Montesinos, Antonio Valdivieso, Vasco de Quiroga, etc. Se dejaron oír en toda su radicalidad las voces de estos profetas a través de las intervenciones de los proféticos obispos latinoamericanos reunidos en aquella memorable Asamblea, que inauguraron un nuevo magisterio social bajo la guía ético-evangélica e la opción por los pobres.

¹ José Camps, “Prólogo”, en *Iglesia y liberación humana. Los Documentos de Medellín*, Nova Terra, Barcelona, 1969, p. 8.

Medellín constituye una referencia obligada para los países latinoamericanos porque defiende sin ambages los derechos humanos al tiempo que denuncia sus violaciones, propicia la democratización del continente al tiempo que critica las tendencias dictatoriales, aboga por un modelo de desarrollo solidario al tiempo que critica al capitalismo, devuelve a esos países a sus propias raíces e identidades culturales, al tiempo que los orienta hacia la nueva civilización que entonces estaba gestándose.

Vigencia de Medellín

El mensaje de Medellín no sólo no está superado, sino que en muchos aspectos se ha quedado en el papel y no se ha puesto en práctica. Peor aún, el propio Vaticano, con el apoyo de influyentes sectores de la jerarquía eclesiástica latinoamericana, e incluso del Pentágono, no cesaron de obstaculizar su proyecto liberador y de denunciar a quienes, fieles al magisterio episcopal latinoamericano y al Vaticano II, intentaron convertirlo en criterio de su reflexión teológica y de su actuación pastoral.

Yo creo que los documentos de Medellín siguen siendo, todavía hoy -y lo serán más en el futuro-, una buen programa para la renovación de las instituciones eclesiales, un aliciente para continuar la reflexión teológica de la liberación en sus diferentes y creativas tendencias y una buena guía para la regeneración de la vida política y de la actividad económica en América Latina. Conserva, por tanto, la misma actualidad o mayor que cuando se celebró. Eso sí: sus textos deben ser leídos, interpretados y actualizados mirando al futuro y atendiendo a los cambios producidos en el mundo y en las propias sociedades del continente en los cincuenta años siguientes a su celebración.

Diría más: Medellín anticipó en treinta años la entrada de la Iglesia latinoamericana en el siglo XXI. De no haber sido por aquel encuentro episcopal, aquella Iglesia se hubiera quedado no ya en el siglo XX -donde cultural y religiosamente apenas estuvo-, sino en el XIX.

Lectura del Concilio Vaticano II a Luz de la Realidad Latinoamericana

Juan XXIII: Iglesia de los Pobres

Al finalizar el Concilio Vaticano II, el obispo chileno Manuel Larraín, entonces presidente del CELAM, tuvo la feliz idea de celebrar un encuentro de obispos latinoamericanos para analizar la realidad del continente desde la perspectiva del Vaticano II. “Lo que hemos vivido –afirmaba, es impresionante, pero si en América Latina no estamos atentos a nuestros propios signos de los tiempos, el Concilio pasará al lado de nuestra Iglesia y quién sabe lo que vendrá después”.

Aquella idea se materializó en la celebración de la II Conferencia del Episcopado Latinoamericano celebrada en la ciudad colombiana de Medellín en 1968, que tuvo el acierto de asumir la propuesta que hiciera Juan XXIII en vísperas del Concilio: “La Iglesia se presenta para los países subdesarrollados, como es y quiere ser: como la Iglesia de todos y, particularmente, la Iglesia de los pobres”. Fue en Medellín donde cobraron sentido y tuvieron su concreción histórica la opción por los pobres y el diseño de una Iglesia de los pobres.

De hecho, la intención de la Conferencia de Medellín era aplicar la reforma conciliar de la Iglesia a la realidad latinoamericana, como estaban haciendo otras iglesias nacionales. Pero en el caso de América Latina, observa certeramente Gustavo Gutiérrez, el contacto con la realidad invirtió la orientación de la Asamblea episcopal y el resultado fue: la Iglesia del Vaticano II a la luz de la realidad latinoamericana”.²

Aplicación Creadora del Vaticano II

Sucedío entonces que Medellín acogió y aplicó el Concilio no miméticamente, sino con fidelidad creadora, extraordinaria madurez y e inusitada originalidad. Siguiendo el análisis de Jon Sobrino, puede afirmarse que el Vaticano II hizo posible Medellín y este a su vez potenció a aquel, lo

² Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, “La recepción del Vaticano II en América Latina”, en Giuseppe Alberigo y Jean-Pierre Jossua, *La recepción del Vaticano II*, Cristiandad, Madrid, 1987, p. 213-237.

enriqueció e incluso lo transformó al descubrir y hacer realidad sus virtualidades, algunas de ellas previstas y otras imprevistas.³

Gracias a Medellín, el Vaticano II tuvo en América Latina una buena acogida en el pueblo creyente que vio en el Concilio una esperanza popular para la transformación eclesial y la liberación de los pueblos oprimidos. Medellín interpretó el Concilio como una llamada a la mayoría de edad eclesial y como una invitación a asumir la propia realidad, a vivir la fe en su propio entorno y momento histórico y a hacer teología contextual.

Injusticia Estructural y Dolorosa Pobreza

En su análisis de la realidad, constata “la existencia de tremendas injusticias sociales en América Latina, que mantienen a la mayoría de nuestros pueblos en una dolorosa pobreza cercana en muchísimos casos a la inhumana miseria” (*La pobreza en la Iglesia*, n. 1). Son millones los seres humanos que se encuentran marginados y excluidos de la sociedad y no son dueños de su propio destino. Se trata de un hecho colectivo de gran magnitud que Medellín califica de “injusticia que clama al cielo” (*Justicia*, 1), de un “sordo clamor” que “brota de millones de hombres (sic)” que esperan “una liberación que no les llega de ninguna parte” (*La pobreza en la Iglesia*, n. 2).

Anhelo de Liberación de Toda Servidumbre, en el Umbral de una Nueva Época Histórica

La constatación de la injusticia estructural, empero, no impide ver los signos de esperanza. Muy al contrario. Medellín es consciente de que América Latina se encuentra “en el umbral de una nueva época histórica... llena de anhelo de una emancipación total, de liberación de toda servidumbre, de madurez personal y de integración colectiva”. Si de la situación de pobreza dice proféticamente que es una injusticia que clama al cielo, de los signos de esperanza de liberación

³ Cf. Jon Sobrino, “El Vaticano II y la Iglesia latinoamericana”, en Casiano Floristán y Juan José Tamayo (dirs.), *El Vaticano II, veinte años después*, Cristiandad, Madrid, 1985, p. 104-134.

afirma que son “un evidente signo del Espíritu” y descubre en la voluntad de transformación “las huellas de la imagen de Dios en el hombre (sic) como un potente dinamismo”. Por eso sus análisis críticos de la realidad no son iconoclastas ni catastrofistas, sino abiertos a la esperanza de transformación.

Autocrítica

Los obispos reunidos en Medellín fueron sensibles a dicha situación e hicieron *autocrítica* reconociendo su responsabilidad no pequeña en dicha situación por el anti-testimonio de la jerarquía, el clero y los religiosos, a quienes los pobres ven como “ricos y aliados de los ricos” y “sienten que sus obispos, sus párrocos y religiosos no se identifican realmente con ellos, con sus problemas y angustia, que no siempre apoyan a los que trabajan con ellos o abogan por su suerte” (*La pobreza en la iglesia*, n. 3).

No puedo ocuparme aquí de los aportes de Medellín en todos los campos. En los próximos artículos me centraré en tres: las Comunidades eclesiales de base (CEB), la reflexión teológica y la crítica del colonialismo.

Carta de Ciudadanías de las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base

La Iglesia se Articula en Torno a las Comunidades de Base

Medellín ha tenido una importancia fundamental en el desarrollo y evolución de las CEB. Mientras estas eran consideradas un movimiento marginal y subterráneo en Europa y U.S.A., y estaban perseguidas por sus jerarquías, la Conferencia Episcopal de Medellín reconoció su plena eclesialidad y las convirtió en el quicio de la acción pastoral. Desde entonces fueron en muchas diócesis el elemento comunitario enucleador que sustituyó a la estructura jeráquico-patriarcal de la Iglesia latinoamericana.

Antes de Medellín, las comunidades de base constituían ya un fenómeno sociológico, teológico y pastoral ampliamente difundido, con una presencia significativa en la Iglesia y la sociedad latinoamericanas. Algunos obispos las habían promovido, animado e incluso privilegiado como motor de renovación

eclesial y cauce prioritario de evangelización liberadora. Veamos un ejemplo. En el encuentro de pastoral de la diócesis brasileña de Crateús celebrado en 1967, siendo obispo Dom Antonio Fragoso –uno de los firmantes del “Pacto de las Catacumbas” en 1965–, se aprobó la siguiente propuesta: “La comunidad de base es una respuesta a las exigencias de renovación de la persona. La educación y la responsabilidad sólo son posibles en grupos pequeños”.

Partiendo de este principio, la diócesis de Crateús se propuso tres prioridades pastorales: a) la Iglesia se articula en torno a las comunidades de base; b) la educación en la fe tiene lugar en el seno de esas comunidades; c) la vida de las comunidades comporta la creación de ministerios eclesiales que han de ser ejercidos por los cristianos de cada comunidad. ¡Era algo eclesiálmamente revolucionario que tenía lugar en Brasil hace algo más de 50 años!

Según el certero análisis de José Marins, gran conocedor y animador de las CEB en América Latina, lo que marcó realmente su nacimiento fue “la preocupación de evangelizar en un continente de bautizados, sin contacto permanente con la vida sacramental, con la palabra de Dios, y contacto comunitario de los bautizados entre ellos [...]. Juntamente con esa preocupación evangelizadora y partiendo de ella, se sintió la responsabilidad de mirar a la realidad global del mundo haciendo que los cristianos entrasen en la tarea de liberación del mundo, comprometiéndose con los más pobres e injusticiados. Por eso también aparecieron comunidades eclesiales de base y de modo más intenso en las áreas más desafiantes, cuando el hombre (*sic*) estaba aplastado por las condiciones adversas”.⁴

Las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base, “Factor primordial de promoción humana”

El acto magisterial más explícito y de mayor autoridad pastoral que dio carta de ciudadanía eclesial y reconoció a las CEB fue precisamente Medellín, que define la vivencia cristiana de la comunidad no de manera abstracta e idealista, sino a partir de la “comunidad de base” en estos términos: “La vivencia de la

⁴ José Marins, “Comunidades eclesiales de base en América latina”: *Concilium*, n. 104 (1975), p. 33.

comunión a que ha sido llamado debe encontrarla el cristiano en su ‘comunidad de base’, es decir, una comunidad local o ambiental, que corresponda a la realidad de un grupo homogéneo, que tenga una dimensión tal que permita el trato personal fraternal entre sus miembros” (*Pastoral de Conjunto*, n. 10).

La acción pastoral propuesta por Medellín se orienta al fomento de dichas comunidades: “El esfuerzo pastoral de la Iglesia debe estar orientado a la transformación de esas comunidades en ‘familia de Dios’, comenzando por hacerse presentes en ella como fermento mediante un núcleo, aunque sea pequeño, que constituya una comunidad de fe, de esperanza y de caridad” (*Pastoral de Conjunto*, n. 10).

Entre las tareas eclesiales y sociopolíticas a asumir por las CEB cita las siguientes: responsabilizarse de la riqueza y expansión de la fe y del culto; ser “célula inicial de estructuración eclesial y foco de evangelización”; actuar como “factor primordial de promoción humana y desarrollo”. Medellín resalta la función de los líderes y dirigentes de las comunidades, que pueden ser sacerdotes, diáconos, religiosos/as o laicos y que han de asumir responsabilidades “en un clima de autonomía” (*ibid.* 11, subrayado mío). *Autonomía* es otra palabra realmente revolucionaria en el marco de una Iglesia en la que las personas creyentes tenían que someterse, por imperativo divino, a las órdenes –con frecuencia castrenses- de los jerarcas. El texto coloca al mismo nivel el protagonismo de sacerdotes y religiosos/as que del laicado.

Las comunidades cristianas de base han de estar abiertas al mundo y plenamente insertas en él, sin caer en los dualismos Iglesia y mundo, historia humana e historia de la salvación. En consecuencia, han de ser “el fruto de la evangelización, así como el signo que confirma con hechos el Mensaje de Salvación” (*Catequesis*, n. 10).

Medellín afirma la necesidad de formar el mayor número de comunidades en las parroquias, especialmente rurales, o en zonas urbanas de marginación, con estas características: estar basadas en la palabra de Dios; realizarse en la celebración eucarística, en comunión con el obispo y bajo su dependencia; tener sentido de pertenencia y conciencia de una misión común; participar activa y conscientemente en la vida litúrgica y en la convivencia comunitaria.

El apostolado de los laicos tendrá mayor transparencia de signo y mayor densidad eclesial si está apoyado en comunidades de fe, a través de las cuales acontece la Iglesia “en el mundo, en la tarea humana y en la historia” (*ibid.*, n. 12). De nuevo otra idea revolucionaria. La Iglesia deja de ser el centro y se convierte en mediación. Su lugar es el mundo; su ubicación, la historia; su misión no se agota en ella misma, sino que se vincula con la tarea humana.

A partir de Medellín, las CEB ocuparon un lugar relevante –preferente, diría mejor– en la eclesiología latinoamericana de la liberación. Ellas han asumido una doble tarea: *re-inventar, re-engendrar nuevamente la Iglesia como comunidad de comunidades desde la experiencia de los pobres e integrarse en los procesos de liberación.*

“Focos de evangelización y motores de liberación”

Once años después, la III Conferencia del Episcopado Latinoamericano celebrada en Puebla de los Ángeles (Méjico) continuó el magisterio de Medellín y constató la multiplicación y maduración de las CEB, que “se han convertido en focos de evangelización y en motores de liberación y desarrollo” (*Documentos de Puebla*, n. 56). Ve en ellas “una de las fuentes de nacimiento de ministerios laicales: presidentes de asambleas, responsables de comunidades, catequesis, misioneros” (n. 57).

Entre las funciones que Puebla asigna a las CEB, he aquí las más importantes:

- Constituyen un ambiente propicio para el surgimiento de nuevos servicios laicos;
- En ellas se difunde la catequesis familiar y la educación en la fe de los adultos en formas más adecuadas al pueblo sencillo;
- Se acentúa el compromiso con la familia, el trabajo, el barrio y la comunidad local;

- Los cristianos pueden vivir una vida más evangélica en el seno del pueblo;
- Interpelan las raíces egoístas y consumistas de la sociedad y ofrecen un valioso punto de partida en la construcción de la nueva sociedad;
- Son expresión del amor preferente de la Iglesia por la gente sencilla;
- En ellas se expresa y purifica la religiosidad;
- Posibilitan la participación en la acción eclesial y en el compromiso de transformación del mundo;
- Deben constituir un ejemplo de convivencia donde seáunen libertad y solidaridad, se viva una actitud diferente ante la riqueza, se ensayan formas nuevas de organización y estructuras más participativas.

Comunidades eclesiales de base, aplicación creativa de la eclesiología comunitaria del Concilio Vaticano II

Efectivamente, el reconocimiento de Medellín a las CEB ha tenido importantes y muy positivas repercusiones en el cambio de estructuras dentro de la Iglesia católica, que comenzó a articularse en torno a los carismas, y no desde la jerarquía, que otrora constituía su principio rector y vertebrador. Era la *aplicación creativa de la eclesiología comunitaria* formulada por el Concilio Vaticano II en el capítulo II de la Constitución *Luz de las Gentes*: “Quiso... el Señor santificar y salvar a los hombres (sic) no individualmente y aislados entre sí, sino construir un pueblo que le conociera en la verdad y le sirviera santamente” (n. 9).

La Iglesia latinoamericana deja de girar en torno a los binomios clérigos/laicos, Iglesia docente/Iglesia discente, jerarquía/pueblo y se articula en torno al binomio comunidad/ministerios. Los seglares asumen el protagonismo dentro de las CEB y ejercen los diferentes carismas al servicio del pueblo y de la comunidad. Un protagonismo que no debe entenderse como concesión graciosa de la jerarquía al pueblo cristiano o del clero a los laicos, sino que

emanía de la igualdad de los cristianos y cristianas por el bautismo, de la común pertenencia a la misma comunidad de fe y de la necesaria corresponsabilidad.

El capítulo II de la *Luz de las gentes*, que, al decir de monseñor Suenens, cardenal-arzobispo de Brujas-Malinas (Bélgica) y uno de los principales impulsores de la reforma eclesial, supuso una “revolución copernicana” en la eclesiología, apenas contaba con cauces eficaces de participación de los seglares, ya que se veían obstruidos por el capítulo III de la misma Constitución, que destacaba la “índole jerárquica de la Iglesia”. Volvía a reproducirse el paradigma jerárquico-piramidal anterior al Concilio.

Creo que puede afirmarse que la “revolución copernicana” de la que hablaba el cardenal Suenens se hizo realidad con el movimiento de las comunidades cristianas de base surgidas primeras en América Latina y desarrolladas muy pronto en otras Iglesias locales de todo el mundo.

La eclesiología de comunión de las CEB lograba desbloquear el doble registro de la eclesiología conciliar y evitaba las rupturas y desencuentros producidos en las iglesias europeas entre la jerarquía eclesiástica y los movimientos cristianos comunitarios de base. La opción de Medellín por las comunidades de base como elemento eclesial fundamental, focos de evangelización y motores de evangelización evitaba tanto la ruptura jerarquía/base como la yuxtaposición de dos paradigmas enfrentados u opuestos.

Jerarquía y CEB son dos dimensiones de la única Iglesia, que se interpelan evangélicamente, se fecundan, enriquecen y convergen en el horizonte del Reino de Dios y en el servicio liberador a las personas y colectivos empobrecidos.

“Eclesiogénesis: las comunidades de base reinventan la iglesia”

Una década después de Medellín y tras el crecimiento y la consolidación de la experiencia de las comunidades eclesiales de base, Leonardo Boff desarrolló teológicamente el nuevo paradigma eclesial comunitario bajo

el título “Eclesiogénesis: las comunidades de base reinventan la Iglesia”.⁵ Estas comunidades representaron una nueva experiencia de comunidad y fraternidad cristianas, que no solo no se distancian del movimiento igualitario de Jesús de Nazaret y del cristianismo originario, sino que se sitúan “dentro de la más legítima y antigua tradición”, como reconoce Boff.

Las comunidades de base no responden a una moda pasajera, sino que constituyen una respuesta específica a los nuevos desafíos culturales y políticos y a la nueva conciencia eclesial. Nueva conciencia eclesial que ya no tiene su base en el clero, “esa especie que desaparece”, como dijo Ivan Illich en su memorable artículo de 1965, ni tampoco en un sacramentalismo desvinculado de la lucha por la justicia, sino en la dimensión comunitaria, constitutiva de la Iglesia, y en el compromiso por la liberación. En sus análisis de la década de los setenta y ochenta del siglo pasado, Boff distinguía con gran lucidez sociológica y teológica, dos modelos de Iglesia: el integrado en la clase hegemónica y el encarnado en las clases oprimidas. En el primer modelo, la Iglesia en su doble dimensión: religiosa-eclesiástica (institución) y eclesial-sacramental, se ajusta a los intereses de las clases hegemónicas y ejerce la función ideológica legitimadora de los diferentes poderes: económico, jurídico-político y cultural, que conforman el orden o, mejor, el desorden imperante.

En el segundo modelo, la Iglesia deslegitima a las clases dominantes, se pone del lado de las personas, clases sociales y colectivos oprimidos y acompaña sus luchas de liberación haciéndolas suyas, respetando, eso sí, el protagonismo del pueblo organizado. A su vez lleva a cabo una restructuración interna conforme al ideal evangélico. Ello exige una ruptura con las tradiciones eclesiásticas hegemónicas.

Boff habla de la “emergencia de una Iglesia popular con características populares”. Es a este fenómeno al que Boff llama “una verdadera eclesiogénesis”, que se realiza en las bases de la Iglesia y de la sociedad,

⁵ Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Eclesiogénesis. Las comunidades de base reinventan la Iglesia*, Sal Terrae, Santander, 1979; id., ... *Y la Iglesia se hizo pueblo. “Eclesiogénesis”: la Iglesia que nace de la fe del pueblo*, Sal Terrae, Santander, 1986.

es decir, entre las clases oprimidas, depotenciadas religiosamente (sin poder religioso) y socialmente (sin poder social)".⁶

La novedad del fenómeno de las comunidades eclesiales de base radica en que rompen con el monopolio del poder social y religioso e inauguran un nuevo proceso religioso y social de estructuración de la iglesia y de la sociedad. Ahora bien, Boff matiza que "la génesis de una nueva iglesia no es diversa de la de los Apóstoles y de la Tradición". Y así es: se encuentran en continuidad con el movimiento de Jesús de Nazaret, las primeras comunidades cristianas y los movimientos proféticos que conforman la tradición liberadora del cristianismo. Es ahí donde se produce la verdadera sucesión apostólica, y no en el papado romano, que difícilmente –por no decir imposible– puede apelar a Jesús de Nazaret y a su movimiento igualitario.

Las características de la Iglesia de base encarnada en las clases oprimidas son, según Boff, las siguientes: pueblo de Dios, Iglesia de los pobres y débiles, de los expoliados, de los seglares, o koinonía de poder, toda ella ministerial, de diáspora, liberadora, que sacramentaliza las liberaciones concretas, prolonga la Gran Tradición, está en comunión con la gran Iglesia, construye la unidad a partir de la misión liberadora, con una nueva concreción de su catolicidad, toda ella apostólica y realizadora de un nuevo estilo de santidad (*Eclesiogénesis. Las comunidades de base reinventan la Iglesia*, 61-73).

Hoy es necesario ampliar el análisis socio-económico-eclesial de Boff, visibilizar y luchar contra las diferentes discriminaciones de que son objetos las personas más vulnerables y los grupos humanos marginados por razones de género, etnia, cultura, clases social, identidad afectivo-sexual, pertenencia religiosa, procedencia geográfica, etc. Hay que crear comunidades eclesiales inclusivas de las personas y los colectivos afectadas por las discriminaciones indicadas, evitando toda tentación de homofobia y xenofobia, y de imponer heteronormatividad y binariedad sexual, en la que tristemente incurren con frecuencia las jerarquías eclesiásticas y los movimientos cristianos conservadores.

⁶ Boff, *Eclesiogénesis. Las comunidades de base reinventan la Iglesia*, p. 62.

Impulso a la Teología de la Liberación Naciente

Gustavo Gutiérrez, “el teólogo del dios liberador”

Un mes antes de la celebración de la Asamblea episcopal de Medellín, en el II Encuentro Nacional del Movimiento Nacional de Sacerdotes (ONS) celebrado del 21 al 26 de julio de 1968 en la ciudad peruana de Chimbote, el sacerdote Gustavo Gutiérrez pronunció una conferencia que, reelaborada un año después en un encuentro de SODEPAX en Cartiny (Suiza) sobre Teología del Desarrollo, se publicó con el título “Hacia una teología de la liberación”.⁷ A la conferencia asistió su compatriota el escritor y antropólogo José María Arguedas, que en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* define a Gutiérrez como “el teólogo del Dios liberador” y lo contrapone al “cura del Dios inquisidor” de su propia novela *Todas las sangres*. En un texto fechado en Santiago de Chile el 20 de agosto de 1969, Arguedas recuerda a Gutiérrez que le había leído en Lima las “páginas de *Todas las sangres en que el sacristán y cantor de San Pedro de Lahuaymarca, quemada ya su iglesia y refugiado entre los comuneros de las alturas, le replica a un cura del Dios inquisidor con argumentos muy semejantes a los de las lúcidas y patéticas conferencias pronunciadas, hace poco, en Chimbote*”.⁸

Llega, incluso, a establecer una similitud entre esa conferencia y las palabras y actitudes del sacristán y cantor de San Pedro de *Todas las sangres*. El propio Gutiérrez considera al sacristán de San Pedro “preursor de la teología de la liberación” y dedica a José María Arguedas Arguedas el libro *Teología de la liberación. Perspectivas*,⁹ que se abre con el siguiente texto de *Todas las sangres* al que se refería el escritor peruano.

⁷ Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Hacia una teología de la liberación*, Documentación MIEC-JECI, Montevideo, 1969.

⁸ Para un análisis de la relación entre Arguedas y Gustavo Gutiérrez, cf. Juan José Tamayo, “José María Arguedas y Gustavo Gutiérrez; una relación fecunda y liberadora”, en Edgardo Rodríguez Gómez (ed.), *Liberación y diálogo de todas las sangres. Homenaje a José María Arguedas*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2013.

⁹ CEP, Lima, 1971; Sigueme, Salamanca, 1972.

Nunca quiso ayudar a la misa en las fiestas principales de la comunidad. El cura de un distrito vecino que venía a celebrarlas le pidió que hiciera de sacristán, le exigió muchas veces. Lahuaymarca tenía un sacristán indio.

- Ese no sabe. Repite las palabras como loro, no entiende; casi no es cristiano. Tú eres mestizo, organista, contestas en latín. La misa será más grande contigo –le dijo el cura en la víspera de una fiesta grande.

- Quemado yo padre. Mi iglesia dentro de mi pecho, quemado. ¿Cómo voy a cantar? La Gertrudis igual que ángel canta. El sacristán contesta.

- La Gertrudis no piensa en Dios; canta triste, sí, porque es deformé

- Padrecito, tú no entiendes el alma de indios. La Gertrudis, aunque no conociendo a Dios, de Dios es. ¿Quién, si no, le dio esa voz que limpia el pecado? Consuela al triste, hace pensar al alegre; quita de la sangre cualquier suciedad.

- Bueno, terco. No puedo obligarte. Esa ‘Kurku’ tiene algo, algo extraño, duele.

- El Dios, pues, padrecito. Ella ha sufrido entre los señores. Dios de los señores no es igual. Hace sufrir sin consuelo.

Ha llegado amarillo, rotoso, sin chullu siquiera. Ha regresado igual de su ropa, pero en su ojo había Dios...

- ¿Qué Dios? ¿Cómo sabes?

- Dios es esperanza, Dios alegría. Dios ánimo. Llegó ‘unpu’, enjuermo, agachadito, salió ilesa, juirme, águila. Era mozo no más. Dios hay aquí, en Lahuaymarca. De San Pedro se ha ido, creo que para siempre.

- Tú tampoco eres cristiano verdadero, hijo. Tantos años de sacristán! Y piensas como brujo. Dios está en todas partes, en todas partes...

El viejo sacristán de San Pedro movía negativamente la cabeza.

-¿Había Dios en el pecho de los que rompieron el cuerpo del inocente maestro Bellido? ¿Dios está en el cuerpo de los ingenieros que están matando ‘La Esmeralda’? ¿De señor autoridad que quitó a dueños ese maízal donde jugaba la Virgen con su Hijito, cada cosecha? No me hagas llorar, padrecito. Yo también muerto ando. Don Demetrio tiene Dios, en la ‘Kurku’ está Dios, cantando; en don Bruno pelea Dios con el demonio; para mí no hay consuelo, de nadies.¹⁰

Arguedas afirma que quizá con él se cierra un ciclo y se abre otro en Perú: “*se cierra el de la calandria consoladora, del azote, del arrierge, del odio impotente, de los fúnebres ‘alzamientos’, del temor a Dios y del predominio de ese Dios y sus protegidos, sus fabricantes*” y se abre el ciclo “*de la luz y de la fuerza liberadora invencible del hombre de Vietnam, el de la calandria de fuego, el del Dios liberador*”.

En la conferencia de 1968 Gutiérrez habló de la teología como inteligencia del compromiso. En *Teología de la liberación. Perspectivas* define la teología como reflexión crítica de la praxis histórica a la luz de la Palabra, como teología de la transformación liberadora de la historia de la humanidad, que no se limita a pensar el mundo, sino que constituye un momento del proceso a través del cual el mundo es transformado, abriéndose al don del reino de Dios. Y lo hace “en la protesta ante la dignidad humana pisoteada, en la lucha contra el despojo de la inmensa mayoría de los hombres, en el amor que libera, en la construcción de una nueva sociedad justa y fraternal”.¹¹

La asamblea de obispos latinoamericanos celebrada en Medellín no fue una Conferencia teológica en sentido estricto. Tanto las ponencias como la orientación general tuvieron un carácter sociológico y pastoral,

¹⁰ En *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* Arguedas dice que él mismo leyó a Gustavo en Lima el texto de *Todas las sangres* con que abre el libro *Teología de la liberación. Perspectivas*, Sígueme, Salamanca, 1972, p. 11-12.

¹¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación. Perspectivas*, o. c., p. 41.

pero bajo la guía de un importante grupo de teólogos que asesoraron a los obispos y participaron en la elaboración de los documentos finales. El método seguido fue el inductivo. La primera ponencia estuvo a cargo del sociólogo brasileño Alfonso Gregory, quien ofreció una “Visión socio-gráfica de América Latina”. En su análisis sociológico Gregory destacó tres fenómenos que iban a marcar las prioridades a seguir en el trabajo pastoral: la marginalidad en la que vivía la mayoría de la población, sobre todo en el continente dentro del contexto mundial, la consiguiente violencia institucional del sistema y la contra-violencia por reacción.

Superación de la Iglesia Colonial

Con Medellín la Iglesia católica superó tanto la larga etapa colonial, durante la que teológicamente, salvo excepciones, fue el remedio de una teología neo-escolástica decadente, como la etapa desarrollista, que entonces estaba gestándose, y entró en la órbita de la liberación como respuesta al principal desafío del continente latinoamericano, que era la necesidad de transformar las estructuras injustas generadoras de pobreza y opresión entre las mayorías populares. Era la respuesta al “sordo clamor de millones de hombres (sic), pidiendo a sus pastores una liberación que no les llega de ninguna parte” y “a las “quejas de que la jerarquía, el clero, los religiosos, son ricos y aliados con los ricos” (*La pobreza en la Iglesia*, nn. 1 y 3).

Si el Concilio Vaticano II instaba a los cristianos y las cristianas a estar presentes en el mundo como levadura en la masa y a hacer creíble la fe testimonialmente entre las personas no creyentes, Medellín llamaba al cristianismo latinoamericano a estar presentes en el mundo de la pobreza y hacer creíble la fe optando por los pobres a través de la presencia en los movimientos de liberación. Fue la impronta de los pobres, seña de identidad de Medellín, la que hizo suya las décadas siguientes la teología de la liberación, que logrará reconocimiento y credibilidad no solo en América Latina, sino en otras latitudes, no solo en el entorno eclesial, sino también el social, no solo en la teología, sino en otras disciplinas como las ciencias sociales.

Con Medellín la teología latinoamericana recuperó amplios espacios de libertad, se encaminó por la senda de la liberación y se abrió al pensamiento crítico en la línea del Vaticano II: “El espíritu crítico más agudizado la purifica (a la vida religiosa) de un concepto mágico del mundo y de residuos supersticiosos, exigiendo cada vez más una adhesión verdaderamente personal y operante de la fe, lo cual hace que muchos alcancen un sentido más vivo de lo divino” (*Constitución Pastoral sobre la Iglesia en el Mundo Actual*, n. 7).

Dolorosos procesos por repensar críticamente la fe en el contexto histórico latinoamericano

Ser teólogo o teóloga no puede reducirse a corear las consignas del magisterio eclesiástico, ni a glosar acríticamente los documentos episcopales o papales, sino que lleva a repensar críticamente la fe para dar razón de ella en cada contexto histórico. Sucedió, sin embargo, que cuando las teólogas y los teólogos latinoamericanos comenzaron a ejercer dicha función, la Sagrada Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe, bajo la presidencia del cardenal Ratzinger, puso en marcha rígidos controles, sospechas y procesamientos que terminaron en dolorosas condenas y sanciones, pero nunca en rupturas por parte de las personas sancionadas.

Dos de los casos más significativos fueron las dos condenas al teólogo brasileño Leonardo Boff por la Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe. La primera fue en 1984 con la imposición de un tiempo de silencio. La segunda, 1992, que Boff califica de “más humillante que la primera”, ya que le impusieron una censura previa a todos sus escritos, le separaron de la cátedra por tiempo indefinido, destituyeron a toda la dirección de la revista *Vozes* y le impusieron una censura a ella y a sus revistas. “Me dejaron sin palabra, sin voz. Y eso para un teólogo, para un intelectual, es como una mutilación de los órganos genitales. Me condenaban al silencio, a la invisibilidad. Era como retirarme el aire para respirar. Y no acepté”.¹²

¹² Juan José Tamayo, *Leonardo Bof. Ecología, mística y liberación*, Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao, 1999, BilbaoBilbao, 1999, p. 147.

Quien condenó al teólogo brasileño fue el cardenal Ratzinger, que, en apenas tres lustros pasaba de mecenas a detective, ya que, como el propio Boff confiesa, cuando terminó la tesis doctoral en Munich, Ratzinger le dio 14.000 marcos para su publicación porque la consideraba una gran aportación teológica en eclesiología y sacramentos. “Después, me impone silencio y me prohíbe publicar –recuerda con sorpresa Boff- Son las paradojas tan frecuentes en las relaciones entre las personas”.¹³

Con dichas condenas se estaba amonestando a cuantos teólogos y teólogas -también europeos, norteamericanos, asiáticos y africanos- transitaban por las sendas de la libertad y la liberación abiertas por el Concilio Vaticano II y Medellín. Efectivamente, no tardaron en llegar las condenas de otras tendencias teológicas como la teología feminista y la teología de las religiones. Antes se había producido la retirada del reconocimiento como “teólogo católico” a Hans Küng y otros colegas europeos.

La teología latinoamericana, en buena medida por influencia de Medellín, dejó de ser simple remedio de la teología europea –fuera esta conservadora o progresista-, adquirió identidad propia y fue capaz de responder con rigor metodológico, hermenéutica liberadora, epistemología socialmente ubicada en el mundo de las personas y los colectivos empobrecidos, fuerza profética y respuesta a los desafíos de la realidad latinoamericana, entre los cuales cabe citar: la pobreza estructural, la múltiple opresión de las mujeres, la multiselular marginación de las culturas indígenas, campesinas y afrodescendientes, el colonialismo interno y el neocolonialismo externo.

Medellín ayudó a descubrir la importancia del lugar social de la teología, cuestión casi descuidada hasta entonces por considerarlo irrelevante, ya que lo que importaba era elaborar una teología formalmente rigurosa. El lugar social condiciona la orientación, la epistemología, la metodología y los propios contenidos de la teología. Ciertamente, no todos lugares sociales son igualmente válidos para hacer teología. Hay uno privilegiado,

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

el de los pobres y excluidos, y no caprichosamente, sino porque es el lugar donde se ubican la revelación de Dios en la historia y el mensaje y la praxis histórica de Jesús de Nazaret, el Cristo Liberador.

La reflexión teológica no arranca de zero ni se hace desde las nubes, sino que parte de una determinada pre-comprensión, de una opción fundamental y responde siempre a unos intereses, en este caso emancipatorios. Lo que hicieron Medellín y posteriormente la teología latinoamericana de la liberación fue explicitarlos y concretarlos en el compromiso ético-evangélico por la opción por los pobres y en la emancipación de los pueblos oprimidos.

Los cincuenta años posteriores a Medellín han sido, sin duda, los más fecundos y creativos, teológica y eclesialmente hablando, del cristianismo latinoamericano con el nacimiento de la teología de la liberación como nueva manera de hacer teología, su evolución y el desarrollo de las nuevas tendencias en los nuevos escenarios religiosos, culturales, sociales, políticos, económicos globales y locales a partir de los nuevos sujetos históricos de transformación: teología feminista, teología indígena, teología afrodescendiente, ecológica, teología campesina, teología del pluralismo religioso, teología queer, teología económica de la liberación, teo-poética de la liberación¹⁴.

Nuevos Desafíos, Cincuenta Años Despúes

Las Religiones y sus Teologías, Respuesta a los Nuevos Desafíos

Cincuenta años después, el cristianismo latinoamericano debe responder a los nuevos desafíos, como lo hizo en su momento la II Conferencia del Episcopado Latinoamericano en Medellín. Las religiones y sus respectivas teologías no son aerolitos caídos del cielo, ni fenómenos intemporales, ni realidades ahistóricas. Son construcciones humanas, fenómenos sociales y

¹⁴ Para un desarrollo de estas tendencias teológicas, cf. Juan José Tamayo, *La teología de la liberación en el nuevo escenario político y religioso*, Tirant Lo Blanch, València, 2011.

culturales que surgen en un determinado momento histórico como respuesta a los problemas planteados en cada época y en la búsqueda del sentido.

Como tales, son objeto de estudio por parte de las diferentes ciencias de las religiones. La filosofía de la religión analiza la racionalidad o irracionalidad de las afirmaciones religiosas. La fenomenología de la religión estudia los elementos comunes de la experiencia religiosa a partir de las plurales y complejas manifestaciones del fenómeno religioso: lo sagrado, el misterio, la actitud religiosa del sujeto, etc. La psicología de la religión estudia el impulso religioso, su origen y evolución y sus motivaciones: consuelo, necesidad de protección, anhelo de trascendencia, búsqueda de sentido.

La historia de las religiones muestra la gran creatividad mítica y simbólica de la humanidad y su capacidad para plantear las preguntas sobre el origen y destino del mundo, el sentido y sinsentido de la vida y de la muerte, y buscar caminos de salvación, tanto histórica como trascendente. La antropología de la religión estudia la religión como sistema cultural, simbólico, moral, de creencias y de acción. La sociología de la religión analiza la relación de las creencias religiosas con la sociedad, así como sus funciones sociales¹⁵.

Las religiones tienden a dar respuestas del pasado a preguntas del presente sin ser conscientes de que cuando sabían todas las respuestas les cambiaron las preguntas. De esa manera corren el peligro de tornarse irrelevantes. Si quieren tener significación histórica e intervenir en los procesos socio-culturales de la humanidad con un mensaje ético liberador, deben estar atentas a las nuevas preguntas y a los nuevos desafíos y mirar al futuro sin olvidar, eso sí, su genealogía, pero sin intentar reproducir el pasado miméticamente, sino recreándolo y descubriendo las vetas de utopía insitas en la realidad histórica y los caminos de esperanza abiertos por los visionarios.

¹⁵ He analizado de manera más pormenorizada el horizonte de estudio de cada una de las ciencias de las religiones, en el capítulo "Teología y ciencias de las religiones", de Juan José Tamayo, *Nuevo paradigma teológico*, Trotta, Madrid, 2009, 3^a ed.

Carácter Dialéctico y Estudio Interdisciplinar de los Nuevos Desafíos

Ahora bien, la atención a los desafíos no puede ser unidimensional, sino que ha de tener carácter dialéctico, sin caer en el catastrofismo, que generalmente desemboca en pesimismo existencial y fatalismo histórico, pero tampoco en el triunfalismo, que suele traducirse en activismo irreflexivo y optimismo ingenuo. Los desafíos deben ser analizados en toda su complejidad, no quedándose en la superficie, sino yendo a las raíces, a las causas más profundas. Hay que atender a los diferentes factores que intervienen: personales y estructurales, políticos y económicos, sociales y culturales, religiosos y medioambientales, diacrónicos y sincrónicos, éticos y simbólicos.

Los desafíos no se producen aisladamente, sino en interrelación, interacción e interdependencia. No es posible analizar las relaciones políticas sin tener en cuenta las relaciones económicas, como tampoco se pueden estudiar las relaciones con la naturaleza sin vincularlas con la economía y la política. Por lo mismo, los análisis económicos, políticos y ecológicos no pueden llevarse a cabo sin la crítica del patriarcado, sistema de dominación omnipresente. Las reflexiones y los análisis sobre las religiones no admiten un tratamiento aislado, cual si de mónadas autónomas se tratara. Deben atender a la funcionalidad política y económica que ejercen y a su estructura en la mayoría de los casos jerárquico-patriarcal.

A su vez, los desafíos deben ser estudiados interdisciplinariamente. No hay ciencia alguna que agote el estudio de todos los fenómenos que se producen en las diferentes sociedades del planeta. Son necesarias todas las disciplinas si se quiere tener una visión de conjunto. Hay que evitar que una disciplina domine sobre las demás e imponga su metodología, hoy, por ejemplo, la economía, que, sometida al asedio del mercado, pretende dominar todos los ámbitos de la existencia.

Nuevos Paradigmas Teológicos

He aquí algunos de los desafíos que conforman el cambio de era que estamos viviendo que son especialmente significativos para el presente y el futuro de las religiones y de las teologías, muy especialmente para las religiones y teologías del Sur Global:

- La pobreza estructural y la creciente desigualdad, que constituyen “el mal común” y dan lugar al estado de malestar, y los movimientos de lucha contra la pobreza. A dicho desafío debe responder una teología profética desde la opción por los pueblos oprimidos.
- La crisis y el letargo de la democracia, sometida a la dictadura de los mercados, y los movimientos de despertar de la democracia participativa. A este desafío corresponde una teología que defienda la democracia participativa de base en las religiones y critique la religión “monoteísta” del mercado.
- La globalización neoliberal excluyente, la globalización posliberal y contrahegemónica y los movimientos alterglobalizadores. La respuesta es una teología contrahegemónica que supere el universalismo abstracto de la salvación, traduzca esta en liberaciones históricas e incluya a quienes la globalización existente excluye.
- La pervivencia del patriarcado, en alianza con otros sistemas de dominación, las discriminaciones de género que desembocan en violencia contra las mujeres, y la alternativa que proponen de los diferentes feminismos, tanto los occidentales como los periféricos. La respuesta es una teología feminista que cuestione el sexism, la homofobia y la violencia de género y apueste por una comunidad fraterno-sororal.
- La depredación de la naturaleza, el eco-cidio, y la nueva conciencia ecológica que da lugar al paradigma holístico eco-humano. La respuesta es una teología ecológica en defensa de la dignidad y de los derechos de la Tierra.

- El armamentismo, el terrorismo global, y la construcción de una cultura de paz. La respuesta es una teología de la paz basada en la justicia.
- El choque de civilizaciones, la diversidad cultural y el diálogo simétrico entre cosmovisiones, culturas y saberes. La respuesta es una teología intercultural de la liberación.
- La proliferación y el fortalecimiento del fascismo social, el debilitamiento de los procesos democráticos y la democratización de la democracia como alternativa.
- El imperialismo cultural, que desemboca en epistemocidio, y la reconstrucción cultural alternativa. La respuesta es una teología interétnica que reconozca las identidades de las culturas originarias.
- La mercantilización de la vida, la cosificación del ser humano, la depredación de la naturaleza y la desmercantilización de las relaciones humanas y con la naturaleza. La respuesta es una teología de la gratuidad.
- Los fundamentalismos religiosos y los deicidios, el pluriverso religioso y el diálogo entre religiones y espiritualidades. La respuesta es una teología hermenéutica interreligiosa de la liberación.
- La cultura de los derechos humanos y su sistemática transgresión. La respuesta es una teología que defienda los derechos humanos y la igual dignidad de todas las personas.
- Las diferentes formas de increencia religiosa, la idolatría y el despertar, con frecuencia patológico, de las religiones. La respuesta es una teología anti-idolátrica.
- La posmodernidad, la cultura, la sociedad y la vida bajo el signo de la liquidez y la teoría de la complejidad como alternativa. La respuesta es una teología no dogmática, no encrucijada en imposibles certidumbres, sino en búsqueda, abierta a la duda y en diálogo con otros saberes.

- Las migraciones y sus respuestas: la xenofobia y el racismo o la hospitalidad y la acogida. La respuesta es una teología de la alteridad, de la hospitalidad.
- La injusticia cognitiva global y la justicia cognitiva alter-globalizadora. La respuesta son las teologías del Sur Global.
- El colonialismo, el neocolonialismo, los movimientos descolonizadores y las teorías poscoloniales y decoloniales. La respuesta son las teologías pos- y decoloniales.

Después de Medellín: Pervivencia del Colonialismo, Estudios post-y de-Coloniales y Teologías del Sur Global

Crítica de Medellín al Colonialismo y al Imperialismo

Influencia especial han tenido en la elaboración de una teología post y de-colonial los análisis de Medellín sobre el “colonialismo interno” y el “neocolonialismo externo”. Del “colonialismo interno” destaca los siguientes fenómenos:

- las desigualdades entre las clases sociales, sobre todo en países caracterizados por un “marcado biclasismo”;
- las diversas formas de marginalidad: socioeconómicas, políticas, culturales, raciales, religiosas;
- las frustraciones crecientes por las desigualdades excesivas que impiden “sistemáticamente” a los sectores menos desfavorecidos satisfacer sus legítimas aspiraciones;
- las diferentes formas de opresión de grupos y sectores dominantes y más favorecidos, insensibles a la miseria de los sectores marginados;
- la violencia represiva de los sectores dominantes contra quienes quieren cambiar las estructuras injustas, a los que acusan de subversivos;

- la creciente toma de conciencia de los sectores oprimidos (*Paz*, nn. 2-7).

También es objeto de análisis crítico el “neocolonialismo externo”. Se refiere “a las consecuencias que entraña para los países latinoamericanos su dependencia de un centro de poder económico, en torno al cual gravitan”, cuyo resultado es que “nuestras naciones, con frecuencia, no son dueñas de sus bienes ni de sus decisiones económicas”. Entre las consecuencias del neocolonialismo interno Medellín destaca las siguientes (*Paz*, nn. 8-9):

- distorsión creciente del comercio internacional por la depreciación de las materias primas y la supervvaloración de los productos manufacturados, con el consiguiente mantenimiento de los países productores de materias primas en la pobreza y el enriquecimiento cada vez mayor de los países industrializados;
- fuga de capitales económicos de los sectores acomodados de los países latinoamericanos y fuga de técnicos y personal competente en busca de seguridad y de lucro personal;
- evasión de los sistemas tributarios establecidos y fuga de divisas y dividendos al extranjero con renuncia a reinvertir en los propios países de origen;
- sistema de créditos internacionales que no tienen en cuenta las necesidades reales ni las posibilidades de los países latinoamericanos, abrumados por los endeudamientos progresivos;
- monopolios internacionales que, “inspirados en el lucro sin freno, conducen a la dictadura económica y al ‘imperialismo internacional’ del dinero” (*Paz*, n. 8).

Medellín denuncia el “imperialismo de cualquier signo ideológico, que se ejerce en América Latina, en forma indirecta y hasta intervenciones directas” (*Paz*, n. 11), en clara referencia a golpes de Estado del imperialismo. Dichos golpes siguen produciéndose hoy en países como en Honduras, Brasil, Guatemala...

Pervivencia del Colonialismo

Cincuenta años después de Medellín, el colonialismo interno y el neocolonialismo externo siguen vivos y activos en todos los campos, incluso bajo formas más sutiles de dominación. Lo expresa con gran lucidez la antropóloga Liliana Suárez Navaz:

“El colonialismo no es un periodo histórico superado, un fósil inerme. Es una semilla que aún da sus frutos, reproduciendo una característica administración del pensamiento y sustentando un sistema de extracción de la mayoría de explotación del planeta... Aunque el sistema político de los imperios coloniales en sentido estricto quedó felizmente en el pasado, sus secuelas están presentes en las nuevas formas de imperialismo económico y político {y religioso, añado yo}, liderado por capitalistas neoliberales en todos los rincones del mundo. Esta globalización tan trillada tiene efectos perversos para las mujeres. Aunque ciudadanas, estas dinámicas nos están empujando hacia una mayor pobreza, más responsabilidades nuevas, formas de migración, nuevas formas de control y violencia”.¹⁶

Conforme a la interpretación del proyecto Colonialidad-Modernidad, la colonialidad pervive aun cuando el discurso políticamente correcto declare que ha terminado el “periodo colonial”. Los sucesivos procesos de descolonización política y jurídica no se tradujeron en procesos de decolonialidad.¹⁷ Recurriendo a la expresión de Habermas, podemos afirmar que “el mundo de la vida” (*Lebenswelt*), formado por la cultura, la sociedad y la personalidad, se torna cada vez menos independiente al someterse

¹⁶ Liliana Suárez Navaz, “Colonialismo, gobernabilidad y feminismos poscoloniales”, en Liliana Suárez Navaz y Rosalva Aída Hernández (eds.), *Descolonizando el feminismo. Teorías y prácticas desde los márgenes*, Cátedra, Madrid, 2008, p. 31-32.

¹⁷ La bibliografía de y sobre los estudios poscoloniales es ingente. Cito tres obras que me parecen paradigmáticas al respecto: Walter Mignolo, *Historia locales/Diseños globales. Colonialidad, conocimientos subalternos y pensamiento fronterizo*, Alkal, Madrid, 2013, 2^a reimpresión; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Justicia entre saberes: Epistemologías del Sur contra el Epistemicidio*, Morata, Madrid, 2017; AA. VV., *Ensayos Postcoloniales*, Traficantes de Sueños, Madrid, 2008.

a la monetarización y a la burocratización, y sigue estando colonizado por la lógica del mercado y por el sistema, que ejerce su poder sobre él.¹⁸

La pervivencia del proyecto cultural colonial se retroalimenta y refuerza con otros sistemas de dominación como el patriarcado, el capitalismo global, el desarrollo científico-técnico de la modernidad, el antropocentrismo depredador de la naturaleza y los diferentes fundamentalismos. Por eso es tarea prioritaria descolonizar, lo que significa erradicar de las relaciones sociales toda forma de dominación basada en la dialéctica superioridad-inferioridad tanto a nivel individual como colectivo.

Diría más, la tarea de descolonización le afecta especialmente a Europa, que desde siglos constituye el centro del colonialismo moderno. Su complejo de superioridad en todos los órdenes la llevó a creer que tenía una misión regeneradora-redentora del mundo y la incapacitó para descubrir los valores culturales, religiosos, éticos y estéticos de otras cosmovisiones.¹⁹

Como respuesta a la pervivencia del colonialismo se han puesto en marcha importantes procesos de descolonización en los diferentes campos: las religiones, la teoría del conocimiento, el feminismo, la epistemología, las ciencias sociales, los modos de producción, las formas de organización social y política, los movimientos sociales, la teoría de los derechos humanos, la teoría crítica, la ética, la estética, las teologías, etc.

Discursos post- y de-Coloniales

A su vez se están desarrollando importantes discursos post- y de-coloniales, entre los que cabe destacar los siguientes: la descolonización de las ciencias sociales (Jack Goody, André Gunder Frank, John M. Hobson), los Estudios de la Subalternidad (Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *Teoría de la acción comunicativa. I. Racionalidad de acción y racionalización social*, Taurus, Madrid, 1987, p. 169, 596, 572.

¹⁹ Cf. el excelente análisis crítico de eurocentrismo y de la violencia epistémica ejercida por Europa, en Montserrat Galcerán, *La bárbara Europa. Una mirada desde el postcolonialismo y la descolonialidad*, Traficantes de Sueños, Madrid, 2017.

Dipesh Chakrabarty), los Estudios Africanos (Achille Mbambe, Paulin J. Hountondji, Amina Mama), la filosofía latinoamericana de la liberación (Leopoldo Zea, Enrique Dussel, Arturo Andrés Roig), la filosofía *Ubuntu* (Mogobe Ramose), el proyecto Modernidad-Colonialidad (Walter Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano, Ramón Grosfoguel, Santiago Castro Gómez), la teoría del Encubrimiento del Otro y de la Transmodernidad (Enrique Dussel), las epistemologías del Sur (Boaventura de Sousa Santos), la crítica del orientalismo (Edward Said) y los feminismos decoloniales y la interseccionalidad de etnia, cultura, religión, clase social, identidad sexual (Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty, María Lugones).

Se está produciendo una revalorización de los saberes, las formas de pensar y de imaginar el mundo, la relación con la naturaleza y los modelos de organización social y política de los pueblos del Sur global.

En América Latina hemos asistido en las dos últimas décadas a importantes avances en los procesos de descolonización, despatriarcalización y desoccidentalización a través de los cambios constitucionales, las nuevas formas de participación política, el reconocimiento del protagonismo de las mujeres múltiplemente oprimidas, de los pueblos indígenas, de las comunidades afrodescendientes y del campesinado como actores de transformación social y sujetos de ciudadanía, de la que antes se veían privados.

La descolonización ha avanzado en estas décadas a buen ritmo y se ha concretado en la liberación de algunos países latinoamericanos de la dependencia de las grandes potencias, el reconocimiento de los saberes y vivires de los pueblos originarios, minusvalorados por el paradigma colonial de la modernidad, la afirmación de la dignidad nacional de los pueblos, el reconocimiento de la plurinacionalidad de los Estados y el cuestionamiento del sistema colonial-capitalista.

Ahora bien, el proceso de descolonización no está terminado. Tiene pocas carencias y, últimamente, importantes retrocesos por el acceso al poder de organizaciones y partidos neoliberales y sometidos al Imperio. Por eso dicho proceso sigue constituyendo un desafío fundamental y una tarea prioritaria. Sugiero algunas propuestas que pueden contribuir a llevarlo a feliz término:

- Cuestionar las visiones que se han centrado en la descolonización política y económica, pero han descuidado la inter-seccionalidad del poder colonial: etnia, género, sexualidad, cultura, religión, y tomar en consideración el estrecho e indisociable vínculo entre racismo, imperialismo, prácticas e ideologías patriarcales en los procesos de descolonización.
- Elaborar teorías poscoloniales que incluyan las categorías antes indicadas y ofrezcan nuevas herramientas de análisis más acordes con la diversidad cultural de los pueblos.
- Crear nuevas estrategias de lucha para construir sociedades descolonizadas inclusivas, inter-culturales, inter-étnicas, inter-religiosas e inter-identitarias, sin que ninguna cultura, religión o etnia sean hegemónicas.

Reformulación de la Teología de la Liberación bajo el Signo Descolonizador

Como respuesta a las transformaciones producidas en el nuevo escenario político, religioso y cultural, en alianza contrahegemónica con los movimientos sociales y apoyándose metodológicamente y epistemológicamente en los discursos post- y de-coloniales, la teología latinoamericana de la liberación se está reformulando hoy como teología decolonial. El resultado es un cambio de paradigma en el relato teológico bajo el giro descolonizador, que cuestiona el racismo epistemológico europeo, tiene en cuenta los plurales escenarios geoculturales, políticos y religiosos y transita por los caminos del diálogo simétrico entre diferentes cosmovisiones, saberes, y sabidurías, religiones y espiritualidades en el horizonte de las teologías del Sur.

Desde el punto de vista teológico, remito a tres obras recientes que incorporan los estudios post- y de-coloniales a la reflexión teológica. Mi libro *Teologías del Sur. El giro descolonizador* hace un recorrido por las teologías del Sur Global: africana, asiática, latinoamericana y negra estadounidense, ubicadas en sus contextos socioculturales y en sus más

significativas tendencias: feminista, ecológica, de la liberación y de las religiones. Son teologías emergentes, contrahegemónicas y creadoras de discursos alternativos que intentan responder a los grandes desafíos actuales que dan lugar a los diferentes sistemas de dominación: capitalismo en su versión neoliberal, colonialismo en sus versiones neocoloniales, patriarcado en sus diferentes manifestaciones (de coacción, de consentimiento, de las religiones), racismo epistemológico, modelo de desarrollo científico-técnico de la modernidad depredador de la naturaleza, sometimiento de la democracia a la dictadura del mercado, fundamentalismos, etc.

Provocações decoloniais à Teologia Cristã, de Carlos Cuhna, profesor de teología en la Facultad Jesuita de Filosofía y Teología en Belo Horizonte (Brasil), me parece especialmente iluminador por el recorrido que hace desde el Post-colonialismo al Pensamiento Decolonial, por la clarificación conceptual, las críticas y provocaciones del pensamiento decolonial a la teología cristiana y por la original propuesta de una “Teología del Reconocimiento”. Tuve oportunidad de compartir experiencias y reflexiones enriquecedoras con el profesor Cuhna en el Foro Mundial de Teología y Liberación, celebrado en Salvador de Bahía del 12 al 17 de marzo de 2018.

El libro *Decoloniality and Justice: Theological perspectives* editado en tres lenguas: castellano, francés e inglés bajo la dirección de Jean-François Roussel, profesor en el Instituto de Estudios Religiosos en la Universidad de Montréal (Canadá), recoge las conferencias del séptimo Foro Mundial de Teología y Liberación (FMTL) celebrado en Montréal (Canadá) del 8 al 13 de agosto de 2016, cuyo título fue “Resistencia, esperanza y creatividad: Otro Mundo Posible”. Es un diálogo riguroso y fecundo entre las diferentes tendencias de las de teologías post- y de-coloniales del Sur y del Norte.²⁰

²⁰ Juan José Tamayo, *Teologías del Sur. El giro descolonizador*, Trotta, Madrid, 2017; Carlos Cuhna, *Provocações decoloniais à Teologia Cristã*, Terceira Via, São Paulo, 2017; Jean-François Roussel (ed.), *Decoloniality and Justice: Theological perspectives*, Oikos Editora, São Leopoldo, 2018.

PART II:
LIBERATIVE JUSTICE

8.

LE VIOL DES FEMMES COMME ARME DE GUERRE EN RÉPUBLIQUE DÉMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO: UNE DESTRUCTION DU LIEN SOCIAL ET RELIGIEUX

DIEUDONNÉ KIBUNGU BWANAMULOKO¹

Contexte des Conflits Armés et du Vide Sécuritaire

Depuis plus de 22 ans, un conflit armé déchire et déstabilise la partie orientale de la RD Congo par des viols systématiques des femmes, des meurtres et pillage des ressources minières². Ce conflit armé demeure encore incontrôlé et « décentralisé, avec plus de 120 groupes armés sans un récit global ou des intérêts communs³ ». Les multiples formes de viol infligées aux femmes - viols de masse, viols multiples et viols collectifs - constituent *une arme de guerre* d'une extrême violence qui terrorise des individus, des familles et des communautés entières au même titre que la torture⁴. Par *viols de masse*

¹ Doctorant en théologie à l'Université de Montréal, titulaire d'un *Master of theology and religious studies* (KULeuven) et d'un Diplôme spécialisé en Catéchèse et Pastorale de Lumen Vitae-Institut international /Belgique. Auteur de *Le tournant féminin et féministe de la théologie africaine postcoloniale. Cas des femmes violées en RD Congo*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2017.

² Vépierre A, « L'Est de la RD-Congo déchiré par 22 ans de guerre », dans *La Croix*. 15 août 2016.

³ Baromètre sécuritaire du Kivu, dans <https://kivusecurity.org> (consulté le 11 juin 2018).

⁴ Crettiez, X. *III. Violences de masse et de terrorisation: réflexions sur les violences extrêmes*, Repères. 2008, p. 69-89.

comme arme de guerre, nous désignons ici les viols commis stratégiquement en contexte de guerre par des hommes armés sur un nombre considérable de victimes avec l'intention de terroriser, d'humilier, de déplacer des communautés et de prendre le contrôle d'une certaine population ou d'un territoire particulier⁵. Les *viols multiples*, pour leur part, renvoient aux viols infligés à plusieurs reprises sur la même victime. Dans les viols dits *collectifs*, par contre, la victime est violée par de nombreux assaillants⁶.

A travers ses cartes, graphiques et rapports analytiques, le *Baromètre sécuritaire du Kivu*, projet que mènent conjointement *Human Rights Watch* et *le Groupe d'étude sur le Congo* de l'Université de New York, rend régulièrement compte de ces violences et violations graves des droits humains. Dans son rapport de mai 2018, le nouveau *Baromètre sécuritaire du Kivu* révèle que « les niveaux de violence sont restés élevés, comme les mois précédents, avec une concentration d'incidents dans le territoire de Beni en raison des affrontements quasi quotidiens entre l'armée nationale (FARDC) et les rebelles des Forces démocratiques alliées ougandaises (ADF)⁷ ».

Depuis le mois d'avril 2017, en termes statistiques, les provinces du Nord et du Sud Kivu ont enregistré 1642 incidents connus de violences extrêmes ayant entraîné 3718 victimes. Parmi ces dernières, 1289 victimes d'enlèvement, 1041 victimes de morts violentes, 775 victimes d'affrontements, 583 victimes de kidnappings pour rançons, 78 incidents de destruction des biens, 62 incidents de répression politique et 78 victimes de viols de masse⁸. Ces violences destinées à nourrir un climat de terreur sont perpétrées tant par les Forces régulières de sécurité congolaises que par des groupes armés qui envahissent cette partie du pays. Certains viols sont commis par des civils

⁵ Reid S. et al., *Une arme de guerre: le viol et les violences sexuelles contre les femmes en République démocratique du Congo : comment le Canada peut se mobiliser et mettre fin à l'impunité*, 2014, dans <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10874107> (consulté 18 février 2018).

⁶ Josse E., *Violences sexuelles et conflits armés en Afrique*. http://www.genreenaction.net/IMG/pdf/violences_2osexuelles_20conflict_20Afrique.pdf (consulté le 20 sept 2017)

⁷ <https://kivusecurity.org> (consulté le 11 juin 2018).

⁸ <https://kivusecurity.org> (consulté le 11 juin 2018).

qui profitent de l'impunité et du vide sécuritaire. Ces pires violences et viols, utilisés comme *arme de guerre*, contribuent au déchirement du tissu social et religieux. Quelles résistances s'organisent ou peuvent s'organiser contre le phénomène du viol de femmes comme arme de guerre en RD Congo?

La résistance devient un combat à mener tous les jours et à étendre de façon stratégique sur « un vaste champ d'action politique et sociale, de militantisme, de théorie, de recherche et de législation⁹ ». Cette *résistance stratégique* consiste à ne pas se limiter à l'étape de dénonciation ni s'enfermer dans une *logique d'affrontement*, mais à « créer » et à développer de « nouveaux mondes » par des actions qui font réellement respecter les droits des femmes et les promouvoir, sur fond de cohésion sociale et de paix durable. En effet, « résister, selon Gilles Deleuze, c'est créer¹⁰ » et « créer, c'est résister¹¹ ». L'épistémologie de la résistance passe aussi par une capacité de nommer et (re)-définir les termes qui désignent les violences subies et de les expliquer afin qu'ils « ne soient pas détournés, neutralisés ou vidés de leur signification politique¹² ». Une *résistance stratégique* créatrice, pratique, politique s'avère nécessaire.

Le présent article s'inscrit dans ce cadre et se veut une mise en pratique de cette résistance stratégique par la mise en évidence du fait des viols subis par les femmes et de leur conséquence sur le *lien social*. Les *viols de masse* sont une *pathologie*, une *métastase* qui, au-delà du corps et de la vie des femmes victimes, détruit la cohésion familiale, sociale et nationale¹³.

Comme démarche méthodologique, ce propos se situe du point de vue des femmes violées en contexte socio-culturel de l'est de la RD

⁹ Smyth A., *Résistance féministe à la violence masculine contre les femmes. Quelles perspectives?* Nouvelles questions féministes, 2002, 21(2) :76-92.

¹⁰ Aubenas F, Benasayag M., *Résister, c'est créer*, Paris, Découverte; 2002. Femmes solidaires, *Résister, c'est créer: 60 ans de femmes solidaires*, Paris, «Clara magazine: Femmes solidaires; 2005.

¹¹ Colrat P., Fèvre A.-M., *Créer c'est résister*, Paris, Textuel, 2011.

¹² Smyth A., *Résistance féministe à la violence masculine contre les femmes. Quelles perspectives?* op. cit.

¹³ Sémelin J., *Purifier et détruire. Usages politiques des massacres et génocides*, Paris, Seuil, 2005.

Congo. Ces dernières en savent plus que les experts sur les viols et sur leurs conséquences parce qu'elles les vivent de l'intérieur¹⁴. Dans une perspective théologique et religieuse, il prend en compte les acquis des recherches récentes. Il est question de trouver des voies pertinentes et des moyens pratiques qui contribuent à mieux déconstruire la culture du viol des femmes comme arme de guerre. Il s'agit aussi non seulement de reconstruire le tissu social mais aussi de le transformer en profondeur.

Pour ce faire, le premier point aborde le viol comme une attaque contre le lien social et religieux. Le second évoque le paradoxe religieux et les conditions de possibilité pour le rétablissement du tissu social. Le troisième propose la *résistance stratégique* et créatrice comme mode opératoire pour un changement durable du *lien social*.

Le Viol des Femmes comme destruction du *lien Social*

En détruisant la vie de plus d'un million de femmes depuis le début du conflit armé, le viol a brisé « la pluralité des liens » qui constituent le tissu social. Le pire est que, souvent, après le viol, la victime est tuée. Quand elle a la chance de rester en vie, elle est soumise à l'obligation du silence, à laquelle s'ajoutent l'impunité, l'injustice et la pérennisation des viols. Et que dire de la banalisation de ce mal radical et de l'indifférence qui s'en suivent ? Le pire aussi est de voir la grande majorité des hommes et des femmes, et même des institutions, se résigner devant ce drame indicible sans arriver à opérer un déplacement et un tournant de civilisation, comme si le viol était une fatalité de la guerre. Ce qui est pire encore, c'est que soient prises ensuite des voies impertinentes, inappropriées, plus injustes, plus violentes encore que le mal contre lequel on combat par des interventions incohérentes. La

¹⁴ Poirier Courbet L., *Vivre après un viol. Chemins de reconstruction*, Editions ères, Toulouse, 2015, p.44.

destruction de la société congolaise s'opère systématiquement par le viol des femmes, lequel porte en lui les germes de cette destruction sociétale¹⁵.

Pour Serge Paugam¹⁶, quatre types de lien constituent le tissu social: *le lien de filiation* (socialisation familiale, parentale, assurant les soins physiques, la sécurité affective), *le lien de participation élective* (socialisation extrafamiliale librement choisie : voisinage, amitié, institution religieuse, sportive, culturelle, etc.), *le lien de participation organique* (socialisation professionnelle et contractuelle), *le lien de citoyenneté* (socialisation d'appartenance nationale, de patriotisme et de communauté politique). Nous ajoutons pour notre part deux liens qui sont aussi importants et sur lesquels reposent ces quatre types: *le lien de chaque être humain avec soi-même*, avec son moi-profound, et *le lien avec la transcendance* dont la qualité et l'équilibre déterminent et garantissent l'harmonie des autres liens. Il y a lieu de l'illustrer par le cas typique de Sylvie dont le viol a provoqué plusieurs ruptures, qui se sont soldées par un éloignement suivi de la mort.

Sylvie était son prénom. Fille du catéchiste, elle a été violée publiquement et devant ses frères. Elle avait 19 ans et se préparait à rentrer au Couvent pour y commencer sa formation au postulat afin de devenir religieuse. [...] Elle fut violée plusieurs fois et rendue grosse. [...] Elle parlait sans relâche de sa désolation, de son enfant issu du viol et pour lequel elle ne sentait pas vraiment d'affection, de ses projets de vie religieuse brisés (elle ne pouvait plus aller au couvent à cause du viol subi et de son bébé qu'elle devait désormais éléver), de la perte de sa dignité, de son rejet par la communauté ('aucun homme n'accepterait de me prendre en mariage, disait-elle, *les violeurs m'ont complètement détruite*'), de la honte qu'elle éprouvait, de sa haine envers les hommes et aussi de sa déception à l'égard de

¹⁵ Bonal, C., Denis Mukwege, "En RDC, le viol est une arme de destruction massive" in https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2014/11/26/denis-mukwege-en-rdc-le-viol-est-une-arme-de-destruction-massive_1150743. Consulté 10 février 2018.

¹⁶ Paugam S., *Le lien social*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2008.

son Église catholique que son papa catéchiste représentait et qui avait encore pesé sur elle lorsqu'elle désirait avorter après le viol. Elle cessa même de venir à l'église. Puis elle s'éloigna vers un autre milieu d'où, quelque temps après, on apprenait sa mort, suivie quelques mois plus tard de celle de son enfant¹⁷.

Par le viol subi, les liens de Sylvie, constitutifs du tissu social, ont été détruits. Il s'ensuivit une rupture avec son avenir, sa famille, son village, son église, les autres, surtout les hommes, etc. Évidemment, le lien avec son moi-intérieur et celui avec la transcendance ne sont pas épargnés. Finalement, pour Sylvie, ses nombreuses ruptures se sont soldées par la rupture avec la vie, à travers sa mort et celle de son enfant. Sa famille, son village, sa paroisse ne sont pas non plus restés indifférents. Leur impuissance devant le viol, leur incapacité à intervenir de façon pertinente, l'insuffisance de leur réponse par rapport aux besoins multiples de Sylvie avant son déplacement, suivi de sa mort, ne laissent pas le tissu social intact.

Le Viol des Femmes, Destructeur du Lien avec le moi Intérieur

Le viol a fait fi de la vie, sacrée pour l'Afrique. Il l'a profanée. Ce n'était pas seulement la *profanation du vagin*, mais, plus que cela, la désacralisation de la sexualité elle-même, en l'utilisant comme instrument de guerre. Le viol anéantit le pouvoir de la victime, sa « force vitale », son dynamisme intérieur, sa dignité humaine, son « image de soi », sa liberté de décider et parfois son pouvoir reproductif. D'après les témoignages recueillis par Josée Ngalula, « des combattants ont pensé aspirer l'énergie vitale de la femme pour se rendre invisibles et/ou invincibles face à leurs adversaires, en violent spécialement des vieilles femmes, en prélevant les organes génitaux de femmes encore vivantes pour en faire des colliers amulettes, ou en éventrant des femmes enceintes¹⁸ ».

¹⁷ Kibungu Bwanamuloko D., *Le tournant féminin et féministe de la théologie africaine postcoloniale. Cas des femmes violées en RD Congo*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2017, p.30.

¹⁸ J. Ngalula, "Violences sexuelles faites aux femmes: qu'en disent les Ecritures?" in *Telema*, 1-4 (janv.-déc.2008), p.102

Buuma Maisha¹⁹ et d'autres recherches récentes mentionnent, parmi tant d'autres effets du viol, la souillure de « l'image de soi et de l'autre ». Le premier lien souillé et brisé est précisément celui de la victime avec son « être profond », avec son « moi intérieur ». Par après, cette destruction touche les autres liens qui se trouvent désormais fragilisés, souillés sinon détruits en même temps que le premier. Le *lien social* à tous les niveaux est en déséquilibre. En ce sens, le viol est effectivement une arme de destruction massive pour une société.

Comme le montre Lise Poirier Courbet, « le viol est une effraction du corps qui touche directement au moi, à l'identité. Cette irruption du réel de la mort n'est jamais totalement assimilable », d'autant plus que « le choc est équivalent à l'anéantissement de soi, de la capacité de résister, d'agir et de penser en vue de défendre le soi propre ». Autrement dit, « les effets d'un viol sont réellement destructeurs (sensation de néant, dévalorisation totale de soi, phobie, impossibilité de faire confiance en la vie, en l'autre)²⁰ ».

Le viol des femmes, destructeur du lien familial, extrafamilial et professionnel

Le viol entraîne aussi une désintégration de la *socialisation familiale*, de la *socialisation extrafamiliale* librement choisie (voisinage, amitié, institution religieuse, sportive, culturelle) et de la *socialisation professionnelle-contratuelle*. Les conséquences du viol ont un « caractère multidimensionnel et collectif », puisque la destruction ne se limite pas au physique, au psychique, à l'être de la victime. Elle est aussi familiale, sociale, environnementale. Ainsi, le viol des femmes a brisé « l'interdit le plus sacré et fondateur de la communauté, en souillant son intimité la plus profonde²¹ ».

¹⁹ Buuma Maisha, *Images de soi et de l'autre souillées : La problématique des tabous sexuels en thérapie et l'apport du rite de purification dans la reconstruction du 'soi' chez la femme survivante de viol à l'Est de la R.D. Congo*, Thèse doctorale, Université Saint-Paul Ottawa, 2016.

²⁰ Poirier Courbet L., *Vivre après un viol. Chemins de reconstruction*, Éditions érès, Toulouse, 2015, p.43, 263.

²¹ Bouvy, A, *Le viol comme tactique de guerre: le cas de la République démocratique du Congo, Justice et Paix belge francophone*, Bruxelles, 2007.

Dans de nombreux cas en milieu rural, après le viol, des familles sont disloquées. « Quand on viole la maman devant ses enfants et son mari, quand on viole la fille devant ses parents, quand on oblige les membres d'une même famille à commettre l'inceste en public, ce ne sont pas seulement les violées qui sont détruites, mais c'est la nature et l'avenir même de la famille qui sont atteints. Les gens ont eu honte de continuer à rester ensemble. Sylvie a dû quitter son milieu pour se réfugier là où elle n'est pas connue²² ». De tels effets marqués directement dans la chair et l'âme des victimes directes et indirectes, ne sont pas sans conséquence pour les communautés témoins des viols et surtout pour les enfants nés des viols. L'éloignement ou l'exil des survivantes n'est pas seulement géographique. Il se produit aussi une prise de distance des relations avec l'autre, avec son milieu et même avec son travail, que la honte et la haine empêchent de regarder en face. Des liens significatifs se défont et nuisent à l'épanouissement personnel et social de la victime.

Le viol des femmes, destructeur du lien de la socialisation nationale et politique

À ces considérations sociologiques et anthropologiques s'ajoute la destruction du *lien de la socialisation nationale et politique*. Vivianne Monnier évoque l'impact des viols sur l'économie des sociétés dans lesquelles ils sont commis. Elle montre comment ils coûtent cher. Même si on ne dispose pas de statistiques précises sur le coût économique des viols et de la prise en charge des victimes, on doit prendre en compte les interventions de la police, de la gendarmerie, de la justice et celles des hôpitaux impliqués. Sans parler de la prestation des professionnels de santé, des absences au travail occasionnées par le viol, de la création et de l'équipement des centres de prise en charge des violées, de la restauration ou de la réparation des dommages matériels provoqués par les agresseurs. Le viol déséquilibre,

²² Kibungu Bwanamuloko, D., *Op. Cit.*, p.45.

déstructure et détruit aussi la communauté nationale, politique et citoyenne en raison non seulement des morts, des déplacements (en quête de refuge dans d'autres pays) et des chômage qu'il entraîne, mais encore des maladies et des coûts de prise en charge qui affectent le budget de l'État.

Le viol des femmes, destructeur du lien avec la transcendance?

Le contexte socio-culturel africain est tel que c'est la religion qui semble incarner la transcendance. Sous cet angle, le viol corrode le lien avec la transcendance. Il y a questionnement sur la tendresse de Dieu et confusion sur l'image de Dieu qui est en même temps le Dieu de la victime et le Dieu du violeur²³. Quoiqu'il en soit, le lien avec la transcendance, bien qu'il ne soit pas à proprement parler détruit, n'est pas non plus resté intact. Certaines victimes ont mis en doute la toute-puissance amoureuse de Dieu, qui ne les a pas épargnées du viol ; d'autres ont attribué à Dieu leur sort ; d'autres encore ont eu un sentiment de révolte à l'égard de l'attitude des responsables des Églises. Certaines victimes ont abandonné le chemin des Églises ; d'autres ont cherché refuge auprès de Dieu. À partir de cette réalité et de ce paradigme, il est possible d'évoquer le paradoxe religieux dans la lutte contre le viol en tant qu'arme de destruction massive du *lien social*.

Paradoxe religieux et conditions pour un changement social

Paradoxe religieux dans un contexte de lutte contre les viols des femmes comme arme de guerre

En contexte socioculturel congolais, un des paradoxes religieux est dans le fait que des chefs religieux, d'une part, veulent agir pour reconstruire le tissu social déchiré par des viols de guerre et, d'autre part, qu'ils n'agissent

²³ Nadeau, Jean-Guy, *Autrement que victimes: Dieu, enfer et résistance chez les victimes d'abus sexuels*, Montréal: Novalis, 2012.

pas au niveau des causes profondes de la culture du viol des femmes. Ils le feraient en écoutant et en tenant compte, par exemple, de leurs récits des viols, de leurs choix, de leurs droits et de leur liberté par rapport à leur autonomie et au contrôle de leur sexualité. Partir de la situation individuelle des violées et de leur souffrance multiple serait pour les responsables religieux une manière appropriée de situer et d'adapter leur intervention pour un résultat durable. Le constat est que ces derniers interviennent de façon magistérielle auprès des femmes victimes des viols. Au lieu de les écouter, certains chefs religieux transmettent la vérité divine à laquelle les victimes doivent se référer et ajuster leur situation, quel qu'en soit le contexte. Pourtant qui mieux que ces femmes connaît ce que représentent le viol et ses conséquences sur le corps, le psychisme et la vie des victimes ? Les femmes victimes des viols en savent plus que les experts sur le stress post-traumatique, parce qu'elles le vivent de l'intérieur.

Trois motifs semblent expliquer ce que la sociologue des religions Danièle Hervieu-Léger appelle « danger religieux » dont le paradoxe inhérent aux religions monothéistes fondées sur la Révélation. La mémoire de ces religions est une « mémoire de combat » qui « porte en elle-même le conflit²⁴ ». Le premier motif repose sur le fait de l'extériorité historique de la vérité. Cette dernière est située « hors de l'histoire » et donc « hors de la portée de la délibération des humains (la Révélation n'est pas, par définition, de l'ordre du choix collectif, elle s'impose d'en haut, comme un bloc)²⁵ ». Même dans la reconstruction du tissu social, la logique religieuse est paradoxale du fait que la référence n'est pas les victimes des viols, mais la Vérité révélée se situant « hors de l'histoire » et souvent éloignée des contextes précis des viols. Les femmes violées sont invitées à conformer leur situation à cette référence unique et transcendante, quelles que

²⁴ Hervieu-Léger, D., “Les religions en procès,” dans *Les religions, menace ou espoir pour nos sociétés: actes de la 83e session*, Lyon, centre des congrès, 21-23 novembre 2008, Paris, Bayard, 2009, p. 27-41

²⁵ Ibid.

soient les circonstances de leur viol et de leur souffrance, ce qui souvent ne fonctionne pas, puisqu'elles réclament d'être écoutées et prises en compte.

Un second motif est l'appartenance exclusive et excluante à la communauté. Des autorités religieuses se donnent le monopole de déterminer qui est dedans et qui est dehors de la communauté croyante. Or l'appartenance est exclusive et excluante. « Ou bien on appartient [...] ou bien l'on est en dehors » du « groupe des élus ou des sauvés : on en est ou on n'en est pas²⁶ ». L'appartenance à la communauté croyante dépend de la conformité à la doctrine et à la vérité révélées. Au regard des viols de guerre, faire dépendre le sort des victimes du pouvoir et du contrôle hiérarchique de la communauté ecclésiale d'appartenance sans impliquer la liberté intérieure, le choix et les décisions des femmes violées, ne peut que produire l'effet contraire, en renforçant des violences qui nuisent à la vie et à la cohésion du tissu social. Reconnaître aux victimes le monopole de savoir ce qui est bien pour elles et de décider ce qui est conforme à leur vie, à leur santé reproductive tout en se situant en regard de leur appartenance religieuse, est un pas important pour une reconstruction durable du tissu social.

Un troisième motif réside au niveau de l'unicité de la vérité. Puisque la Vérité est unique, la bataille de la conquête religieuse n'est pas finie. Par tous les moyens, il importe de conquérir les gens qui sont encore à l'extérieur de la communauté et qui ignorent encore l'unique Vérité, ainsi que de maintenir coûte que coûte les gens qui sont déjà à l'intérieur de la communauté et qui ont la chance de connaître la Vérité. Les réalités du viol des femmes, en tant que réalités que vivent les victimes des viols de guerre, sont multiples et variées. Ne constituent-elles pas des miroirs à travers lesquels percevoir la Vérité unique ? La violence engendrée par ce paradoxe religieux est à la fois effective, car elle « nourrit les guerres de religion », et symbolique, car, elle « menace l'autonomie des individus-sujets²⁷ ».

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Hervieu-Léger, D., Op.Cit., p.31

De ce qui précède, se dégagent trois lieux du paradoxe religieux dans un contexte de lutte contre les viols des femmes comme arme de guerre. Premièrement, prétendre combattre le viol et ne pas détruire ses racines profondes. Deuxièmement, travailler pour la reconstruction du tissu social et ignorer la connexion du lien individuel de la femme victime du viol. Troisièmement, condamner des pratiques des viols et justifier en même temps le patriarcat.

Conditions pour un changement social: Rejoindre les sources des violences

Le statut des femmes congolaises les rend souvent vulnérables²⁸. Les viols sont aussi liés au statut de la femme dans les sociétés, à l'abus de pouvoir de domination, au rapport de forces entre les individus et au déséquilibre de l'échange où le pouvoir de l'un pèse sur l'autre. Il est cohérent de déconstruire la culture du viol à partir de ces racines, en cherchant à promouvoir l'égalité de droit entre hommes et femmes, en défendant les droits, l'autonomie et la liberté des femmes. De manière générale, les religions monothéistes en Afrique ne semblent pas manifester un grand intérêt en faveur de l'autonomisation des femmes et surtout de leur droit et liberté de disposer pleinement de leur corps. Il y a persistance d'un fort contrôle sur la sexualité et sur la fécondité des femmes.

Si l'origine de la violence et du viol doit être cherchée au niveau de ce que Kä Mana appelle un *déséquilibre ontologique radical*, il convient d'aller à la source de ce déséquilibre pour résoudre durablement cette question. Cette approche requiert la reconnexion aux sources et aux valeurs fondatrices, régulatrices et donatrices de sens propres à l'Afrique²⁹. De même, la solution serait aussi de tenir compte des récits des

²⁸ Linder E., *Violences sexuelles en République démocratique du Congo (1/2)*. 2016, cf. <http://www.jetdencre.ch/violences-sexuelles-en-republique-democratique-du-congo-12> (Consulté le 10 février 2018).

²⁹ Kä Mana, « Vaincre la violence et éradiquer la torture en Afrique. Quand l'Evangile fertilise la culture africaine ». In Kä Mana et Jean-Blaise Kenmogne, *Pour une voie africaine de la non-violence. Religion, politique, développement et éthique de la paix en Afrique*, Ed. Le Potentiel, Kinshasa, 2008, p. 35-89.

victimes des viols et de leurs besoins. Les institutions religieuses doivent s'impliquer et contribuer de manière efficace et durable, étant donné la place importante qu'elles occupent dans l'imaginaire social congolais.

Résistance stratégique comme mode opératoire

La transformation radicale des rapports sociaux résulterait d'une résistance à la fois stratégique et créatrice, susceptible de *repenser le lien social*, de le renouer autrement et de (re)définir les notions de sacré, de sexualité et de pouvoir en tenant compte des contextes et des réalités situés dans le temps et dans l'espace. A ce sujet, l'image du filet dont il convient de relier le fil brisé semble intéressant.

Le sociologue Georg Simmel, en effet, définit la personne humaine comme étant avant tout un « être de liaison » capable de relier « le séparé », mais aussi capable de séparer « le relié³⁰ ». L'image du filet que propose le sociologue Elias illustre ce propos. La société, vue comme un filet, est constituée essentiellement par des liens, comme un réseau fait de plusieurs liaisons, toutes importantes pour l'ensemble. « Un filet est fait de multiples fils reliés entre eux. [...] et en même temps chaque fil forme, à l'intérieur de ce tout, une unité en soi ; il y occupe une place particulière et prend une forme spécifique³¹ ».

Tous ces liens reposent sur l'individu concret et situé, différent des autres. Il ne se trouve pas de lien isolé dans le vide et sans attache. Chaque fil est relié à l'autre et joue son rôle : permettre et faciliter les connexions. « Comme dans une étoffe où les fils sont entrecroisés, le risque est toujours que la rupture de l'un d'entre eux entraîne un effilochage et, progressivement, par la pression exercée à l'endroit de la faiblesse, la rupture des autres³² ».

Visiblement, pour retrouver la forme et l'équilibre du filet, la seule voie est de renouer le fil détruit, à l'intérieur même du filet, et donc de

³⁰ Cf. Paugam, S., *Op.Cit.*, p. 53

³¹ Paugam, S., *Op.Cit.*, p.10.

³² Ibid.

partir non pas de principes extérieurs, mais de ce fil brisé. La qualité de la forme finale du filet dépend de la manière dont le fil brisé est simplement renoué ou radicalement transformé.

Aux œuvres caritatives des religions pourraient s'ajouter le combat pour la transformation radicale des consciences et des pratiques sexistes, et pour la reconstruction de l'identité anthropologique et éthique de ces femmes congolaises profondément meurtries. La société les place dans une position de subordination et de dépendance dans laquelle s'enracinent la violence et les injustices sociales. Une telle transformation globale des sociétés exige aussi de redéfinir le rapport entre différents types de liens sociaux.

Aller à l'origine même de la Violence

Les violences et les viols résultent aussi du *déséquilibre ontologique radical*, ce déséquilibre étant provoqué, selon Kä Mana, par une triple rupture radicale entre culture africaine, société et Évangile. De telle sorte que les trois catégories essentielles des valeurs africaines, à savoir les valeurs fondatrices, régulatrices et donatrices, ne sont plus sources de vie, d'harmonie et de sens. Cette profonde rupture engendre un déséquilibre au niveau de l'être débouchant sur des conflits et des violences de toutes sortes dont les guerres et les viols. Pour sortir de cette impasse, il convient de retrouver avant tout *l'équilibre ontologique initial* en recréant le lien de la personne avec les valeurs vitales essentielles oubliées, qui sont pourtant à la fois sources de relations respectueuses de toute vie, d'orientations et de sens. Les oublier, c'est perdre des repères, et du coup se perdre soi-même dans un tourbillon et un vertige déséquilibrants.

Repenser le lien social

Chaque cas de viol constitue un fil qui est détruit, la femme violée étant une femme détruite dans ses liens individuels et collectifs. Se reconstruire passera nécessairement par le rétablissement du lien brisé et la reconnaissance de son être, de sa place, de son rôle, de sa dignité à l'intérieur même du tissu social.

Cette reconnaissance devrait établir le lien fondamental brisé par les effets du viol. Nous le comparons à ce qu'Alex Honneth appelle les trois formes du mépris. Celles-ci ont des liens avec l'intégrité physique de la femme, ses droits et sa valeur intrinsèque dans la société. L'atteinte à son intégrité physique se manifeste par la torture infligée à son corps avant, pendant et après le viol, laquelle détruit en elle la confiance. Devant les barbaries atroces qu'elle subit lors du viol, la femme victime se voit niée comme personne capable de disposer librement de son corps. Par rapport à l'exclusion juridique, la femme victime de viol se voit privée de ses droits de dire non ; le respect de soi est atteint. Et que dire de la dépréciation sociale ? La victime du viol est stigmatisée, isolée ; sa valeur, sa dignité et son honneur social sont atteints alors qu'elle assiste à l'impunité des agresseurs.

Un lien indéniable existe entre le viol, d'une part, et la sexualité, le sacré et le pouvoir, d'autre part. Chaque fois que l'humanité de l'autre est violée à répétition, sa dignité détruite, survient la violence qui peut être commise par une pensée, une action ou une institution. Établir l'*équilibre ontologique* à partir du contexte des femmes violées passe par des relations d'égalité et de justice. Pour dépasser le paradoxe religieux, D. Hervieu-Léger propose « « l'appropriation », « l'incorporation d'une dynamique, d'une création continue de la tradition à partir de l'expérience du présent ». Ce qui « brise le bouclage dogmatique entre la vérité reçue une fois pour toutes du passé et l'espérance autorisée³³ ».

Conclusion

Être vecteur de paix, de développement et de transformation radicale du lien social est une façon de résister au phénomène du viol des femmes comme arme de guerre, destructeur du lien social et religieux. Le tissu social n'existe que grâce à la vie, à l'action engageante et à la participation de chaque personne humaine. Dans cet article, c'est ce qui est considéré

³³ Hervieu-Léger,D., *Op.Cit.*, p. 34

comme une *résistance stratégique et créatrice*. Pour ce faire, il s'est agi d'abord de déceler combien le viol des femmes est destructeur du lien social et religieux. Ensuite, il a été question du paradoxe religieux et des conditions de possibilité pour le rétablissement du tissu social. Enfin, une résistance stratégique et créatrice a été proposée comme mode opératoire pour la transformation durable du *lien social*.

9. **FEMINICIDE: AN INSTRUMENT OF CONTROL OVER WOMEN'S BODY**

LUIZA E. TOMITA¹

Introduction

Feminicide is an issue that has earned relevance in Brazil for the increasing number of episodes in recent years. It has become an issue of extreme concern among women due to two factors: first, feminists struggle to build legislation and achieve public policies to fight against all types of gender violence and second, to assure punishment to transgressors, which was nonexistent until one or two decades ago. It was customary for men to kill their wives/partners and claim jealousy as a rationale to escape from any condemnation. However, due to feminists intense struggles, the laws against feminicide came into force in 1985 through law nr 13.104/2015, which changed article 121 of the Penal Code (Law Decree nº 2.848/1940), to consider feminicide as a qualifying circumstance for the crime of homicide. It is possible to claim that feminicide is the last instance of women's control by men: a control over life and death. The growing number of feminicides and the high maintenance of patterns of violence against women show the need for further changes: social, cultural, legal and political.

¹ Luiza Etsuko Tomita, born in São Paulo, is a teacher in Biblical Theology and Feminist Theology. She has a PhD in Systematic Theology from the Methodist University of São Paulo (UMESP). She was EATWOT's President from 2013 – 2018. She is part of the Permanent Commission of the WFTL.

Statistics of Violence Against Women in Brazil

A study by the University Institute of High International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland, indicates that more than half of the 25 countries with the largest cases of femicide are in Latin America and Caribbean. These numbers could be larger as, according to specialists, they are still registered as homicide and robbery, and not as femicide.² According to the UNO Women using the Brazilian Violence Map of 2015, published on April 8, 2016 in Brazil, the femicide rate is 4.8 to 100 thousand women or 13 daily female homicides – the fifth largest in the world according to the World Health Organization. From 2003 to 2013, the number of female victims increased from 3,937 to 4,762, i.e., more than 21% in one decade, and from this number 50,3% were by family members, with 33,2% by a husband/partner.

The first legislation that called the attention of the Brazilian society to the occurrence of intra-familial violence was Law Maria da Penha, enacted in August 2006. The story of Maria da Penha is like many other women's: she was a traditional housekeeper who suffered domestic violence for years. One day she was spanked by her husband in such a brutal way that she almost died. She was taken to the hospital where she stayed for many weeks and when she recovered she had lost the use of her legs. She proved to be a very brave woman as she started her activism in the feminist movements against violence which finally resulted in an important law which took her name: 'Maria da Penha'. At last violence against women was recognized as a human rights violation. Up to that moment this act was considered as just a cultural and juridical problem of the private sphere, with no punishment.

The Racist Prejudice against Black Women

It is important to also outline the intense work of the black Brazilian feminist movement³ which struggles against racism and gender violence.

² Diario do Sul, 09.12.2017, accessed Sept. 2, 2018 11:17h

³ We can mention here Sueli Carneiro, Nubia R. Moreira, Sonia Correa.

Racist prejudice is denied by the majority Brazilian population and black women have had to fight for better living conditions since post-abolishment days up to the present. Even when the feminist movement in the 1970s promoted a universal language of sisterhood, it did not consider racial differences. Only in the decade of the 1990s did black women inside the feminist movement insist on language that recognized their specific realities and raised a new banner on black womanism. The fight against racism by black women as they advocated for real social insertion in the existing movements, started questioning the existing inequalities among white and black feminists. This further questioned the universalist speech of citizenship that should have included them but which did not do so in reality as well as the calls for resistance against machismo.⁴

According to Sociologist Bruna Cristina Pereira,⁵ who coordinates the study group of Black Women at Brasilia University, racism is a factor of dehumanization of black people which also contributes to violence against women. It advocates that a certain color of woman is less human, can be undervalued, and because they are perceived to have a stronger body and thus not considered vulnerable, can be ill-treated with impunity. This means that black women are not only the main group of females in poverty in Brazil, but also because of racism they have less access to social services and are more exposed and vulnerable to violence.

The Map of Violence over the female public showed that between 2003 to 2013 the murder of black women increased 54% in ten years, from 1,864 to 2,875.⁶ A clear example of the prejudice against the black population happens in Santa Catarina, the State with the smallest black population (only 15% declare being “black” or “brown” in this region, according to

⁴ Valdenice José Raimundo, V. Gehlen, D. Almeida: *Mulher Negra: Inserção nos Movimentos Sociais Feminista e Negro*. Artigo internet <http://www.fundaj.gov.br/geral/observanordeste/valdenice.pdf>

⁵ Author of the book “Tramas e Dramas de Gênero e de Cor” July, 2007

⁶ . *Mulheres Negras sofrem mais que as brancas em SC* in Hora de Santa Catarina, Dia da Consciência Negra, 20.11.2017 internet access Sept. 1, 2018

IBGE – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) and where European culture is most valued. And maybe for this same reason the homicide of black women increased 133,4% from 2005 to 2015 in the State, a rate more than four times above the homicide of non-black women of 30,6% in the same period, according to the Violence Atlas of 2017.⁷ The increase of homicides in that population surpassed the national average of almost all the other federal states, except Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe.

In 2009 the National Survey by Home Sample (PNAD) did research about physical aggression and access to justice by black women and it was found that there is a lack of specific policies for black women. Black feminists, like Vanda Pinedo, activist of the Unified Black Movement in Santa Catarina,⁸ denounces that there's a hindrance to be able to recognize and state this at the Police Station due to the restrictions by the Police to give proper attention to black women and to consider them as victims. There is also the fact that these women have less access to information and difficulty in accessing protection mechanisms like public defense and the specialized police stations. For Pinedo, the present mechanisms help preserve white women's lives but not that of black women. Black women have to face public policies that enshrine racism as a whole and the institutional racism inside it. For Vanda Pinedo, the situation is even worse among women who are victims of domestic violence since maintaining silence about the abuse is a commonplace. These women suffer numerous traumas from racism, social exclusion, life in violent places, and domestic violence. Their silence is a result of their sense of shame in exposing all these factors and facing incrimination. When one thinks about it, they have been the recipients of all kinds of violence since the times of slavery⁹... things seem to have changed very little.

⁷ Study by the Institute of Applied Economy Research and the Brazilian Forum of Public Security

⁸ See *Mulheres Negras sofrem mais violência que as brancas em Santa Catarina* in Hora de Santa Catarina, Nov. 20, 2017 internet accessed Sept 1, 2018

⁹ See *Mulheres Negras sofrem mais que as brancas em SC, p.6*, in Hora de Santa Catarina, Dia da Consciência Negra, 20.11.2017, accessed Sept. 1, 2018

Feminicide and Jealousy

Mutilation of the female body is commonplace in femicide and happens mostly because of one thing: jealousy on the part of the partner as a result of understanding women as possessions. This generally happens when the woman separates (or wants to separate) from the husband and he does not accept the separation. One may think that this kind of crime happens mainly in low income, less educated couples, with women who have little access to legal protection or little knowledge of laws against gender violence. However, in fact, this crime happens among all kinds of people, including highly educated couples who are well aware of the reasons and consequences of gender violence and nevertheless enter into this spiral of violence. Some cases of femicide that have been accompanied by severe aggression can illustrate how they happen in a machismo culture.

The northeast region is known by this type of sexist, machismo culture. In March this year, a school teacher, Cenira Angélica Ventura, 39 years old, city of Viçosa, Alagoas, was murdered by her husband, Jose Ricardo, who started aggression inside the house and finished in the street outside the house, with at least 20 stab wounds by knife. She had been a teacher at the Municipal School Saint Joseph for 17 years and was very well considered among teachers and students.

Another case took place in Santa Catarina state (Southern Brazil), which was occupied by European immigrants (mainly German and Italian) in the last decades of 18th century and became a livestock farming region, which is considered the food barn of the country. All of the population there can afford good education and healthcare, but this is the second State in the country with the biggest number of femicides in 2016, second only to the state of Piaui (Northern Brazil), according to the 11th Brazilian Annual publication of Public Security. In the city of Biguaçu of Santa Catarina state on August 6, 2017, Viviane Monteiro, 35, was attacked with a knife several times by her husband, Isac da Costa, 32, in front of her two daughters of

3 and 16, who testified at the trial. The husband confessed to the crime giving the motive as jealousy and was condemned to 12 years in prison.

In another city of Santa Catarina, Blumenau, on July 25, 2018, Bianca Mayara Wachholz, 29, a designer, was murdered by Everton Balbinot de Souza, 31. Everton killed Bianca after their separation which had occurred 15 days before. Everton wanted her to come back, but she was afraid of his violent and aggressive behavior. She told friends that he used to spank and beat her since the beginning of the relationship and she had been advised to report it to the police station but was afraid of being killed if she did. On the day referenced above, Everton jumped over the walls to the house, found Bianca who ran into the bathroom to hide and shot her twice in her head.¹⁰

In Jaragua do Sul, Santa Catarina, on August 5, 2018, Andreia Araujo, was killed by her husband, Marcelo Kroin, after a party where they had several drinks. He attacked her, suffocated her, fell and had head trauma. She was 3 months pregnant and he cited jealousy as his reason for the crime.

In analyzing the cruel cases of feminicide we begin to understand that men believe they have possession over the body and life of their wives or girlfriends and we can conclude that they are a product of a sexist culture. One can perhaps also argue that popular music culture supports and contributes to this.

The Feminist Struggle against Feminicide

After decades of struggle, on March 8th, 2018, the Brazilian feminists achieved the “*National Guidelines to Investigate, Process and Judge the Violent Murder of Women in a Gender Perspective – Feminicide*”,¹¹ which was signed by the Brazilian Government and the United Nations Office for Human Rights. The aim of such a document is to assure that the

¹⁰ Notícias do Dia, SC, Accessed July 29, 2018 m 21:00h

¹¹ UNO: *Rate of Feminicides in Brazil is the fifth largest in the world; National Guidelines search for solution.* 12.04.2016. Accessed 4.3.2018

victims achieve human rights in justice, truth and memory. In Brazil, the femicide rate is 4.8 for 100 thousand women – the world's fifth largest according to the World Health Organization.¹² The National Guidelines try to eliminate the prejudice women suffer from sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, lesbophobia and other forms of inequality.

For Nadine Gasman, the UNO representative in Brazil,

“Femicide is a ruthless murder which is defined by the impossibility of defense of the victim, tortures, mutilations and abjection of body and memory. And in most of the times do not end with the murder. It is maintained by the impunity and difficulty of the public power to guarantee justice to the victims and the punishment of the aggressors”.¹³

Law 2015 typified the crime:

“UNO Women and the Brazilian government expect that the publication contributes to the implementation of the Femicide Law (13.104/2015) which altered the Brazilian Penal Code about this crime which is a homicide perpetrated with cruel measures against women with gender motivation. The release of these Norms wants to include the gender perspective as an initial hypothesis of the murders investigations.”¹⁴

According to the National Secretariat of Public Security of the Ministry of Justice, the Norms will promote training of police officers and experts to have a specialized vision. For Eleonora Menecucci, the Special Secretary of Women Policies of the Ministry for Women, for Racial Equality, Youth and Human Rights, “The Femicide Law represents a cultural change in

¹² Ibid, p. 2

¹³ Ibid, p.2, translation mine.

¹⁴ Ibid. translation mine.

a patriarchal society". She declared that the Government will promote sensitization at a national level so that all the states apply these Norms.¹⁵

In the new legislation, domestic and family violence, disregard of or prejudice toward women are described as elements of gender violence and are considered aspects of feminicide. The National Norms detail the motivations based in gender which may be behind violent episodes: feelings of possession and control over women; control over her body, desires and autonomy; limitations of her professional emancipation; treatment of women as sexual objects etc. The National Norms are based on a Model of Latin American Protocol of Women's Violent Murders Investigation by Gender Reasons. Brazil was chosen as a pilot-country for the adaptation of the international document and its incorporation to the National Norms. The selection criteria included the prevalence and relevance of violent murders of women for gender reasons in the nation, the capacity implementing the Norms in the criminal justice system, the previous existence of interinstitutional relationships among the partners, the technical capacity of the UNO Women office and the ACNUDH¹⁶ office to develop the Project in Brazil and the Austrian diplomatic representation, whose government supports the initiative.¹⁷

The Brazilian government participated in the conception of the document due to the efforts of the Politics Secretariat in the Ministry of Women, for Racial Equality, Youth and Human Rights, and the Ministry of Justice, coordinated by feminist sociologist Eleonora Menecucci.

Feminist Theology against Sexism and Gender Violence

We cannot speak about feminicide outside of the context of violence against women. In fact, violence against women is a framework where we find

¹⁵ Ibid. P.3

¹⁶ High Commissary of Human Rights of the United Nations

¹⁷ UNO: *Tax of feminicides in Brazil is the fifth largest in the world; National Guidelines search for solution.* 12.04.2016. Access 4.3.2018, p.4

abuse, rape, battering and feminicide as the worst types of gender violence. Feminists have shown that violence against women is a phenomenon that reveals the unequal relationship between genders in our society due to a social construction. This inequality leads to men exercising power over women in ways that also which women their right to control their own bodies. This exercise of power presupposes that men are the owners of women's bodies with complete and total sexual. Women should be under the control and protection of a certain man, otherwise she is considered to be available for everyone, including sexually. According to Ruether, women's rape is fundamentally an expression of hostility and disdain, and not an expression of sexual desire and attraction. What proves this assertion is the fact that in general rape is followed by violence and mutilation.¹⁸

The control over women's bodies implies the objectification of their body or consideration of their bodies as a mere merchandise, commodities. The woman's reduction to a body-object of man's use is imposed by a network of control which goes from the subtle to the most brutal. For example, in the fashion world where men control what women should wear or not and show hostility over women's bodies by a tyrannical sadism over her body image.¹⁹ Sexism is centered in a distorted reality where women are objectified and men's psyches are fed distorted images of relationships between men and women. The result of this distortion is the impossibility of an authentic relationship, as women are, in this case, unable to achieve an autonomous identity due to men's control over her being and body. On the other hand, men become unable to integrate in their own identity those repressed attributes which they project over women.

According to Schüssler Fiorenza, violence against woman should be located in a *continuum* of male power and control over women and children: this is not only physical violence but includes the cultural and

¹⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether. *Sexismo e Religião. Rumo a uma Teologia Feminista*. RS: Sinodal. 1993, p.147

¹⁹ Ibid, p.146-147

religious construction of docile female bodies and submissive female personalities. This kind of construction should not be reduced to abstract statistics nor to isolated facts, but should be understood and analyzed in structural, systemic terms. It is motivated by proprietary control ingrained in Western cultural, political and religious traditions. For Schüssler Fiorenza, Western society and family are not simply male dominated: they are not only patriarchal (ruled by the father), but kyriarchal (ruled by the master/lord/husband) because elite men, who have properties, have power and control over the subordinated who are dependent upon them.²⁰ Kyriarchy is, therefore, a pyramid of inter-structured oppression or a multiplicative system of violence that includes sexism, racism, poverty, cultural imperialism, homophobia, militarist colonialism, among others.²¹

In classical times, patriarchy was exercised by men of the elite who had the power of life and death over freely born women, children, slaves and servants of the house. We can find this situation during the Roman Empire and the Medieval Ages, and also in the texts of the First Testament like Judges, ch. 19, v.24. During modern democracy, we find a capitalist patriarchy where man has the right of physical control and legal power over women and children of "his" family but also of his race, class or nation. Schüssler Fiorenza calls this patriarchy a "colonialist kyriarchy". And violence against women constitutes the core of kyriarchal oppression, which is supported by multiplicative structures of control, exploitation and dehumanization. She calls this a heterosexist oppression which is multiplied by racism, poverty, cultural imperialism, war, militarist colonialism, homophobia and religious fundamentalism.²² She claims that violence against women can only be understood when analyzing it on the basis of this kyriarchal pyramid.

²⁰ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Ties that bind: Domestic Violence against Women," in Mary John Manzanar et al, eds. *Women Resisting Violence. Spirituality for Life*, New York: Orbis Books. 1996, p. 43

²¹ Ibid, p. 45

²² Ibid, pp.44-45

Guilt: Women as Scapegoats

Modern revolutions brought freedom to slaves and democracy based on the French Revolution tried to bring “liberation” to men and women. But why did it take so long for women to start fighting for their own liberation?

Violence against women has more often been produced and reproduced in places where religious teachings legitimate the inferior status of women, accusing them as guilty of sin and evil in the world. The internalization of guilt through religious and cultural teachings have been the main factors that succeed in “naturalizing” women’s subordination. Scapegoating is an antique from of stereotyping, produced by the sexist comprehension of the relation between men and women. The stereotypes related to gender violence are related to an imposition of an unjust burden on women, who are held accountable by the abuse and violence that they suffer, and the influence of religious gender stereotypes clearly has the tendency to use this in a way that maintains women’s subordination.

In Western European culture, two myths accuse women to be the originator of the evil in the world. One is the Pandora Greek myth and the other one is the Hebrew myth of Eve in Genesis. The latter had a bigger cultural impact since Christian theology spread it as divine revelation, even though for Judaism this story paled in comparison to the story of the people’s search for idols after being chosen as the People of God, according to Ruether.²³ Ruether points out that it was Pauline theology with its dualism between the New and the Old Adam that created the myth of Adam’s Fall. Pauline theology created a theology of sin to a dimension that was unknown in Judaism. For Judaism, there is a historical collective sin brought by cosmic powers but there is the human freedom to choose between good and evil. Later, the theology of Augustine and his successors, interpreted Adam’s fall as suppressing the human freedom

²³ Rosemary Radford Ruether. *Sexismo e Religião. Rumo a uma Teologia Feminista*. São Leopoldo, RS: Sinodal, 1993, p.140

to choose the good. Therefore, the crucifixion of Christ became the gift to return the possibility of human salvation and Eve, thus, became the scapegoat which would be the cause of Adam's fall. For this reason, all women, as Eve's daughters, inherit her sin of guilt!²⁴ The narrative of Genesis 2-3 has been considered, since Pauline theology and Scholastic teachings (Augustine and successors), the foundational myth of humanity's Fall; the patriarchal myth that legitimates man's power and control over women and reinscribes her inferiority and subordination.²⁵

Feminist Theology and the Religious Controversy

Feminist theologians have given diverse alternatives to overcoming the bible's texts of terror²⁶ for women, which try to legitimate women's subordination. Schüssler Fiorenza suggests we choose the strategy of resistance and change by exploring the contradictions between the religious-cultural kyriarchal politics of "femininity" on the one hand, and the religious-cultural emancipatory politics of meaning and self-worth in the eyes of God which is inscribed in Christian texts and traditions on the other. This strategy would be inscribed in a critical feminist theology of liberation which would contest the authority of the practices and discourses that advocate the politics of subordination and violence on theological grounds, empowering those victimized by kyriarchal oppression and the whole Christian community to believe in a God who is with us in our struggles to eradicate violence and to foster self-determination, dignity and well-being for all.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid, p.140-141

²⁵ See Charles ESS, "Reconsidering Biblical Concepts. Reading Adam and Eve: Re-Vision of the Myth of Woman's subordination to Man," in Carol J. Adams & Marie M. Fortune, eds., *Violence against Women and Children. A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. New York: Continuum, 1995, pp.92-120

²⁶ Reference to Phyllis Trible's book, "Texts of Terror: Literary Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives," Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

²⁷ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Ties that bind: Domestic Violence against Women," in Mary John Manazan et al, eds. *Women Resisting Violence. Spirituality for Life*, New York: Orbis Books. 1996, p. 52

Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite²⁸ argues that instead of having to choose between remaining Christian or leaving an abusive situation, women should try to disrupt the cultural political inscriptions of the “feminine” politics of meaning. Abandoning their religious affiliation would deepen the disempowerment of religious women. Instead, she advocates a feminist theological strategy that outlines the alternative “liberating” traditions inscribed in Christian scriptures and theologies such as Lk 4:18.20 or Gal 3:28 and Mt 20:25-26 and its theological argumentation of the incarnation of Christ: God’s identification with human suffering or God’s being on the side of the oppressed as a way to confront a sacrificial Christology or negative texts such as Eph 5:22.²⁹ For Letty Russell, the authoritative tradition varies for each community as to scripture, tradition, reason and spiritual experience. In a similar manner, feminist theologies are also formed out of communities of faith in a struggle to make the connections with the various forms of tradition, choosing what is life-affirming for them as women of faith.³⁰

Christianity should be a religion of love, according to Stella Baltazar, God’s word is a liberating experience, and for women it should be good news in their exploitative and violent situation, by giving up all meaningless exercises and engaging in a liberative praxis. Therefore, women should liberate the Scripture from its patriarchal perspective by means of a self-determinative and liberative praxis to overcome the evil. She advises re-interpreting biblical passages to reclaim the hidden treasures, such as in Luke 10,38-42 when Jesus enters the house of Martha and Mary and tries to free Martha in a way, yet within a struggle of a patriarchal mind-set.³¹

²⁸ Ibid, p. 52

²⁹ Ibid, p. 52

³⁰ Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round. Feminist Interpretation of the Church*. Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, p. 39

³¹ Stella Baltazar, “Domestic Violence in Indian Perspective,” In Mary John Mananzan, et al., eds., *Women Resisting Violence, Spirituality for Life*, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, p. 60.

Spirituality of Resistance

Feminist theologians from all corners of the planet advocate the importance of building a spirituality of resistance, based on a spirituality for life and justice. In this way, it is fundamental to take into consideration women's cultural backgrounds. For Western Christian feminists, for example, it is difficult to understand the cultural practices of women in Africa, Asia, Latin American or from Islam. It seems that women from the south are pressed from all sides: either by men of their culture who cannot understand woman's equality and body integrity and use new Western practices as a form of a post-colonialism domination or by Western feminists who cannot understand the significance of differing community practices as important to the preservation of the women in these communities. For Isabel Apawo Phiri, an African theologian, the interface between Christianity and Africa as practiced in South Africa is visible because the majority of African Christians are still influenced by the beliefs and practices of African traditional religions, especially in times of crisis. She gives the example of *sangomas*,³² the South African healers, who usually have a flow of beliefs and practices between the Christianity and their traditional religions. She mentions that African women theologians have declared that African theology needs to be critical of its sources so that they should not be seen as promoting the oppression of women.³³

For an Asian feminist theologian, Hisako Kinukawa, the participation in an Asian feminist community of faith, a multi-logue environment shows that religions and their spiritualities are very much alike in their patriarchal

³² Phiri describes the female *sangomas* as playing a prominent role in bringing spiritual, social and psychological healing, especially to women, in South Africa. Their stories combine their African traditional religious and Christian heritages, which they draw from with ease. In Isabel A. Phiri, *Dealing with the Trauma of Sexual Abuse*, in PHIRI, Isabel A., NADAR, Sarojini (eds). *African Women, Religion, and Health. Essays in honor of Mercy Amba E. Oduyoye*, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2006, p.125

³³ Isabel A. Phiri, "Dealing with the Trauma of Sexual Abuse," in PHIRI, Isabel A., NADAR, Sarojini (eds). *African Women, Religion, and Health. Essays in honor of Mercy Amba E. Oduyoye*, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2006, p.116-117

structures and teachings, as women in any religion have suffered from subservient roles and non-person positions. Therefore, they are driven to create new emancipatory theologies from a very critical stance, in new inter-religious and inter-cultural multi-logues which should enable them to live in a liberating feminist theology.³⁴

The sharing of stories and feminist practices can lead us to a cultural transformation and be a way to resist patriarchal violence against women. In South Africa, healing practices are widespread because of frequent rapes and trauma due to violence against women and also HIV/AIDS. The healers (usually women) play a prominent role in bringing spiritual, social and psychological healing. Their stories combine their African traditional religions and Christian heritages, in a way that they probably mix religious traditions.³⁵

A Final Word

This is an issue that is ongoing and will not easily or readily be resolved, therefore we can only say where we stand at the moment. As an activist in the feminist movement for years, I am of the opinion that the feminist fight for violence against women has to bring together public policies along with the search of spirituality and solidarity among women from different cultures and religions: an integrity of our body and spirit.

Resistance can also involve the reconstruction of our wholeness and the integrity of our body. For example, we have to transform some Western ideals, especially the ideal of women's beauty as the "delicate, slim woman" (represented by the Barbie doll), which is a class ideal. R. Trailer-Spiritu writes that to claim the body as good and beautiful we need appropriate hermeneutics to re-read our religious tradition that has passed on to us

³⁴ Hisako Kinukawa, "A Milestone of Feminist Theology in Japan," in *Journal of Women and Religion* – Vol. 13, 1995, by the Center of Women and Religion. Berkeley, CA, US, pp.42-43

³⁵ Isabel A. Phiri, "Dealing with the Trauma of Sexual Abuse," in PHIRI, Isabel A., NADAR, Sarojini (eds). *African Women, Religion, and Health. Essays in honor of Mercy amba E. Oduyoye*, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2006, p.125

ambiguous messages about the body, in particular about women's bodies. She says: "*Women must claim their right to bodily integrity (including sexual integrity) and to decisions concerning their bodies*". This includes overcoming the use and abuse of women's bodies, including their ownership.³⁶ The violence against woman must be broken by a feminist theology of resistance that transforms the relationship between men and women by creating and establishing the end of a hierarchy of power between genders.

³⁶ Reinhold Trailer-Spiritu. "Violence against Women's Bodies," in PHIRI, Isabel A., NADAR, Sarojini (eds). *African Women, Religion, and Health. Essays in honor of Mercy amba E. Oduyoye*, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2006, p.75

10.

TRANSFORMING THE IDEA(L) OF JUSTICE: READING STORIES BY INDIGENOUS WOMEN AS A FEMINIST SETTLER

ÉLISE COUTURE-GRONDIN¹

In October 2015, a group of indigenous women living in the region of Val-d'Or (a town 500km north-west of Montreal, Quebec) publicly denounced physical and sexual abuses by police officers.² These allegations were collected by journalists who were initially investigating the disappearance, in April 2014, of an Algonquin woman, Sindy Ruperthouse. While asking questions to community members, the journalists received a daunting number of unexpected testimonies about systemic abuse of indigenous women in the area at the hands of the police. After the report was broadcast, indigenous women from other cities (Maniwaki, Sept-Îles and Schefferville) contacted the journalists to share their own stories, revealing a widespread phenomenon.³

¹ Élise Couture-Grondin completed her doctoral degree in Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. She published "Analyse antiraciste du rapport au territoire, à l'autre et à l'écriture dans *Aimititau! Parlons-nous!*" *Voix Plurielles*, 13.2 (2016): 127-149, and she co-wrote with Denise Couture, "An Antiracist, Ecofeminist and Theological Perspective on Abortion for a Sustainable Life and a Sustainable Choice," *Religion, Human Dignity and Liberation*, Ed. Gerald M. Boodoo, São Leopoldo: Editora Oikos, 2016, p. 73-83.

² On the national broadcaster in the reportage "Abus de la Sûreté du Québec: des femmes brisent le silence," presented by *Enquête*, October 22, 2015.

³ See « Après Val-d'Or, d'autres femmes autochtones brisent le silence ».

The women who decided to speak up uncovered the inability of the white legal system to provide them with security, equal treatment, and justice. When, a year later, in November 2016, they learned that the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions had decided to drop charges against police officers, there was a general sense of frustration and indignation. The absence of prosecution revealed that indigenous women's testimonies could be discredited or discarded for not being strong enough to sustain formal accusations in the justice system. Can the settler justice system hear indigenous women's voices when they "break the silence"? Are their testimonies able to direct the priorities for reparatory justice in a time when the government of Canada claims to engage in reconciliation? Finally, how do we all hear testimonies by indigenous women when they expose the violence of colonialism?

These questions are crucial to me, a settler feminist scholar in the field of indigenous literary studies, and I engage them in my work with indigenous women's literary texts, particularly first-person narratives. In what follows, I refer in particular to an autobiography by An Antane Kapesh (Innu) published in 1976 and a testimony by Rigoberta Menchú (Maya Quiche) published in 1983. While these texts depict how colonial injustices and violence affect the authors' lives, contributing to raising settler readers' awareness, I wonder how I can read these texts in ways that underline the texts' visions of justice. These texts, published before truth commissions were established in Canada and Guatemala, play an active role in the field of justice, notably by activating indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and polities,⁴ and also by establishing relationships with the readers. The women of Val d'Or's testimonies did not lead to prosecutions but they were listened to by a large audience of indigenous and non-indigenous people. One direct effect of this, was to encourage other women to denounce aggressions by the police. In addition, while achieving justice through the Canadian legal

⁴ See Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*, Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011; and Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations. Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2013.

system is crucial, indigenous women's voices play a role in challenging the legal system's structure which is rooted in colonialism. In a similar way, I believe that one impact of reading testimonies or autobiographies by indigenous women could be to transform the readers' idea(l) of justice.

Weaving Stories of Justices

I heard about the denunciations mentioned above while doing research on An Antane Kapesh's book written forty years ago.⁵ In her bilingual (Innu/French) autobiography, *Eukuan nin matshimanitu Innu-ishkueu / Je suis une maudite Sauvagesse* [I am a damned savage], she dedicates a chapter to a description of all types of abuses of Innu people by the police, including an episode in which she saw her son beaten by two police officers. She writes, "When police officers torture us like this, they fear no one: among all the government officials, there is really nobody we can trust to protect and defend us, the Innu."⁶ Reading her text today makes it impossible to deny ongoing systemic discrimination in justice institutions. In other words, we cannot say that the events of Val-d'Or constitute an exception or that Kapesh's book describes injustices occurring in the past. Rather, watching the women of Val-d'Or's news report, I witnessed ongoing systemic colonial violence operating both in the form of physical and sexual abuses and in the ways indigenous women's voices are discredited.

Literary texts, like Kapesh's, play a role in the field of justice notably by providing spaces in which to reimagine relationships altogether, that is to say, by reimagining them on another basis than that of the justice

⁵ An Antane Kapesh was born in 1926 near Kuujjuaq and lived there until the creation of Maliootenam, a reserve close to Sept-îles, in 1953. She lived in Lac-John and was chief of the community of Matimekush-Lac-John from 1965 to 1967. She passed away in 2004.

⁶ An Antane Kapesh, *Eukuan nin matshimanitu Innu-ishkueu/Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, Chicoutimi: Les Éditions du CAAS, 2015 [1976], 130. All quotations from this book are my own translation, original in footnotes: "Quand les policiers nous torturent de cette façon, ils ne craignent personne: parmi tous ces fonctionnaires qui ont été affectés à ce poste, il n'y a vraiment personne de confiance pour nous protéger et nous défendre, nous les Innu."

system and sovereignty of the Canadian state. Throughout her book, Kapesh explains that the Innu have their own laws and legal systems that show them how to live and inform their own vision of justice. A crucial message is that, before the imposition of white literacy and white laws,⁷ “[they] were more civilized and [their] life was more acceptable.”⁸ From this position, she establishes a particular relationship to settler readers, asking them to reconsider their own understanding of justice.

Underlining Kapesh’s claims about the value of Innu justice matters, so that we do not, as readers, focus exclusively on the injustices described. Rather, she is an author using literary strategies to communicate her pain and her hope to different audiences from a strong position as an Innu woman. Eve Tuck criticizes a dominant methodology in the social sciences, which consists of establishing “harm or injury in order to achieve reparation.”⁹ She warns against this research paradigm, which may have long-term effects for indigenous subjects to think of themselves as “broken.”¹⁰ For her, this type of research often conceives of changes as coming from outside communities rather than from the inside. She states that communities are more than stories of injustices and that “this incomplete story [of damage] is an act of aggression.”¹¹ Her proposition is not to deny past and ongoing injustices, but to redirect attention to “the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities.”¹²

Violence against indigenous women is a central aspect of colonialism. The settler projects of Christianizing and civilizing, disrupted intergenerational rela-

⁷ Kapesh uses the term “kauapishit” in Innu, which is translated to “le Blanc” [the White or the white (man)].

⁸ Kapesh, p. 132. “À l’époque où nous n’étions encore jamais allés devant les tribunaux, nous étions plus civilisés et notre vie était plus convenable. Ce n’est ni la prison ni les tribunaux qui nous ont civilisés.”

⁹ Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: Letter to the Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79.3 (2009): p. 409-427; p. 413.

¹⁰ Tuck, p. 409.

¹¹ Tuck, p. 416.

¹² Tuck, p. 417.

tionships through education and interpersonal relationships within indigenous communities and families by putting the man at the head of the family and by prioritizing the man's participation in social and political life over women's roles.¹³ The Indian Act established patrilineality, which means that women who "married out" could no longer pass on their status to their children, despite the closeness of the relationships they hold with their communities. Because these policies affected Indigenous communities for generations, indigenous women have also had to face discrimination within their own communities.

On the other hand, many Indigenous women have dis-identified with feminism, particularly when feminist politics have been claimed based on the experience of white women. For Joanne Barker, this dis-identification is a featuring characteristic of indigenous women's politics.¹⁴ In turn, Paula Gunn Allen speaks of the "red roots of white feminism" saying that indigenous modes of relationships and governance have inspired settlers' dreams for liberation. She claims, "We as feminists must be aware of our history on this continent."¹⁵ Reading Kapesh and Menchú makes me aware of our history on this continent, not only of our history of violence, but also of the history of the indigenous peoples who were living in this territory long before settlers arrived and of their history of contact that differs from the colonial history that is usually taught in Canada. For me, a feminist literary analysis from a settler position is a way to reinscribe *our* bodies in the history of the land as narrated by indigenous women, a narration that is not new but has been invisibilized:

The experiences and intellectual contributions of Indigenous women are not on the margins; we have been an invisible presence in the center, hidden by the gendered logics of

¹³ Joanne Barker, "Gender, Sovereignty, and the Discourse of Rights in Native Women's Activism," *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 7.1 (2006): p. 127-161; p.132.

¹⁴ Joanne Barker, "Indigenous Feminisms," Ed. José Antonio Lucero, Dale Turner, and Donna Lee VanCott, *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous People's Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013; p. 2.

¹⁵ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop. Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions: with a new preface*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1992; p. 214.

settler colonialism for over 500 years [...] there cannot be feminist thought and theory without Native feminist theory.¹⁶

In similar ways, Andrea Smith contends that indigenous women's "theological imagination then becomes central to envisioning the world we would actually want to live in;"¹⁷ in doing so, they "further theologize possibilities of alternative forms of governance for the world."¹⁸ Indigenous women's writing, therefore, has not only been critical of the exclusion of their voices in indigenous self-determination and feminist movements, but they have been at the center of how these movements have articulated their goals.

Stories of justice by indigenous women are hard to read because they are rooted in indigenous epistemologies that risk being misunderstood by readers. Gunn Allen argues, "the study of non-Western literature poses a problem for Western readers, who naturally tend to see alien literature in terms that are familiar to them, however irrelevant those terms may be to the literature under consideration."¹⁹ For Lee Maracle, literary creation is sacred and entails spirit-to-spirit relationships. However, these visions are not to be appropriated and to be removed from their context of specific politics and cultural meaning:

The fact that all things possess spirit, creation is sacred, the human experiences oneness with all creation, and transformation is integral to being alive—all this was simplistically applied to all circumstances, rather than explored in the context of the body politics and culture of Indigenous people.²⁰

¹⁶ Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formations* 25.1 (2013): p. 8–34; p.14.

¹⁷ Andrea Smith, "Dismantling the Master's House with the Master's Tools: Native Feminist Liberation Theologies," Ed. Kwok Pui-lan, *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women's Theology*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010; p. 82.

¹⁸ Smith, p. 79.

¹⁹ Gunn Allen, p. 54.

²⁰ Lee Maracle, *Memory Serves. Oratories*, Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2015; p. 171-172.

Alternative types of relationships in indigenous women's writing are not timeless, backward or ideal, but place-based, complex, multifaceted and political. When we read these texts as settlers, we need to challenge and take distance with the colonial habits that mark our perspectives, while acknowledging that we cannot appropriate indigenous visions as our own.

Andrea Smith discusses Vine Deloria Jr.'s distinction between Christianity and Indigenous spirituality, in which the former is "a temporally rather than a spatially based tradition (that is, it is not tied to a particular land base, but can seek converts from anywhere)."²¹ Reading as settlers coming from Christian traditions we have to be careful in not imposing a justice vision from above, as progressive as we might imagine it to be, and not situating indigenous women's voices in a colonial temporal framework in which these voices come to raise our awareness so that "we" can enact justice. Rather, I take the text as a place, a significant place created by indigenous authors and which activates alternative relationships. While reading texts by indigenous women that denounce the violence of colonialism, it is important to draw attention to what the texts do in affirmative ways. Although texts like Kapesh's and Menchú's speak to a settler audience, they are rooted in their own epistemologies, ontologies, polities, and spirit-to-spirit relationships. And the power of their texts is surely greater than what I can do with it from my position as a settler feminist scholar; I can only work at establishing good relationships to these texts from that position.

Menchú: Justice Grounded in a Millennium-Old Culture

My training in literary studies started in Hispanic Studies. As part of the curriculum, we read *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, a testimony by a Maya Quiche woman who narrated her story to anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos-Debray in 1982.²²

²¹ Smith, p. 74.

²² Rigoberta Menchú, Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, ed, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*, Barcelona: Argos Vergara, 1983.

In her testimony, Rigoberta Menchú exposed the violence of the Guatemalan regime against the Maya population during what was called a “civil war,” lasting from 1964 to 1996.²³ The Commission for Historical Enlightenment (1996–1999) recognized the violence of the regime as genocide. Menchú describes massacres, torture and rapes. The first time I read it, I did not see how the text presented an Indigenous woman’s voice about reparatory justice, but I was shocked at the descriptions of extreme violence in Guatemala. When I realized, a few months later, how little I knew about the violence of colonization in Canada and that I had decided to engage in research on indigenous women’s writing, I came back to Menchú’s text. I understood then that the violence she describes is not only the acute violence of an authoritarian regime, but also a colonial and gender violence that touches the North as well.

In my current reading of the text, I propose to be careful not to situate injustice as characterizing Menchú’s narration while justice is in the hands of the reader from the North (North-America, the U.S. and Canada) who feels empathy, wants to move into action and benevolently help. On the one hand, *violence is not only located in the South* (South and Central America, Mexico), and her testimony pushes readers from the North to reflect on their own position. On the other hand, *justice is also located in the South*. Menchú’s text enacts justice by reaching out to the audience and by participating, on the epistemological level, in discourses about difference, indigeneity, incommensurability, violence and peace.

Although what first astonishes the non-indigenous reader may be the depiction of violence and human rights abuses, the passages about cultural practices are as central and provide crucial hints concerning Menchú’s strategies to reach out to the non-indigenous audience. Menchú describes her life in her community of Chimel, including ceremonies of birth, wedding

²³ The term “civil war” was used to justify the violence of their interventions through the rhetoric of subversive groups in the country. However, the Commission of Historical Enlightenment distinguishes the violations of human rights, committed by the government or its agents, and the facts of violence, committed by the guerrillas. The report concludes that the government was responsible for 93% of the violence and that the guerrillas were responsible for 3%. Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico. *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*, Guatemala, 1999, p. 324.

and death, to show the readers that she is part of a millennium-old culture. For instance, Menchú invokes “the laws of the Ancestors”²⁴ mentioning that her Ancestors “were not sinners; they could not kill”²⁵ and they “would always ask for permission to everything that exists in order to use it or to eat it or anything. And now this no longer exists.”²⁶ The reference to these laws makes clear that the genocide is more than physical; it involves the extermination of another culture, a culture despised because it would never engage in such extermination itself. In the chapter on the ceremony of birth, Menchú notes, “the custom in my culture makes us respect everyone, yet we have never been respected.”²⁷ These passages contrast with the violence of colonial domination, gender abuses, and state repression; they suggest that she wants the readers to become aware of more than the abuses of human rights committed by the regime from the 1960s to the 1980s.

While she asserts the value of her culture, Menchú uses the image of the secret throughout her narration to underline that she keeps information from the reader. She writes,

But I need a long time to narrate [the stories] of my people because it cannot be understood easily. Of course, here, in my narration, I think that I give a picture of it. However, I am still hiding my identity as Indigenous. I am hiding what I consider that nobody knows, not even an anthropologist or an intellectual, although they have a lot of books, they are not able to discern all our secrets.²⁸

²⁴ Menchú, p. 84, “Leyes de los antepasados.”

²⁵ Menchú, p. 93, “ellos no fueron pecadores, no sabían matar.”

²⁶ Menchú, p. 93, “Y dicen, nuestros antepasados nunca pasaron por alto que había que pedirle permiso a todo ser que existe para utilizarlo y para poder comer y todo eso. Y eso ya no existe.”

²⁷ Menchú, p. 28, “Muchas veces la costumbre en nuestra cultura nos ha hecho que nosotros respetemos a todos, sin embargo a nosotros nunca nos han respetado.”

²⁸ Menchú, p. 271, “Pero yo necesito mucho tiempo para contar sobre mi pueblo porque no se entiende así. Claro, aquí, en toda mi narración yo creo que doy una imagen de eso. Pero, sin embargo, todavía sigo ocultando mi identidad como indígena. Sigo ocultando lo que yo considero que nadie sabe, ni siquiera un antropólogo, ni un intelectual, por más que tenga muchos libros, no saben distinguir todos nuestros secretos.”

Revealing these “secrets” would risk the appropriation by the “other,” but keeping them also seems to encourage discrimination. Menchú wants the reader to understand the double bind, and reveals the site of silence as one of resistance:

A priest arrives at our villages and all of us Indigenous people close our mouths [...] But when we are among ourselves, we know how to discuss, how to think, and how to judge. What happens is that, because they’ve never given us space to talk, to judge and to take into account our opinions, we also just don’t want to open our mouths.²⁹

The silence in the narration, represented through the repetition of the trope of the “secret,” has to be read as a literary and political strategy to keep the reader at a distance and to affirm the complexity of indigenous ways of life, which remains incommensurable to non-indigenous readers.

The secrets, as a form of resistance, have been passed on from generation to generation: “[our Elders] say, the obligation of the parents is to keep all the secrets until the last, the last generations, so that we do not give the Ladinos³⁰ our secrets, that we do not teach the Ladinos the Ancestors’ tricks.”³¹ They are also based on the community’s protocols for sharing knowledge. Secrets are the knowledge that pertains to the community, and they entail different levels of wisdom: what cannot be revealed to the Ladinos, what can or cannot be shared between parents and children,

²⁹ Menchú, p. 196, “Llega un cura a nuestras aldeas, todos los indígenas nos tapamos la boca [...] Pero cuando estamos entre nosotros los indígenas, sabemos discutir, sabemos pensar y sabemos opinar. Lo que pasa es, que como no nos han dado el espacio de palabra, no nos han dado el espacio de hablar, de opinar y de tomar en cuenta nuestras opiniones, nosotros tampoco hemos abierto la boca por gusto.”

³⁰ The Ladinos are descendants of Spanish people living in Guatemala. Often mixed-raced, they differ from indigenous peoples by culture, language, and position of power.

³¹ Menchú, p. 93, “Dicen, la obligación de los padres es guardar todos sus secretos hasta las últimas, las últimas generaciones, para no darles sus secretos a los ladinos, para no enseñarles a los ladinos los trucos de los antepasados”

what is shared by an Elder to one person, who then becomes responsible for transmitting the wisdom to the next generation. In her description of the ceremony of death, Menchú explains that, when the Elders know that they will die, they choose one person close to them “to make the last recommendations and transmit, at the same time, the secrets of our Ancestors and of how to behave well within the Indigenous community and in the presence of the Ladino.”³² Menchú’s father had told her that failing to preserve the secrets through this protocol would be like “assassinating the Ancestors.”³³ The secrets remind the readers of the distance between them and the narrator, which is even more important when we consider the habit of readers from the North, derived from the autobiographical genre, to assume that the narrator of a personal story will be accessible and sincere.

Nevertheless, Menchú does not reveal the “secret” of genocide in order for the readers to be centered on themselves. In addition, she chooses not to reveal the secrets of her people because she wants the readers to remain in their location, without crossing the lines through appropriation, misunderstanding or paternalism. Menchú’s literary strategy points to a paradox that readers must confront: when we try to come closer we get further away; but by respecting distance we come closer. The issue arises when “coming closer” means to react to the text through the urge to help or know or the desire to identify with Menchú’s pain and struggle. For me, respecting distance means being in relationship with her through the text. The difficulty lies in defining what respect means concretely in the readers’ relationship to the text: readers have to occupy their position depending on whether they are a reader from the North, a settler, Ladino, non-indigenous and they cannot just occupy their position as such without putting it into question and without reaching out to Indigenous peoples.

³² Menchú, p. 226, “para hacerle las últimas recomendaciones y transmitirle, a la vez, el secreto de sus antepasados y también trasmitirle su propia experiencia, sus reflexiones. Los secretos, las recomendaciones de cómo hay que comportarse en la vida, ante la comunidad indígena, ante el ladino.”

³³ Menchú, p. 213-214.

Thinking my relationship to the texts through incommensurability

As I write about these books, I do not seek to know or to grasp the texts' meaning, nor do I read them in order to understand the Innu or Maya Quiche cultures. In fact, both authors are careful in revealing aspects of their own ways of life. Menchú describes different ceremonies, but also states that she keeps secrets from the readers and that she cannot reveal everything to them. Kapesh, who was raised by her parents in the woods, does not describe her life as it was before, but describes what is closer to her at the moment which is the colonial impingement on her own parental responsibilities towards her children. As a reader, I reflect on my relationship to the texts from my own position, marked by fighting ignorance. I have much to learn about colonial dynamics and about how to relate, how to act and read differently. Different scholars contend that reading indigenous writing is unsettling for settlers.³⁴ The texts I analyze are challenging not only because they present a difference (different ways of thinking and seeing or different expressions of spirituality) but because they require readers to change their ways of *relating* to their difference, that is to say, to challenge their views about how justice is made when relating to these "alternative" visions.

Kapesh: Justice as Truth

In Canada, the residential school system came with a vision of "sacred" justice, in which it was for the good of the "savage people" that they were converted to Christianity and civilized. This vision relies on the settler belief that they knew what was best for everyone. Throughout her

³⁴ See, among others, Gunn Allen; Helen Hoy, *How Should I Read These? Native Women Writers in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001; and Sarah Hunt, "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept." *Cultural Geographies* 21.1 (2014): 27–32.

book, Kapesh insists, “the white (man) does not tell the truth.”³⁵ When the school was constructed in 1953, the Innu were misled to believe that education would be beneficial to their children who would then become priests, doctors, or engineers. Kapesh recounts:

When we saw its construction, we never thought that this school would make us lose our culture and we never imagined that later it would be the source of a miserable life for us. When they built the school, they said all kinds of positive things and they presented all kinds of good things. They proceeded this way, at first, to please us.³⁶

Kapesh writes as a mother about how her life was changed by the colonization of her land and the disruption of her relationships with her children. In the course of forty years, she saw the arrival of the white people who came to exploit the iron ore in the region, forced the Innu to settle down and educated the Innu children in white culture. In the 1970s, after having forced the Innu to settle down, Kapesh witnessed a change in their vision of the Innu culture: “Today, we often hear the white (man) say: ‘The Indian should be proud of the Indian culture.’ *I don’t believe the white (man) when he says that* because he is the one who buried our Innu culture and our language.”³⁷ The author is distrustful of white people’s good intentions and weary of paternalism:

³⁵ Kapesh, 153, “Le blanc ne dit pas la vérité.”

³⁶ Kapesh, 107. “À l’époque où nous vivions dans le bois, nous les Innu, on nous a construit une école. C’était en 1953. Quand nous l’avons vu se construire, jamais nous n’avons cru que cette école nous ferait perdre notre culture innu et jamais nous n’avons pu concevoir qu’elle serait source de vie misérable pour nous plus tard. Quand on a pensé nous construire une école, on nous a dit toutes sortes de bonnes choses et on nous a présenté toutes sortes de belles choses. On a procédé de cette façon au début, seulement pour nous contenter.”

³⁷ Kapesh, p. 112, emphasis added, “Aujourd’hui nous entendons souvent le Blanc affirmer: ‘L’Indien doit être fier lui aussi de sa culture indienne.’ Je ne crois pas le Blanc quand il dit cela car c’est lui qui a enterré notre culture et notre langue innu.”

I can no longer hear the foreigner say that he is my brother, I have had enough of the white way of life. During the twenty years in which I have lived in the same place, here at Lake-John, our house was wretched, I endured all sorts of ordeals and my children were corrupted in vain.³⁸

Her knowledge of colonial deception enables her analysis of white people's shallow view of cultural recovery twenty years later. When the white people include Innu lessons in school, Kapesh sees that this decision is only meant "to please [them]" (*Sau* 111), since, she explains, the lessons are for one hour a week starting in fourth or fifth grade. The hypocrisy of the settlers when they arrived on her land is mirrored, in the repetition of the phrase "to please us," by the hypocrisy of the white people who are keen on preserving the "culture."

Kapesh herself does not present her culture in the book but instead denounces the multiple aspects of cultural genocide. Her book is like a catalogue of injustices, describing the violence of forcing the Innu to settle down, of educating children in residential schools, of limiting hunting and fishing practices, of selling alcohol, of exploiting the territory, of imposing a system of justice and exercising discrimination in its application, and all the while, writing a version of history that erases Indigenous agency. When I read Kapesh, I feel indignation and I want to be on her side. I can hardly identify with the settlers that she describes, partly because I see my engagement in reading her text and in dismantling colonial dynamics as differentiating me from 'them,' the settlers. But Kapesh also states that she is weary of the white people saying that they want to be on her side, because she does not trust them. This forces me to face the fact that Kapesh does not trust settler readers; she does not trust me. This is not a personal matter between Kapesh and me, but rather a structural

³⁸ Kapesh, p. 148, "Moi, je ne peux plus entendre l'étranger me dire qu'il est mon frère, j'en ai assez de la vie de Blanc. Pendant les vingt années où j'ai habité au même endroit ici au lac John, notre maison était lamentable, j'ai eu toutes sortes d'épreuves inutilement et mes enfants ont été corrompus vainement."

relationship that makes me understand the difficulty of embodying my position as settler. Kapesh does not ask me to do justice in the form of acting to help her, but rather to understand my place in a system that was constructed upon domination, lies, and violence.

While I want to imagine what justice could look like, what an ethical reading could look like, Kapesh speaks as a mother from what she knows and what she has experienced. She seems to have no desire to imagine how I could read her text ethically or how we could relate in the future. There are no relationships between settlers and Innu, in Kapesh's book, that are not shaped by paternalism, except the one that the author establishes with the readers, because she does not invert the power relation by telling settler readers what they should do (how they should read). While Kapesh speaks as a mother, we should not understand her role as a woman through an abstract notion of motherhood, linked to the image of the Mother Earth or mother of all. This image fixes the significance of women's roles into an idealized comprehension of their contributions to communities and seems to give everyone access to her teaching as an Innu mother. The fact that Kapesh addresses her role in the education and transmission of knowledge to the next generation, and that she talks about her affective bonds with her children is significant in the context of colonialism, in which indigenous women have been denied their political and public status, as well as their most intimate bonding with their children, their parents, their family members, their friends, and their own bodies. While the value of an Innu education has been generally belittled, as have the capacities of Innu mothers to raise their children adequately, thinking that Kapesh can teach settler readers as a mother would enact a form of appropriation, which entails taking these teachings out of context to the service of settlers. In sum, Kapesh cannot be a mother to her children because of colonial management; she cannot be a "mother" either to settlers who would like to learn from her Innu knowledge.

Kapesh, indeed, takes back her position as a mother offering teachings to her children or to the next generations of Innu children, not about her past

life, but about colonialism. This new type of intergenerational communication envisions an Innu readership for books written in Innu which does not quite exist yet. In the preface, “Language travels” [Le voyage du langage], she contends, “In my book, there is no white speech.” Kapesh moves across boundaries, not to occupy a white space (the city, the book) but to create an Innu space from where to speak up. In doing so, she contests the colonial imprint on her that made her sedentary, marked by the limits of the reserve and by the categorization of the book as a “white” mode of expression.

The last chapter, “How will the white (man) consider us in the future?” [Comment le Blanc nous considérera-t-il à l’avenir?], anticipates no resolved future and leaves it open to the readers to take responsibility to answer her question. She wants them/us to take responsibility:

And if the white (man) does not want to understand that it is his task to seek peace with us, it’s he who should go back from where he comes from.³⁹

This statement, which is the last sentence, makes me understand that Kapesh’s rage-filled tone is not meant to cut off relationships, but that it is not her task to imagine what peace with settlers will look like. For me, this process begins by recognizing the violence of the disruption of Innu education, which is the cause of many of the problems nowadays, but also the space of Innu justice, a space that Kapesh occupies in the book.

Conclusion

The context of settler-indigenous relations has changed since 1976; there have been different truth commissions and various moments of settlers’ “coming out of ignorance.” However, many things have not changed.

³⁹ Kapesh, p. 154, “Et si le Blanc ne veut pas comprendre qu'il lui revient à lui de rechercher la paix avec nous, c'est lui qui devrait retourner d'où il est venu.”

Considering how the indigenous women of Val-d'Or raised their voices against colonial gendered violence, I wonder if in another forty years from now Innu women will still have to fear and live these abuses. Will indigenous women be able to trust the police and white people? Realizing that Kapesh does not trust me does not push me to disengage but rather to take a stance of working from my own position to understand what forms colonialism takes in our time. I am impressed by the strength of her political voice. I understand, through the question she is asking me, her future reader, that I must be able to raise my own political voice.

Settlers have imposed their laws and justice systems, but we/they are not able to provide justice for indigenous women and men. In this context, when I/we intend, as "benevolent colonizers," to engage in the work of decolonization, we need to be wary of imposing once again another version of justice. This task might begin with not reading testimonies as merely revealing injustices and seeing how they activate alternative visions of justice. Now, as the texts by Menchú and Kapesh show, these alternatives risk being misunderstood, appropriated or devalued by settler readers. Therefore, in my/our engagement to read and to be informed, I/we need to put into question what we know of justice and how I/we think we can participate in it. And yet, my hope does not come from my own transformation as a reader, but from the texts that offer alternative types of relationships that become models for renewed visions of justice for settlers and that enact justice by creating sovereign indigenous spaces of resistance.

11.
DECOLONIZING MERCY:
DE-LINKING MERCY AND JUSTICE

GERALD BOODOO, MICHELLE BLOHM, AND FORTUNATUS MUGISHA¹

Introduction

In approaching the notion of mercy, it is too easy and quite commonplace to link it inextricably with justice. We think this has situated mercy in an uncontested location that gives it reflexive power differentials between those who bestow and those who receive mercy, as well as a misunderstanding of how it informs Catholic and Christian virtues. We suggest that these misunderstandings are rooted in colonial epistemologies that still persist in our theological and religious imagination and we call for a de-linking from these epistemologies and a constructive re-linking to epistemologies, theological and religious imaginations, that place human dignity and the expansiveness of divinity first. To this end, in three parts, we present aspects of decolonial thinking and how it may inform theology; Isaac of Nineveh as a theological resource for de-linking and re-linking the notion of mercy; and finally, some implications for theological endeavor.

¹ Dr. Gerald M. Boodoo is the Rev. Francis Philben Endowed Chair and Director, Center for African Studies, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA. Michelle Blohm is an American PhD student at Duquesne University in the final stages of her work. Fortunatus Mugisha is a Ugandan PhD student at Duquesne University beginning his dissertation phase.

I. Decolonial Thinking

Over the past decade and more, some scholars in Latin American Studies have been filling in the gap in Latin American studies on its colonial history. Their point of contention is that when one thinks of modern colonialism one easily refers to Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean but not so easily to the Americas and specifically Latin America.² As these scholars began to investigate this submerged reality, they discovered structural patterns of thinking and acting that appeared to be present in what they term the modern project- the expansion of selective European ways of thinking and acting designed to consolidate European hegemony. The structures they uncovered and the mode of thinking they have promoted is now termed coloniality and decolonial thinking. For our purposes, there are four main points we want to make with regard to decolonial thinking.

The first is that we need to understand that modernity has created a world system that for the first time in the history of the world has linked all (or virtually all) parts of the world and subsumed them into a connected system. Along with this comes the realization that not everyone and everywhere have benefited from these connections. There is a dark side to this modern system of coloniality so that you have those who benefit from the modern project, those who are “inside” modernity and wield the power of modernity and who can be too easily blinded to the millions who are negatively affected by modernity, who are “outside”. This “outside” of modernity is termed the “colonial difference”. By colonial difference is meant “the place and experiences of those who have been the object of inferiorization on the part of others who, in the midst of the colonial endeavor, have come to consider themselves to be superior. It is a place and experience constituted as an exteriority to modernity according to a negative logic (a logic of inferiorization)”.³

² Cf. *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Mabel Morana, Enrique Dussel, Carlos Jauregui, eds., Duke University Press, 2008.

³ Gregory A. Banazak & Luis Reyes Ceja, “The Challenge and Promise of Decolonial Thought to Biblical Interpretation”, *Postscripts* 4.1 (2008) 113–127, p. 116.

Second, there is a “coloniality of power”⁴ which privileges and enshrines Euro-American thinking by constituting itself in (i) the classification and reclassification of the planet population (the concept of culture becomes crucial in this task) (ii) institutional structures which function to articulate and manage such classifications (state, university, church etc.) (iii) the definition of spaces appropriate to such goals (iv) an epistemological perspective that articulates, legitimates and channels its production of knowledge. Walter Mignolo explains that “Eurocentrism becomes, therefore, a metaphor to describe the coloniality of power from the perspective of subalternity. From the epistemological perspective, European local knowledge and histories have been projected to global designs....”⁵

Third, decolonial thought seeks to produce knowledge formed from the colonial difference. What is needed is a new way of thinking, not new ideas. As such, if one speaks from the perspective of the colonial difference, one also speaks from what Mignolo calls the “colonial wound” and therefore the “other paradigm” does privilege the knowledge from these spaces of oppression, the victims of modernity, but with the realization that even though it is produced from “outside” modernity it still is linked to the modern project. The colonial wound is created by coloniality. So decolonial thought gives rise to an ethics and a politics of *pluriversality* (a combination of the words “plural” and “universality”). Standing in opposition to global and totalitarian designs, created in the name of universality (which usually means a particularity claiming to be universal), pluriversality is an attempt to make visible and viable a multiplicity of knowledges, forms of being, and visions of the world. Pluriversality is equality-in-difference, the possibility that many worlds can fit in one

⁴ Cf. Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification”, in Mabel Morana, Enrique Dussel, Carlos A. Jauregui, eds., *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2008.

⁵ Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2000, p. 17.

world. It is the future alternative to modernity/coloniality.⁶ Decolonial thinkers see this as occurring across many disciplines and many facets of life, hence they assert the “transdisciplinary” and “transcultural” nature of decolonial thinking. This mixture of perspectives works to unmask the “purity” of disciplines and the so-called “universality” of modernity.

Fourth, though decolonial thinking speaks about the “inside” and “outside” of modernity, these are markers designed to explain the colonial difference and colonial wound. They are not to imply that there is a point of view that stands outside of the modern project looking in. In fact, decolonial thinking insists that it is impossible to have a vantage point from which one can view the goings on of the modern project, there is no “epoché” as early phenomenologists would say. This means that we all understand the workings of coloniality already experiencing it and partaking in neocolonial bounty as a postcolonial or anticolonial human agent. Hinkelammert refers to this as the “privileged exploited”, and Gayatri Spivak calls this “neocolonizing anticolonialism”.⁷ In other words, in working to decolonize, we must be aware of our complicity and use of colonial methodologies, languages, and epistemic locations and the trap of substitutive ideology. This might be the most important aspect of decolonial thinking since it does not set itself up as the answer to the problems of modernity but as a way of de-linking accustomed relationships with a view to re-linking in multiple, relative and admittedly impure ways.

As an aside, let us also briefly mention how decolonial thought differs from postmodern and postcolonial thinking. The postmodern debate, as its name suggests, still is a debate situated in the heart of modernity and is an inner modern debate attempting to rekindle enlightenment principles

⁶ Gregory A. Banazak & Luis Reyes Ceja, “The Challenge and Promise of Decolonial Thought to Biblical Interpretation”, *Postscripts* 4.1 (2008) 113–127, p. 118.

⁷ Cf. Franz J. Hinkelammert, “Changes in the Relationships between Third World Countries and First World Countries” in K.C. Abraham and Bernadette Mbuy-Beya, eds., *Spirituality of the Third World: A Cry for Life*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1994; Gayatri Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason; Toward a History of the Vanishing Past*, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 191

in non-dogmatic or non-overarching narrative form. Despite this, it still holds to the core belief that the European enlightenment is the measure by which one determines preference for food, culture, language, music, business and education. It is still heavily inscribed with the coloniality of power and for all its intentions, is unable to seriously address the colonial wound and the millions of people affected by it.

Decolonial thought rejects the idea that discourse generated from the inside of modernity can effectively address the colonial difference. Postcolonial thought, though similar to decolonial thought, tends to be, again as the name implies, critical thinking in response to the aftermath of colonialism in previously colonized nations after “independence”. Such thinking is uniformly anti-colonial and focuses on issues of identity, politics and social construction in postcolonial contexts. Its aim is to forge reasoned trajectories for members of postcolonial societies as they navigate post-independence/globalization phenomena with the hope of creating stable, secure, productive and locally owned/managed contexts. Where this constructive activity is important for decolonial thought, its seeming implication that there is an epistemic location outside of the colonial matrix from which it can be critiqued as a space to create alternatives, is rejected by decolonial thought. Indeed, for decolonial thought, one must make the clear distinction between colonialism and coloniality—the former a period of occupation and the latter, the epistemic structures that remain long after the period of occupied colonialism has ended. Let us now turn to how decolonial thinking can relate to theology.

Decolonial Thought and Theology

Based on the previous section there are some obvious ways in which decolonial thought can relate to theology. Some of them relate to how power is understood and used, the intersectionality of religions in terms of inter-faith encounter and understanding, as well as who and what is privileged in reading the biblical text. I think some of this work has

already been done⁸ so we want suggest some other avenues in the use of decolonial thought for theological reflection. It is worthwhile quoting here the Tunisian Jew Albert Memmi when he says:

We have seen that colonization materially kills the colonized. It must be added that it kills him spiritually. Colonization distorts relationships, destroys or petrifies institutions, and corrupts men, both colonizers and colonized. To live, the colonized needs to do away with colonization. To become a man, he must do away with the colonized being that he has become. If the European must annihilate the colonizer within himself, the colonized must rise above his colonized being.⁹

So, the driving question becomes how does theological reflection, itself, go about the task of rising above its colonized being since it has historically linked itself with colonization and coloniality. Indeed, some decolonial thinkers see this as an impossible task given the way Christian theological thought has permeated coloniality. While we acknowledge this factual appraisal, we nevertheless think that theological reflection can be decolonized, as is implied by the title and purpose of this chapter.

First of all, how does theology in any region rise above its colonized being? How does it de-link from the coloniality of its religious expressions and exhibit some creative epistemological disobedience in order to re-link to more decolonial and, in some cases, indigenous, religious expressions? Inculturation has helped significantly in this process in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, by demanding that we take seriously the popular and culturally appropriated aspects of faith expressed in the region as examples and manifestations of incarnate divinity. It has forced churches to take seriously liturgical, ecclesial and theological renewal in

⁸ Cf. Keller and Banacek

⁹ Albert Memmi. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965, 15.

languages and cultural expressions that sync and relate to many and differing peoples. While witnessing to their own faith and way of life, what does it mean for Christians to “acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture” as exhorted in *Nostra Aetate*?² And indeed, drawing upon this exhortation and that of *Gaudium et Spes* (53-59) Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio* goes so far as to say:

This simple statement contains a great truth: faith’s encounter with different cultures has created something new. When they are deeply rooted in experience, cultures show forth the human being’s characteristic openness to the universal and the transcendent. Therefore they offer different paths to the truth, which assuredly serve men and women well in revealing values which can make their life ever more human. Insofar as cultures appeal to the values of older traditions, they point-implicitly but authentically-to the manifestation of God in nature, as we saw earlier in considering the Wisdom literature and the teaching of Saint Paul.¹⁰

John Paul continues in the next paragraph:

While it demands of all who hear it the adherence of faith, the proclamation of the Gospel in different cultures allows people to preserve their own cultural identity. ...This means that no one culture can ever become the criterion of judgment, much less the ultimate criterion of truth with regard to God’s Revelation. The Gospel is not opposed to any culture, as if in engaging a culture the Gospel would seek to strip it of its native riches and force it to adopt forms which are alien to it.¹¹

¹⁰ *Fides et Ratio*, 70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

Let us leave aside for the moment problematic questions on the acultural transcendent aspect of the gospel John Paul II presents here, as well as the very Eurocentric nature of his discourse, and attend instead to his insights, first, that faith's encounter (we would say differing faiths encounters) with different cultures *creates* something new, and second, that this encounter should allow people to *preserve* their own cultural identity. These two activities of preserving a people's culture and giving them opportunities to create something new as they are encountered (not dominated) by faith is at the heart of inculturation (as we understand it) and also at the heart of decolonial theology. For in attempting to preserve differing cultures (and religious expressions) we can give voice to submerged, oppressed and inferiorized perspectives that often create expanded vistas for spirituality, prayer, worship and interaction. Faith's encounter with coloniality reveals the colonial wound and *creates* something new that exhorts us to explore and understand what we have voluntarily and involuntarily overlooked in the fullness of divine expressions in our locations. Again, this is the work of inculturation, but also of every Christian and of every person of faith.

Second, how do we challenge the narratives of "established" religion and religiosity as well as challenge the need to show relevance and "belonging" by "propping up" the colonial modern project? Perhaps the issues around self-identification for indigenous peoples have already begun to radically restructure dominant narratives, especially in urban spaces.¹² Would self-identification help to relocate the dislocation (spatially and temporally) associated with indigeneity in many parts of our world? This would fundamentally restructure the location of the indigenous and thereby also the place and space of the sacred and the involuntary associations in those locations that give rise to religious and theological expression. Perhaps this relocation as a future possibility is what recreates

¹² See Antje Dietrich, "Constructions of Indigeneity in Urban Spaces: Local Adaption of a Global Idea?", in *Traversa*, vol.3, 2013, 20-31.

indigeneity and in identifying the whereness¹³ (eclectically) of indigeneity, we thereby also understand who and what is indigenous.

What self-identification emphasizes, in a decolonial mode, is the impurity of traditions and how much, in relation to indigenous peoples, we base our understanding of them and their expressions, on “imagined pureness and authenticity”¹⁴. This tendency to homogenize (and ethinize) our traditions and epistemic locations can be decolonized by relinking them to those spaces, places, peoples and traditions that are still giving expression to non-homogenous epistemologies-indigenous communities. This is not about watering down or relativizing (though I don’t see relativity and respectivity as bad) traditions, but indigeneity and self-identification highlight how much we generate constructions of pureness and authenticity regarding our religious traditions and then use them as gate keeping ideologies and doctrines. This is the greatest obstacle to collaboration between faiths and religions and does not allow us to access the expressive power of those traditions. I would go so far as to say that this is an imperial, colonial epistemic viewpoint and encountering indigenous expressions reminds us of how much our theology and religious expression still depends on these homogenous (culturally homogenous as well) colonial constructions.

Third, rewriting religious history is significant. Given the reality of coloniality, whereby we read, write, express and share religious expressions in the language, theology, rituals and religious epistemologies of coloniality, rewriting religious history in a decolonial mode presents significant problems. This is also hampered by the demonization of pre-colonial and contemporary indigenous religious expressions that was imposed by Christianity and which is still supported at basic epistemic levels. The pre-colonial and indigenous religious histories are often characterized as inferior, incomplete understandings of divinity. It sometimes appears to

¹³ See Vine Deloria, *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, Fulcrum Publishing, 30th edition, 2003.

¹⁴ Dieterich, 22.

deny, as theologians in the Caribbean have voiced,¹⁵ that God was present in regions of the world before Christianity presented/imposed itself. In addition, the fact of having to record and share understandings of these histories in colonial languages and methodologies complicates the endeavor.

Allow us to illustrate some of this by way of an example and some inferred points. In her entry on the Wayana pīyai of Suriname, in the *Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions*, Karin Boeve¹⁶ notes how the role of these guardians of the community changed from eco-cosmological stewards, masters of geographical and spiritual areas, and thereby promoters of Wayana cultures, to basically healers and arbiters of community interpersonal conflict as a result of European encounters. The introduction of the money economy has changed how Wayanas relate to their land and to the animals and plants in that land, and modern healing methods further erode trust and confidence in the pīyai who themselves (though becoming fewer and unattractive vocations for the youth) have to compete with modern medicine with the growing outreach of health services in their lands. As a result, the pīyai now conform to modern cosmologies attempting to become another viable alternative in the modern economy. We mention this to recognize how our use of colonial languages, which is what we primarily use, carries with it epistemological and cosmological baggage and adjusts indigenous self-identification as well as interpretations of indigeneity. So, the history we attempt to re-create is also at the same time re-creating itself with the varied encounters we have in a globalized world.

There are two sub-points to be briefly make in this regard concerning theological/religious cosmology and eschatology/historiography. First, the eco-cosmology of indigenous peoples recognizes geographical and spiritual areas. The geographical areas are usually marked by mountains and rivers, and

¹⁵ Gerald Boodoo, "Mission and Coloniality: Christianity and the Caribbean", in Elochukwu Uzukwu, ed., *Mission for Diversity: Exploring Christian Mission in the Contemporary World*, LIT Verlag, Zurich, 2015.

¹⁶ Karin Boeve, "The Wayana Pīyai", *Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions*, 81-84. See also "Indigenous Religions", 369.

the spiritual areas by properties of particular plants/food crops and animals, and various persons, animals and plants serve as the “masters” or conduits through which relationships to these spiritual properties are negotiated. There is a sense of reciprocity and need for balance since humans are not seen as primary in this cosmological, geographical and spiritual outlook. Some work has been done in this regard among eco-feminists and eco-theologians, but we need to begin considering how much our use of *imago dei* has worked against this eco-cosmology as well as what might our theologies and religious historical perspectives look like if these indigenous eco-cosmologies could play a part in our religious epistemologies, liturgies and relationships.

Second, the way in which temporality is abstractly experienced in some Christian liturgies (even when related to the winter solstice and spring equinox, as in Christmas and Easter) and understood in our eschatology in a teleological manner could do with greater anchoring in our communities’ experience of spatial temporality. By this is meant greater connections of our liturgical seasons and eschatological viewpoints to local weather patterns, lands, rivers and seas and not to colonial anthropological markers that seem to emphasize humankind’s membership in the domination of their space and place, which then promises some fulfillment or reward for being a good dominant steward. Reading religious history with this spatial temporality helps to locate change with space as the primary marker and not prioritize modern chronological developmental markers. In addition, indigenous historiography tends to view historical events from the epistemic location of their pre-colonial cosmologies and in encounters with the colonizers, through the colonial wound, and therefore sometimes produces historical readings irreconcilable with the Euromerican and Christian traditions. So that while we had an interpretation, for instance of Carib indigenous people as fierce cannibals, archeological evidence does not support widespread cannibalism, and we do not ever engage the Carib perspective of perplexity when they are made to understand that Christians cannibalize their God, Jesus Christ, in claiming to eat his body and drink his blood on a regular basis. Why is one form of ritual cannibalism better than the other?

After this description and explanation of decolonial thought and theologizing, how now do we go about decolonizing the notion of mercy? In the next section, we will begin the process by de-linking mercy and justice looking to a pre-modern figure¹⁷ in the Christian tradition to help make de-linking possible and point to how re-linking may occur. Before we do however, let us take a brief excursus to explain why we think drawing on a 7th century CE Christian thinker is of help to the argument of this chapter.

Brief Excursus

First, the historical, social context of Isaac was one that saw the breakdown of the Assyrian empire by incursions from Arab Muslims, so that by 638 CE most of the area was conquered by Muslims. This means that Isaac spent most of his life (though as a hermit) in a context that was predominantly Muslim. That he lived until nearly 700 CE indicates that he must have had some amicable relationship with this wider Muslim context. One writer even suggests that Isaac's good relations with Muslims may have helped to shape the Sufi mystical tradition.¹⁸ Whether that is true or not, he is an interesting figure who produced most of his Christian ascetical writings in a context while it actively transitioned to a predominantly Muslim culture. This is very similar to many contexts in our world over the past century and in contemporary times that have transitioned, and are transitioning, to different socio-religious cultures and contexts. How Isaac reflexively/implicitly responds to this multi/inter faith reality, we believe, is reflected in his writings and offers us some insight on how to approach these transitional periods, especially as experienced by the colonial wound.

Second, Isaac does present us with an authentic way to recognize the intersectionality or transversality of periods and perspectives. That he is part of our diverse Christian tradition highlights this, and we prefer his perspective

¹⁷ We are indebted to our colleague, Bogdan Bucur, Ph.D., in identifying Isaac as a possible choice.

¹⁸ Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism*, New York University Press, 1989, p. 17f.

because we think it serves the promotion of human dignity better than others. Instead of raising temporally induced questions as to the appropriateness or strategic value of using a pre-modern thinker for contemporary times, the use of Isaac is based primarily by us on his epistemic location which facilitates the processes of de-linking and re-linking. Now on to Isaac of Nineveh.

II. Isaac of Nineveh: Re-envisioning God's Mercy

Isaac was born in modern day Qatar around 613 CE and lived as a hermit in the Assyrian Church of the East. He received his early monastic training and education and became familiar with spiritual writers like St. Ephrem, John the Solitary, Evagrius, Macarius, Abba Isaiah, Mark the Monk, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Diodore of Tarsus. He was ordained bishop of Nineveh but abdicated after five months. Isaac's writings are discourses, homilies, letters and answers to various questions and his theology is deeply influenced by Scripture and the Fathers.¹⁹ His surviving works today fall into three collections: "The First Part", "The Second Part", and "The Third Part". The First Part contains 83 homilies. These were translated into Greek at the renowned monastery of Saint Saba, south of Jerusalem, in the late 8th or early 9th century. They were eventually translated into Romanian and Slavonic and again later into Italian, German, Russian, and English. In 1983, Sebastian Brock rediscovered the Second Part of Isaac's writings. Subsequent to its publication, sections from it were translated into Italian, English, Russian, French, Romanian, Arabic, Persian, and Malayalam – a clear indication of the continuing relevance of Isaac's teaching to diverse Christian traditions.²⁰ The "Third Part" has also been recently discovered and is available to readers in Italian, French, and Romanian.

¹⁹ Isaac of Nineveh (Isaac the Syrian). "*The Second Part*", chapters IV-XLI, edited by Sebastian P. Brock, Louvain: Peeters, 1995, Introduction, 12.

²⁰ Isaac of Nineveh (Isaac the Syrian). "*The Second Part*", chapters IV-XLI, edited by Sebastian P. Brock, Louvain: Peeters, 1995, 12.

Isaac's Account of Divine Love

The tenor of Isaac's theology is the emphasis on the love and mercy of God. He sees the divine *oikonomia* as a manifestation of the great love of God.²¹

God, in Isaac's account, is above all immeasurable and boundless love. The conviction that God is love dominates Isaac's thought. His whole theology, asceticism, and mysticism is based solely upon and can only be understood through this premise of God as love.²² God's love surpasses our human understanding and description, but, at the same time, this love is reflected in God's action in the world and in humanity. As Isaac writes: "Among his actions there is none which is not entirely a matter of mercy, love, and compassion: this constitutes the beginning and the end of his dealings with us."²³ The whole act of creation and incarnation, according to Isaac, had only one aim: "to reveal his boundless love to the world."²⁴ The great mystery of God's love is a fountainhead drawing forth a profound encounter of awe and amazement:

What profundity of richness, what mind and exalted wisdom is God's! What compassionate kindness and abundant goodness belongs to the Creator! With what purpose and with what love did He create this world and bring it into existence! What a mystery does the coming into being of this creation look towards! To what a state is our common nature invited! What love served to initiate the creation of the world! This same love which initiated the act of creation prepared beforehand by another dispensation the things appropriate to adorn the world's majesty which sprung forth as a result of the might of His love.²⁵

²¹ Alfeyev Hilarion. *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian*. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2000, 52.

²² Alfeyev, 35-36

²³ II/39, 22.

²⁴ Gnostic Chapters IV, 79.

²⁵ II/38.1-2

It is an encounter that, for Isaac, calls one to step back at that which is overwhelmingly beyond yet, in the divine *oikonomia*, ever-draws creation into that which is utterly beyond itself. With respect to creation, Isaac's emphasis is fundamentally that of a divine gift, not a human possession.

Even though divine love exceeds human understanding and description, it is continually active and is revealed in the universe. According to Isaac, God revealed himself in the creation of the world:

What that invisible Being is like, who is without any beginning in his nature, unique in himself, who is by nature beyond the knowledge, intellect, and feel of created beings, who is beyond time and space, being the creator of these, who at the beginning of time was learnt about through hints and was made known as if it were through his mark by means of the establishing of the fullness of creation ... the fountainhead of innumerable nature – this Being is hidden, for as he dwelt in his Being for aeons without number or limit or beginning, it pleased his graciousness and he made a beginning of time, bringing the worlds and created beings into existence. Let us consider then, how rich in its wealth is the ocean of his creative act, and how many created things belong to God, and how in his compassion he carries everything, acting providentially as he guides creation, and how with a love that cannot be measured he arrived at the establishment of the world and the beginning of creation; and how compassionate God is, and how patient; and how he loves creation, and how he carries it, gently enduring its importunity, the various sins and wickednesses, the terrible blasphemies of demons and evil men.²⁶

Divine love is, therefore, a continuous realization of the creative potential of God, an endless revelation of God in his creative act. Nevertheless, even in this boundless revelation the divine remains beyond and is neither

²⁶ II/10, 18-19

captured by divine *oikonomia*, nor handed over to it, as possession. The divine giving in love is continually given, but never received. This divine love lies at the foundation of the universe and governs it, leading it to a glorious consummation. God has created the world in love and for love, everything God has done is an expression of divine love. Divine love is as indiscriminate as it is prodigal. It is the love of a Father, “who in his great and immeasurable love surpasses all in paternal affection.”²⁷ Divine love gives freely, and its government is such that it is unhindered and unimpaired by evil:

In love did He bring the world into existence; in love does He guide it during this its temporal existence; in love is He going to bring it to that wondrous transformed state, and in love will the world be swallowed up in the great mystery of Him who has performed all these things; in love will the whole course of the governance of creation be finally comprised. And since in the New World the Creator’s love rules over all rational nature, the wonder at His mysteries that will be revealed then will captivate to itself the intellect of all rational beings whom He has created so that they might have delight in Him, whether they be evil or whether they be just.²⁸

Thus, God providentially cares for all the inhabitants of the universe. Angels and demons, human beings and the bounty of the natural world – his providence is universal and embraces all. No creature is excluded from the scope of God’s loving providence.²⁹ According to Isaac, God’s love extends even to the fallen angels and demons. This is simply because for Isaac, to think of hatred or resentment existing in God even against demons is utterly odious and blasphemous. This would be to imagine some weakness in divine nature. Isaac poignantly argues that “just as an abundantly flowing

²⁷ I/52 (254) = PR 51 (361)

²⁸ II/38.1-2

²⁹ I/7 (65); II/38, 3.

fountain is not blocked by a handful of dust, so the Maker's mercy is not overcome by the wickedness of those whom He has created.”³⁰

Isaac's account of divine love holds substantial consequences for his account of the significance of the incarnation, by which the infinite love of the Creator is dramatically displayed. Why did God become man? Why did Jesus die on the cross? Certainly, not to appease an angry deity. If God's sole purpose were to achieve the remission of sins, he could have accomplished this end by another means. The incarnation and the cross are a revelation of the divine mercy and love:

If zeal had been appropriate for putting humanity right, why did God the Word clothe himself in the body, using gentleness and humility in order to bring the world back to his Father? And why was he stretched out on the cross for the sake of sinners, handing over his sacred body to suffering on behalf of the world? I myself say that God did all this for no other reason than to make known to the world the love that he has, his aim being that we, as a result of our greater love arising from an awareness of this, might be captivated by his love when he provided the occasion of this manifestation of the kingdom of heaven's mighty power—which consists in love—by means of the death of his Son.³¹

Consequently, as divine love is actively given but never possessed, Isaac's account of divine love is foreign to that of love as a transactional or legal encounter, and it is certainly not a *quid pro quo* exchange. For Isaac, nothing diminishes the love of God; not sin and not the Fall because to think of God's love being diminished is ‘to reduce the glorious nature of the Creator to weakness and change’.³² Nothing that happens in creation,

³⁰ Brock, 18. Hom. 50, B 345.

³¹ Alfeyev, 52

³² II/38, 4.

therefore, affects the nature of God, who is “exalted, lofty and glorious, perfect and complete in his knowledge, and complete in his love.”³³ God, therefore, loves both the righteous and sinners alike. Disobedience does not change the character of the Father, sin does not diminish his love.

Isaac's Account of Divine Mercy, De-Linking Justice

Isaac's account of God does not lend itself to the image of God as Judge. God as Judge is completely overshadowed in Isaac's theology by the image of God as Love (*hubba*) and Mercy (*rahme*³⁴). According to Isaac, mercifulness (*mrahmanuta*) is incompatible with justice (*k'inuta*). In Homily 51, Isaac addresses the incompatibility of justice and mercy:

Mercy is opposed to Justice. Justice is equality on the even scales, for it gives to each as he deserves Mercy, on the other hand, is a sorrow and pity stirred up by goodness....; it does not requite a man who is deserving of evil, and to him who is deserving of good it gives a double portion. If, therefore, it is evident that mercy belongs to the portion of righteousness, then justice belongs to the portion of wickedness. As grass and fire cannot coexist in one place, so justice and mercy cannot abide in one soul.

So then, one can speak not at all of God's justice, but of mercy that surpasses all justice: 'As a grain of sand cannot counter-balance a great quantity of gold, so in comparison God's use

³³ II/10, 23.

³⁴ Isaac uses “Rahme” for the mercy proceeding from God. This word has the same root as “rahm”, the plural form of “womb”, and this is also translated as “mercy”. God's mercy is a nurturing womb; it is like the mercy bestowed by a mother on the children of her womb. *Rahme* has a different nuance from the Old Testament word *hesed*, which indicates a profound attitude of ‘goodness’ and highlights the marks of fidelity to self and of responsibility for one's own love. *Rahme*, denotes a deep and original bond of the womb—indeed the unity – that links a mother to her child; from there springs a particular relationship to the child, a particular love. Of this love one can say that it is completely gratuitous, not merited, and that in this aspect it constitutes an interior necessity: an exigency of the heart.

of justice cannot counterbalance his mercy. Like a handful of sand thrown into the great sea, so are the sins of the flesh in comparison with the mind of God. And just as a strongly flowing spring is not obscured by a handful of dust, so the mercy of the Creator is not stemmed by vices of his creatures.³⁵

For Isaac, the opposition of divine love and mercy to justice is confirmed by the revelation received in Jesus in the New Testament parables of the workers in the vineyard (Mat. 20:1-15) and of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20-22), and still more by Christ's incarnation for the sake of sinners: "Where, then, is God's justice, for while we are sinners Christ died for us?"³⁶

For Isaac, God's mercy contradicts the idea of justice especially with the eternal punishment of sinners. He argues that if we suppose that God will punish sinners eternally, we imply that creation of the world was a mistake and that God is unable to oppose evil and hence that God is weak:

So, then, let us not attribute to God's actions and his dealings with us any idea of requital. Rather, we should speak of fatherly provision, a wise dispensation, a perfect will which is concerned with our good, and complete love. If it is a case of love, then it is not one of requital; and if it is a case of requital, then it is not one of love. Love, when it operates, is not concerned with the requiting of former things by means of its own good deeds or correction; rather it looks to what is most advantageous in the future: it examines what is to come, and not things of the past. If we think otherwise than this, then according to the resulting childish view the Creator will prove to be weak for after what he had established had become corrupted against his will, he devised some other

³⁵ I/51 (244) = PR 50 (345)

³⁶ I/51 (250-251) = PR 50 (357-8)

plan, preparing ills in return for its corruption. Such are the feeble ways of understanding the Creator!³⁷

God's justice has often been understood as retributive justice, an evenhanded measure, we reap what we sow or even as if it were some version of karma – what you do comes right back on you. Isaac understands this differently: it is an unmerited mercy extended to all creation. For Isaac, God does nothing out of retribution. To think of God in these terms is blasphemous. In Jesus, we experience a God who reaches out in unfathomable love and mercy to each and to all. Mercy is not a pious sentiment or the possession of a few meted out to others. Mercy is gratuitous self-giving love, poured out to all creation.³⁸

Isaac's Re-Linking of Human Mercy to Humility

Having demonstrated the manner in which Isaac of Nineveh de-links mercy and justice in his account of divine love, we turn to humility as that to which Isaac re-links mercy and discuss its theological implications for decolonizing mercy.

Isaac's account of human mercy as humility is closely linked with his account of mercy as divine love. Realities such as justice and mercy, must be approached with a keen awareness of both divine excess and human weakness. That is, as Jesse Couenhoven argues elsewhere in this volume, any approach to justice and mercy must be tempered by the realization that human estimations are clouded by sin and human weakness, both in the human being's capacity to judge the actions of self and neighbor and in the human capacity to avoid sin and act righteously.

³⁷ II/39, 20 (see also the proceeding verses II/39, 21-22 which continue the nature of God's goodness vs requital)

³⁸ Pope Francis, Homily, "Holy Chrism Mass," Rome, March 24, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160324_omelia-crisma.html

In the face of love that is overwhelmingly beyond, and beyond possession, human beings are ill at ease addressing the divine due to their ineptitude. Isaac states, “do not be inept in the requests you make to God, otherwise you will insult God through your ignorance.”³⁹ One who offers an inept prayer is like: “when someone asks a human prince for a load of dung” such that “not only will that person be despised as a result of his despicable request, but [that] he has also offered an insult to the prince by means of his stupid request.”⁴⁰ Human weakness extends beyond the capacity for prayer to include human judgement: “mercy and justice in the soul is like [one] who worships God and idols in one house.”⁴¹ Isaac associates justice with idolatry in that “justice is the equality of the even scale...giving to each as he deserves” such that “when it makes recompense, it does not incline to one side or show respect of persons.”⁴² That is, justice reduces the reality of the human person to an impersonal abstraction, which divides human communities rather than heal the wounds of human infirmity. Human attempts at justice recast a divine gift as a human possession.

Contrary to an economic or legal relationship, a relationship of mercy “compassionately inclines [one] in the direction of all.”⁴³ Far from imparting a transactional or legal debt, human weakness is the very means by which one perceives divine love: “Without temptations, God’s concern is not perceived, nor is freedom of speech with him acquired, nor is spiritual wisdom learnt, nor does the love of God become grounded in the soul.”⁴⁴ Attempting to transform the divine *oikonomia* into a transactional or legal relationship insults divine generosity: “if you owe God a small coin over

³⁹ Brock, 2. Hom. 3, B 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ St. Isaac the Syrian, “Homily Fifty-One,” *The Ascetical Homilies of Isaac the Syrian* (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984), 243–248, 244.

⁴² Ibid., 244.

⁴³ Ibid., 244.

⁴⁴ Brock, 4. Hom. 3, B 36.

some matter, He is not going to accept from you a pearl in its place.”⁴⁵ Isaac explicitly cites “zeal against the infirmities of other[s]” as an “illness of the soul” arising from “narrow-mindedness and deep ignorance.”⁴⁶ Isaac argues, “if you wish to heal the infirm [through your zeal], know that the sick are in need of loving care than of rebuke.”⁴⁷

Any form of virtue, for Isaac, is only won through great hardship: “fire will not catch alight with wet wood, and fervor for God will not be kindled in a heart that loves ease.”⁴⁸ Isaac compares the labors of the spiritual life with childbirth: “just as it is only after labo[r] that a pregnant woman give[s] birth to the fruit that gives joy, so it is with the soul: only after labo[rs] is knowledge of the mysteries of God given birth in it.”⁴⁹ When not only labor, but indeed also suffering, is not present, prayer fails: “every prayer over which the body does not share the toil, and over which the heart does not feel suffering, you should consider to be still-born.”⁵⁰ Labor and suffering are, for Isaac, keys to the path to holiness by acknowledging human weakness. Isaac argues that “the person who has attained to knowledge of his own weakness has reached the summit of humility.”⁵¹ It is the humble who are “beloved by God.”⁵²

The consequence of humility for mercy is that one ought to “prefer to be treated unjustly [oneself] to treating someone else in an unjust way”: “be persecuted, but persecute not; be crucified, but crucify not; be wronged, but wrong not; be slandered, but slander not.”⁵³ Acting thusly is the “beginning of divine wisdom..., which arise[s] from greatness of soul and the bearing of

⁴⁵ Brock, 4. Hom. 5, B 63.

⁴⁶ St. Isaac the Syrian, 243.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 243.

⁴⁸ Brock, 4. Hom. 4, B 54.

⁴⁹ Brock, 8. Hom. 6, B 83.

⁵⁰ Brock, 10. Hom. 18, B 144.

⁵¹ Brock, 12. Hom. 45, B 321.

⁵² St. Isaac the Syrian, 245.

⁵³ Brock, 18; St. Isaac the Syrian, 246.

the infirmities of [others].”⁵⁴ Mercy with respect to personal virtue requires that one remain satisfied with acting according to the virtue to which one has attained while continuing to seek virtue with great fervor. This emphasizes fervent pursuit and eschews self-castigation, which is not to be confused with abandoning the works of asceticism: “an unmerciful ascetic is a barren tree.”⁵⁵ The ascetic pursuit of healing in divine love must recognize the essential illness of spirit, i.e., human weakness, for its effectiveness.

III. Thinking Mercy in a Decolonial Way

In this concluding section, we will address Isaac’s account of mercy in the context of decolonial thinking and layout some considerations on its consequences for contemporary theology.

Isaac and Decolonial Thinking

Isaac’s account of mercy as humility adds depth to a decolonized concept of mercy in that it stands inherently respectful of otherness, both divine otherness as viewed through the lenses of divine love and human otherness as viewed through the lens of humility, recognizing human weakness. At a time when global systems subsume subsidiary communities into a connected system, it is no longer appropriate to construe mercy in terms of economic and legal metaphors on an impersonal balance scale, that is, in terms of justice. The “coloniality of power” that privileges and enshrines that “justice” of Euro-American thinking must be abandoned and replaced by mercy as humility, mercy as attaining knowledge of weakness. This demands a true subsidiarity of mercy to thrive such that the encounter with human weakness must become an encounter with spaces of oppression and marginalization, both to unmask perspectives claiming purity in claims to universality and to speak from the “colonial wound.”

⁵⁴ St. Isaac the Syrian, 243.

⁵⁵ St. Isaac the Syrian, 246.

Kasper on Mercy and Pseudomercy

Though a broader and more thorough evaluation of the Christian tradition through the lens of decolonial thinking is certainly in order, it is necessary to be satisfied here with a few brief reflections on the consequences of this analysis for contemporary theology. To accomplish this, we will offer a few brief critiques of Walter Kasper's *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*. Kasper's *Mercy* stands as a particularly poignant foil to our argument here in that he assumes that any attempt to de-link mercy and justice must devolve into a kind of wishy-washy theology of "pseudomercy."⁵⁶

Kasper, contrary to Isaac's position, unambiguously associates divine mercy with divine justice: "Mercy must be understood as God's own justice and as his holiness."⁵⁷ According to Kasper, a "'soft' spirituality or a vapid pastoral concern" has arisen in reaction to a "ruthlessly rigid, legalistic praxis" resulting in a kind of "pseudomercy."⁵⁸ The God of "pseudomercy," for Kasper, is a "saccharine 'dear God,' which turns God into a good-spirited pal and no longer takes seriously God's holiness."⁵⁹ Kasper argues, "mercy becomes pseudo mercy when it no longer has a trace of trembling before God, who is holy, and trembling before his justice and his judgement...when 'yes' is no longer a 'yes' and 'no' is no longer a 'no,'" that is, "when it does not exceed, but rather undercuts the demand for justice."⁶⁰ Any account of mercy not tied to justice must, for Kasper, emerge as the fruit of individual whim, "lacking clear definition and forced somehow to suit each individual."⁶¹

⁵⁶ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, translated by William Madges (New York: Paulist Press, 2013). [Emphases in the subtitle are original, as well as notable.]

⁵⁷ Kasper, 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁶¹ Ibid., 10.

Though Isaac refuses to equate mercy with justice, Isaac's God does not come across as a warm and fuzzy companion subject to the demands of whim. Isaac's insistence on the centrality of humility is precisely an insistence on acknowledging that human whim cannot possess or control divine love. Isaac, rejecting the impersonal scale of justice as equation, demands that one take seriously the vicissitudes of human weakness in its personal yet communal character, including its historical consequences. Kasper himself argues that the concept of mercy receives its derivation from the "historical self-revelation of God" and speaks of empathy and a God who suffers, yet it is challenging to argue that Kasper takes seriously the epistemic consequences of human weakness, such as in the case of the consequences of colonization, for his concept of justice.⁶² Amidst *de facto* proclaiming an indisputable and fundamental union between Hellenistic philosophy and Christian theology, Kasper argues that "the metaphysical determination of God's essence, which has shaped the entire theological tradition since the early days of the church, should in no way be fundamentally questioned."⁶³ Voices from the margins and spaces of oppression become drowned out in the self-certainty characteristic of Kasper's argument. Kasper's argument, when analyzed from Isaac's emphasis on humility, attempts to possess and control divine love, resulting in a kind of idolatry.

Future-Looking Perspectives

One consequence to be drawn from the foregoing reflections is that re-linking mercy to humility centers on an epistemological humility that puts human dignity first. Isaac's concern in de-linking mercy and judgement directs conceptual attention away from metaphors of judgment and towards metaphors of healing. This does not negate the concerns for which 'justice' is often employed such as using metaphors of justice to encourage actively

⁶² Ibid., 11.

⁶³ Ibid., 10-11.

pursuing wholeness and goodness, but rather it recognizes human fellness in a manner that is unavailable to the self-certain claim implicitly made through the problematic epistemic claim to justice. Consequently, mercy as humility requires a journey even more arduous than that proposed by mercy as justice as it requires the redirection of efforts towards justice to focus on healing and the attendant self-sacrifice of self-righteous certainty.

Second, thinking of mercy in this decolonial way will certainly influence the way we view our understandings of salvation. We are well aware that for Isaac, God's indiscriminate and prodigal love is extended to both the righteous and the sinner equally and makes no distinction between them and therefore, when considering salvation, it is human activity which channels this love into transformative and saving experiences. However, we want to suggest that emphasizing the ineffable, even and changeless mercy of God leaves behind the notion of who gets the reward or not and can lead to a much more expansive notion of salvation as seen in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-15) where those who worked only one hour and those who have borne the burdens and heat of the whole day get the same reward. Salvation is thus granted to us not on the basis of our worthiness or unworthiness but on the basis of God's mercy who, in the words of St. Paul, 'desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Timothy 2:4). In this perspective, heaven is not a meritocracy; it becomes a space of grace, love and mercy and the resurrection becomes an expression of the overflowing mercy and love of God which can never be repaid. This approach to mercy delivers us from the religion of slavery and fear. Our response to the immense love of God, is freed from fear of punishment or even hope for a future reward in what we do. Our response becomes that of profound humility aiming to mutually engage, in some small way, this love because it cherishes and upholds human dignity.

Finally, de-linking mercy from justice and re-linking to humility in the service of human dignity does compel us to look at how we understand power and its use. The coloniality of power makes us keenly aware of the

imbedded power-relations we inhabit and their influence on theological reasoning, epistemologies and productions. At the 2001 annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in the World Church Theology Group, Leo Kleden presented a paper entitled “*Missio Ad Gentes: An Asian Way of Mission Today*”⁶⁴. In that paper, he spoke about European missionaries going to Asia from positions of political, cultural, religious and military superiority. However, times have changed, and in describing the phenomena of priests from Asia invited to work in parishes in Europe and North America, Kleden opines that in “comparison to the former missionaries from Europe, the Asian missionaries today seem to be sent empty handed. This fact is their weakness and should be their strength as well.” Kleden understands this “empty handed” approach as “weakness” in the sense that these missionaries do not arrive with political, social, economic or social positions of superiority and are therefore forced to rely upon the people to whom they are sent, to work *with* the people and not *for* the people. Kleden sees this as a kind of evangelical *kenosis*. This shift in focus, this de-linking from a missionary space clothed in superiority and re-linking to one that is empty handed, really emphasizes that we need to understand and use *dynamis* as *exousia*⁶⁵ rather than as *dikaiosyne/iustitia*. De-linking mercy from justice may indeed give more expansive epistemological and physical expressions of mercy that grow the margins of solidarity and love needed to restore and sustain human dignity.

⁶⁴ See *Proceedings of the Fifty Second Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, Milwaukee, 2001, pp. 197–198.

⁶⁵ Leonardo Boff, *Church Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, London, SCM Press, 1985, p. 60.

12.

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND CASTE SYSTEM IN IGBOLAND, NIGERIA: MISSION RESPONSE FROM WOMEN'S EVANGELISTIC PERSPECTIVE

DR. KEMDIRIM O. PROTUS¹

Introduction

Missionary activity in Igboland, Nigeria began at the turn of the twentieth century. Contact with Christianity was first with the Church Missionary Society (henceforth CMS). For nearly 30 years, the CMS maintained an unchallenged missionary influence having arrived in the uncharted Igbo territory in 1857 howbeit progress in the mission work. The arrival, however, of the Roman Catholic Mission (henceforth RCM) on Christmas day in 1885 under two intrepid French Spiritan priests namely, Fr. Joseph Lutz and Fr. Horn brought about an aggressive evangelism that was hitherto unknown in Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century among the Igbo. However, in spite of the prodigious efforts of these nineteenth-century missionaries in Igboland and the apparent growth of Christianity in later years the caste system remains largely untouched. Like the Jews and Samaritans, Igbo society

¹ Dr. Kemdirim O. Protus is a member of EATWOT. He was the former Secretary-General of Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria and Associate lecturer at the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt. He lives in Port Harcourt, Nigeria where he writes books in Religion and Theology.

is divided. There is discrimination and exclusion. Today the task of mission evangelism in Igboland would mean overcoming social and cultural barriers as exemplified in the Samaritan story. It would mean transformation of the Igbo society to enable the divided classes to grow and move on. Indeed, like the Samaritan woman identified as a model of courageous action, African women evangelists who today participate in an impressive list of congregational functions: elder, deacon, sexton, member of the missionary committee, etc., address with courage the caste system and issues faced by African women Christians still weighed down by patriarchal structures.

This reflection on the story of the Samaritan woman in John's gospel is thus set within the context of the caste system and mission responses from African women's perspective in Igboland, Nigeria, with the goal of the liberating and transforming Igbo culture to overcome social and cultural barriers for those understood as outcasts in Igboland.

I shall first briefly explain what is meant by evangelism or its cognate term evangelization, and the biblical background to women's involvement in evangelism. Then, I do an analytical reading of Jn. 4:1-12 to show how the two major characters in the story are exemplars for women in evangelism. Next, I examine the early missionary approach to caste system in Igboland and how contemporary African women evangelists address boundaries that separate the freeborn and outcast in Igboland. Finally, I show how the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman contains for everyone - diala (freeborn) and osu (outcast) – the liberating message that salvation is for everyone.

Evangelism: Its Meaning

It is pertinent to briefly examine what is meant by evangelism/evangelization and the biblical background to women in evangelism of which the Samaritan woman herself is an example. As I observed elsewhere² evangel-

² Kemdirim O. Protus, "Towards Inclusiveness for Women in the African Churches" in *Mission Studies*, Vol. XII-1, 23 (1995), p. 1-8.

zation, etymologically speaking is derived from the Greek *evangelion*, and it means good news. In Christianity, however, it designates the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. By virtue of the primary meaning of the word, *evangelion*, evangelization always entails a divine invitation. It is an invitation to all those (male and female) who have experienced Christ and his salvific act, to bear witness to Christ in word and deed. According to William Boarders, it has become possible to define evangelization in terms of proclaiming Christ to those who do not know him, preaching, catechesis, conferring baptism and the other sacraments.³ Thus evangelization is not a mere theological teaching about Christ or an apologetic argument about Christianity, but a sharing of the Christian experience.⁴ It is in the sense of sharing the Christian experience vis-à-vis living out the faith or salvation that evangelization is understood here. Additionally, women as evangelists have a strong biblical background. Specifically, the New Testament is clear of the role of women in evangelization. A good example is Mary Magdalene, the first woman to bear witness to the resurrection (Mt.28:1-10; Mk.16: 8-11; Lk.24:10; Jn.20:11-18), and the Samaritan woman in our text, reputed as the first woman evangelizer,⁵ the first to say that Jesus is the Messiah. The texts of Luke 8:1-2 and Romans 16:3-6, 12 further speak well of women as evangelists. In fact, everywhere in the Pauline corpus, for instance, women as deacons (phoebe), apostles (Junia), missionaries and prophetess (Priscilla and Maximalla) and teachers (Thecla) including Mary, Tryphaena, Persis and Tryphosa), and also Euodia and Syntyche (cf. Phil.4:2), Prisca (cf. 2Tim.4:19), and Lydia (Acts.16:11-15) committed them-

³ William Boarder, Eucharistic Liturgy Homily, in David B. Burnel and Franzita Kane, (eds.), *Evangelization in the American Context*, South Bend University of Notre Dame 1976, 46-52

⁴ D.S. Amalorpavadas, *Theology of evangelization in the Indian Context*, in Service and Salvation, Bangalore 1973, 32f (Theological Publications in India)

⁵ Her evangelization was spectacular. She adopted a method of evangelization, which is in contrast to today's popular preachers of prosperity, who teach that material prosperity will come when a person believes in Christ.

selves to the service of the Church.⁶ The fact is that the activities of these women challenge African women to extend their feminist responsibilities to the church, especially regarding the liberative motif and socio-cultural transformation. In this respect, professional women, academics, bankers, lawyers, doctors, engineers and surveyors put themselves at the service of the Church as a form of evangelism. By so doing they help the Churches in Igboland to grow and develop a deeper self-understanding.

Textual Analysis

Jn 4: 1-12 is the context of the study. It narrates in part Jesus' meeting with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well near Sychar – the geographical setting of the narrative. It is one of the fascinating dialogues of Jesus in the gospels. Here, more than elsewhere the Johannine dramatic story/dialogue is at its best having no resemblance to anything in the Synoptic gospels. The outline is simple. After the introduction by the narrator in verses 1-6, the conversation between a Jewish man and a Samaritan woman starts in verse 7. In vv. 9 and 11, the woman refers to the socio-cultural problems and sphere within which the conversation takes place namely, the relation between Jews and Samaritans⁷ on one hand, and herself as a woman and Jesus a man⁸ on the other. Then the woman asks Jesus the revealing question, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans)." The woman's questioning of Jesus' openness to her reflects her recognition that she is being called to ignore traditional boundaries (Bob Ekblad 2004:139). The woman goes on in verse 12 to ask another daring but significant question. "Are you greater than our ancestor

⁶ Kemdirim O. Protus, "Gospel Challenges Women of Africa," in *Mission Outlook*, Edinburg: T&T Clark, Vol. 34 No.3 (October 2002), p. 1-4

⁷ The history of tension between Jews and Samaritans is well-known to the readers of John's gospel. A history of animosity filled with discontinuity and difference.

⁸ Women were regarded as being of inferior status in the patriarchal society of the time of John's gospel.

Jacob who gave us this well, and with his sons and his flock drank from it..." By this question (reaction) the woman again focus on the socio-cultural contrast between Samaritans and Jews – the discontinuity and difference.

In verse 20, she takes up the place of worship specifically mentioning again the names of the ancestors, Jacob and Joseph as another attempt to defend her ancestral and cultural heritage and from there she shifts the conversation to the basic dispute of the Jews and Samaritans – the proper place of worship to Yahweh. This leads Jesus to pronounce that the old Jewish-Samaritan debate is about to be transcended by worship in spirit and truth, then the woman's assurance that the dispute will be cleared up in the messianic age, and leads to Jesus' declaration that he is the Messiah; and the woman's departure to fetch her friends to see Jesus, who engages in conversation with many Samaritans.

The Characters in the Story

The major and minor characters in the story are clear enough. They are Jesus and the Samaritan woman who consist of major characters while the minor characters are the disciples, the Samaritans and the Jews. The former merits our attention.

The first major character in the story is Jesus. He is typified differently by scholars. Jesus is considered trustworthy and convincing, a good teacher (Hans de Wit 2004:79) and a great communicator, a gentle Savior who epitomizes God's defense of the dignity of women (Jan Hartman 2004:353). He is one who crosses boundaries that separate people. Jesus' behavior toward the Samaritan woman is a model of how to relate to the excluded or transform exclusion into inclusion. Instead of prejudging and pronouncing punishment on the Samaritan woman, Jesus restores her.

Again, Jesus is an example for mission. He overcomes all barriers to meet the Samaritan woman and offers her health and salvation. He did not condemn the woman; instead he was pleased to talk to her.

The Samaritan Woman

Another major character is the Samaritan woman. She is portrayed differently in varying contexts by scholars. Indeed, some have a positive attitude toward her. Against the classical characterizations and interpretations of the woman in commentaries and sermons as a prostitute, as immoral and the type of a sinner, she is seen as a woman of high social standing and possesses moral authority with greater initiative and understanding than the disciples. The people of Sychar followed her when she went to proclaim the message to them. Indeed, one cannot prove from her having been with five men that she was a prostitute (cf. Eric Anum 2004:187). The number of husbands she had can be explained (tentatively) in terms of Jewish laws that require a woman to marry her brother-in-law on the death of her husband (John Riches 2004:466).

Further, the Samaritan woman is seen as a woman of courageous action who was not shy about going to tell others. She was already personally courageous before meeting Jesus who changes her into an equally courageous social activist (John Riche: *ibid*) and missioner. Completely honest with Jesus ("I have no man"). She would have probably not married again after the encounter with Jesus but became independent, an evangelist. She is considered self-confident, a deep thinker, honest, brave and daring to take the risk of engaging in a witty conversation with a Jewish rabbi such as other biblical women like Martha and Mary Magdalene. She is a model for evangelism, an exemplary apostle who evangelizes her community, the same village out of which the other (male) disciples were only able to get ordinary food. She is the first woman evangelizer, an example of woman growing in faith. She talked just once with Jesus and reached faith and real confidence. She was a good disciple of Jesus, a teacher of Samaritans, a sower and harvester, and a woman who witnessed as Martha and Mary did.

There are, however, scholars whose attitudes toward the Samaritan woman is negative. For these, the Samaritan woman represents the sinner par excellence. The woman is an outcaste whose isolation brings tragic consequences: "low self-esteem, criticism, rejection, negative perception

of herself, culpability, social resentment, disappointments, frustrations, complexes, and so on (John Riche *ibid*). Though her attitude appears as a vindication of struggle for equity in gender relations, she is thought to be a vulgar village woman, unsuited for a dialogue with "the Christ" (Eric Anun *ibid*).

Igboland and the Osu caste system

In the light of mission evangelism among the Igbo both in the past and present, and in relation to caste system, it may be asked, who the Igbo are. The question is also asked who are the Osu? Or, how does the Osu stand out as outcast? How prevalent is the practice in Igboland today?

In the first place, the Igbo are a monolithic ethnic group found in the south-east of Nigeria. They constitute one of the three largest ethnic groups in the country. The others are the Hausa/Fulani (North) and Yoruba (West). The population of the Igbo today is estimated to be over seventy million people.⁹ They are predominantly Christian with no trace of Islamic conquest, dominance or footing. They are hardworking, industrious and prodigiously religious. Indeed, they have a rich missionary evangelism centered on school apostolate method,¹⁰ a factor that is accountable for their rich Christian heritage. In the mid-1960s, the Igbo with other minority groups in the region fought a civil war (1967 – 1970) with Nigeria in a bid to become a separate nation, Biafra.¹¹

⁹ The statistics in the paper are impressive, but they simply may not stand up under clear analysis, for they are backed by no reliable, documented evidence.

¹⁰ The method of school apostolate meant that wherever the church was established the school was also established alongside with it. In many cases, the same church building was used as school building too. The method differed from the principle of the Christian village which was the approach used by the Jesuits in South America and which was also popular along the West African coast especially in missions manned by French pioneer missionaries. The latter meant that all the converts were to come and build their homes close to the mission. Gradually a complete village composed of entirely of Catholics grew up.

¹¹ In the Roman Catholic cartography, Biafra covers the territory erected into the Prefecture of the Lower Niger in July 1889 which had as its boundaries the river Niger, the Benue, the Cameroon frontiers and ocean - to be precise the Bight of Biafra. The agitation for the restoration of the Republic of Biafra resurfaced since 2012 to an unprecedented level at the present.

The question about who the Osu are, and indeed the practice of caste system in Igboland from the earliest times is aptly described by Chinua Achebe in his celebrated novel, *Things Fall Apart* thus:

He was a person dedicated to a god, and thing set apart – a taboo forever, and his children after him. He could neither marry or be married by the freeborn. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Wherever he went, he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was a taboo to him. An Osu could not attend an assembly of the freeborn, and they in turn, could not shelter under his roof. He could not take the four titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his kin in the evil forest (Chinua Achebe 1958:111)

Again, as regards the practice of caste system, Achebe's further description of the relationship between the Diala/Osu is very illustrative.

...One Sunday two of them (i.e. the Osu) went into the Church. There was an immediate stir... Those (i.e. the Diala) who found themselves nearest to them (Osu) merely moved to another seat. The whole church raised a protest and was about to drive thee people (the Osu) out (Chinua Achebe ibid)

Today while many are wont to tolerate association with outcaste even cautiously, belief in the system is yet to be a thing of the past. The concept remains deep rooted in the culture. The fact is that like Jews and Samaritans of the past, there is still division. One area that discriminatory practice is yet to abate is marriage relationship. The Diala (freeborn) cannot marry Osu (outcast). This negates the neither Jew nor Gentile dichotomy in the body of Christ that Paul talked about in Galatians.

Early Missionary Approach to Osu Caste System

The first Igbo contact with Christianity was with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the late 18th century. The pioneer missionaries were Bishop Ajai Crowther, a Yoruba by birth and Olandah Equiano himself an Igbo. Both were ex-African slaves. They arrived in Igboland in 1857 from Sierra Leon. Nearly 30 years later the Roman Catholic missionaries led by two intrepid French Holy Ghost priests namely, Fr. Joseph Lutz and Fr Horne, and their companions made entry into the un-chartered Igbo hinterland precisely on Christmas day 1885. With the arrival of the later began emphasis on a method of evangelization¹² which directed attention not to the conversion of entire population, but only to a particular group of persons – liberated slaves, orphans, outcastes and condemned criminals.

It is, however, unimaginable that in spite of the prodigious efforts of the later twentieth-century missionaries the caste system still remained largely untouched. Could it be that the incarnation of Christianity in African culture was not vigorously pursued during the era? Or that the missionaries did not devote more to the study of the Bible to appropriate such rich text as Jn. 4 for the liberation of the Osu (outcast). Indeed many Bible stories like Jesus and the Samaritan woman contain universal aspects, aspects that transcend culture. The stories appeal to life experiences and problems that have to do with human existence like Osu caste system and women who suffer from patriarchal structures as well.

Though the Osu (outcasts) were received into the church yet the caste system and discriminatory practices did not come out forcefully of missionary teaching and preaching. Today, however, the system is open to new mission approach, women centered evangelism.

¹² This was Christian village method used by the Jesuits in South America. It was also popular along West African coast especially in missions manned by French missionaries. The principle of Christian village was that converts built homes close to mission.

Contemporary Mission Approach: Women in Evangelism

The contemporary mission or church response to caste system in Igboland is from women's evangelistic approach. In the first place, the involvement of African women in evangelism is outstanding especially in Pentecostalism where there is greater access to women's ministry. The array of women who join the league of church founders and planters especially in Nigeria¹³ is unprecedented. And to undertake mission effectively as Jesus and the Samaritan woman, they gradually equip themselves for ministry through theological training.¹⁴ Thus today women participate in an impressive list of congregational functions: elder, deacon, sexton, and teacher of religion in schools, member of the missionary or church committee. Accordingly, and with regard to ministry to the outcasts, *vis-à-vis*, the transformation of the traditional Igbo society in particular they reflect on how Jesus transforms the exclusion into inclusion to see how such inclusion of the excluded can occur in practice. Indeed, like the Samaritan woman who showed solidarity with the people she cared for; women evangelists adopt new evangelistic approach – life changing evangelism to address the culture of classism, namely caste system in Igboland.

Today like the Samaritan woman who was not only confident in herself but courageous to engage the Jewish man women evangelists critique aspects of Igbo culture that discriminate against outcasts not the least of which is exclusion from marriage relationship with the freeborn in Igbo society. Accordingly, they emphasize marriage relationship based on love and friendship and not by class. In this sense, marriage relationship would

¹³ In Nigeria, women founded churches are many. Good examples are God's Church Mission led by Archbishop Margaret Idahosa, God Fulfiller Ministry in Kafanchan Kaduna state by Comfort Obi, God is King Ministry, Kafanchan by Nkechi Jude, and Voice Throne of God Ministry, Egon Nasarawa state by Evang. Mrs. Grace Akwashika.

¹⁴ In the past women in Africa had little or no access to theological education and therefore did not have the opportunity to minister as pastors or catechists/agents in the church. Today, however, things are changing. In Catholic Church, for instance, women religious access theological education at the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt. In Pentecostal churches theological education for women a *fait accompli*.

mean an end to attitude of superiority of "being better of" (Romans.3:9) and for no one party to think that they are closer to God than anyone else. The fact is that like Jews and Gentiles, the freeborn and outcast in Igboland are sinners alike and both too are equal beneficiaries of God's saving grace.

African women evangelists have learnt to proclaim the good news exactly as the Samaritan woman did when she experienced the change in her life. They live their salvation and do not stay quiet. They set up house churches both in the urban and rural areas to transmit the gospel just as the Samaritan woman did (v.28ff). The result is that discriminatory cultural practices that affect outcasts in particular are becoming a thing of the past. Indeed, today the freeborn are beginning to participate in traditional dowry or bride-wealth marriage ceremony of the outcast with Christian devotedness. Thus, outcasts in Igboland overcome traditional boundaries in human relationship and receive spiritual gift (Jn. 7:37-39) offered by Jesus for the restoration their place in the society. From restoration and liberation springs the obligation to engage the so-called freeborn courageously in a genuine exchange and interaction that enables both classes - freeborn and outcast - to grow and move on.

African women evangelists today realize that the Samaritan woman could have lived in their societies where women are weighed down by patriarchal structures on all sides. In fact, like the Samaritan woman they live in society full of cultural depth dimensions. They encounter social groups like the ones Jesus and the Samaritan woman are involved (disciples and village people), social exclusion, ethnic differences and discrimination, women quarreling with each other over men, a difference in social status or relegated to a position of inferiority and silence. In situations as this, many are aware that they probably would identify themselves with the Samaritan woman who had many men in her life or other layers in the story. Or would have been like her in the past confused and rejected and would equally have been angry with the world too. It is against this background that African women evangelists struggle to transform the society by not shying away from speaking on matters that would bring about positive change. They

address the ills of the society such as teenage pregnancy, pre-marital sex, child abuse, abortion, early marriage, and trafficking in children and other human tragedies on the dignity of women in particular as in migration. Like the Samaritan woman their activities can be seen as gateways to achieving significant results in evangelism. An interpretation and understanding of the characters in the Samaritan story show how best women evangelists are responding to the challenges of exclusion in the Igbo society and elsewhere where the culture of caste system is prevalent even in the present times.

Conclusion

The story of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well contains for everyone - the Diala (freeborn) and Osu (outcast) – a liberating message that salvation is for everyone. Jesus' action stimulates groups to some form of reflection about barriers in personal faith and breaking down prejudices, knowing that all share one ancestor and are equal recipients of God's gracious act of salvation in Jesus Christ. Christ's rejection of stigmatization of Samaritans is a lesson that Christ does not approve of a culture that discriminates. He wants all to be united. This is the message of African women evangelists in their transformation of Igbo society.

13.

FORMAÇÃO EM SAÚDE DA POPULAÇÃO NEGRA: UMA ABORDAGEM A PARTIR DA METODOLOGIA ATIVA^{1 2}

MARIA JULIANA MOURA-CORRÊA³, STÉNIO DIAS PINTO RODRIGUES⁴,
SELENIR CORRÊA GONÇALVES KRONBAUER⁵

Introdução

No Brasil, a educação na área da saúde tem apresentado profundas mudanças programáticas frente ao desafio de acompanhar as exigências contemporâneas e os fundamentos que norteiam o modelo assistencial na formação profissional e popular. Neste contexto, os paradigmas do ensino tradicional têm sido gradativamente substituídos por novas metodologias, inovações tecnológicas e pedagógicas que apontam para necessidade da formação centrada no desenvolvimento de competências crítico-reflexivo, capaz de transformar a realidade social.⁶

¹ Este trabalho foi elaborado e apresentado como resultado de projeto realizado sobre Saúde da População Negra (2013-2016) publicado no vol. 22, nº1/2017, do Periódico *identidade!* das Faculdades EST

² Revisão gramatical: Caroline Ferrari.

³ Maria Juliana Moura Corrêa - Doutora em Saúde Coletiva pelo Instituto de Saúde Coletiva da UFBA, mestre em Serviço Social pela PUCRS, especialista em Epidemiologia pela UFPEL. Contato: mjulianamc@gmail.com

⁴ Stênio Dias Pinto Rodrigues - Bacharel em Ciências Jurídicas e Sociais Uniritter, Graduado em Gestão Pública na ULBRA Contato: steniodpr@gmail.com

⁵ Selenir Corrêa Gonçalves Kronbauer - Mestre em Teologia pela Faculdade EST. Professora e Coordenação do Grupo Identidade da Faculdade EST. Contato: selenir@est.edu.br

⁶ Adriana Lenho de Figueiredo Pereira, "As tendências pedagógicas e a prática educativa nas ciências da saúde". Cad Saude Publica. [periódico on-line]. vol.19, n.5, 2003, p.1527-1534.

A formação dos profissionais em saúde requer elementos que considerem o compromisso com a integralidade, a qualidade da saúde da população, com estabelecimento de vínculo com os usuários e cumprimento aos princípios do Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS).⁷ Entretanto, apesar das conquistas da política pública da saúde centradas no direito à saúde a todas as pessoas, percebemos que persistem desigualdades importantes na assistência e nos indicadores do setor. Esses tipos de desigualdades, baseadas no conceito de capital social⁸, apontam para a necessidade de se estudar como a questão racial é fator determinante nas disparidades de oportunidades do acesso a direitos desencadeados por mecanismos estruturais que influenciam a situação da área para a população.⁹

As condições de iniquidades da saúde da população negra são resultantes dos impactos do racismo individual e institucional, ao longo das transformações sociétárias. Fundamentalmente, aquelas relacionadas ao trabalho e a gestão em saúde, evidenciam a necessidade de formação permanente embasados em referenciais teórico-práticos direcionados aos profissionais vinculados ao campo de intervenção e o desenvolvimento das políticas de proteção à saúde universal e equânime.

Os processos de trabalho no setor reproduzem novas e antigas determinações de saúde-doença, evidenciados pelas disparidades das patologias entre a população negra e branca. E, dessa forma, as políticas públicas, por meio das formas de gestão e organização do trabalho em saúde, ainda não foram efetivas para o enfrentamento da matriz de danos e desigualdades que tem rebatimentos na saúde das pessoas de forma diferenciada, pelas questões étnicas.

⁷ Isabel Brasil Pereira, "A educação dos trabalhadores: valores éticos e políticos do cuidado na saúde". In: Pinheiro R, Mattos RA, orgs. *Razões públicas para a integralidade em saúde: o cuidado como valor*, Rio de Janeiro: Cepesc; 2009, p. 147-164.

⁸ Ichiro Kawachi and Lisa Berkman, "Social Cohesion, Social Capital, and Health". In: Berkman, L.F. and Kawachi, I. Eds., *Social Epidemiology*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001, p.174-190.

⁹ Michael Marmot, "Economic and social determinants of disease". *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 79(10):988-996, 2001.

Por outro lado, verifica-se em nosso país, um conjunto de iniciativas¹⁰ que buscam reduzir as desigualdades sociais e raciais, por meio de políticas afirmativas, intersetorial. Além disso, foi realizada a constituição de comitês e políticas específicas para esta população, assim como programas de valorização da cultura e da história negra, no sentido de reforçar aspectos relacionados com a identidade e com isto ampliar o reconhecimento da diversidade cultural que formou a nação brasileira (CONFERÊNCIA, 2001). Entretanto, apesar de importantes iniciativas que visam incidir sobre as desigualdades sociais, elas têm se mostrado insuficientes no que se refere à redução das desigualdades raciais.¹¹

A experiência de políticas universais, em especial do Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS), balizada pelos princípios e fundamentos de equidade tem demonstrado seus limites. Uma prova disso são os mecanismos recorrentes de reprodução do preconceito, da discriminação racial propagado na organização do trabalho, gestão nos serviços de saúde e das instituições públicas.

Para Rosana Heringer (2002)¹² estas desigualdades são graves, pois afetam a inserção dos negros e negras na sociedade, no acesso a direitos e, por conseguinte, comprometem a consolidação do projeto de construção de um país democrático e com oportunidades iguais para todos. Essa conjuntura, por sua vez, constitui uma enorme barreira para a abordagem das desigualdades raciais em âmbito local e nacional, especialmente no que se refere à transformação de costumes, atitudes e organização da gestão do trabalho em saúde.

Este cenário exige esforços no sentido de construir estratégias e processos formativos que (re)signifiquem as demandas advindas da população

¹⁰ A Escola Superior de Teologia (EST), Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, tem um compromisso com as questões étnico-raciais por intermédio do GRUPO IDENTIDADE há mais de 20 anos, o qual é apoiado financeiramente pela ELCA/Global Mission.

¹¹ Luciana Jaccoud, "O combate ao racismo e a desigualdade: O desafio das políticas públicas de promoção da igualdade Racial" in: *As políticas públicas e a desigualdade racial no Brasil: 120 anos após a abolição*. Org: Mário Theodoro Luciana Jaccoud, Rafael Osório, Sergei Soares. – Brasília: IPEA, 1^a ed., 131-166, 2008.

¹² Rosana Heringer, "Ação afirmativa e combate às desigualdades raciais no Brasil: o desafio da prática". *Encontro Nacional de Estudos Popacionais*, 13, 2002, Ouro Preto. Anais. Recife: Abep. CD-ROM, 16 p. Disponível em www.abep.org.br.

negra, de análise de situação em saúde e principalmente do fazer nesse setor, pela potencialidade estruturante da formação na área da Saúde da População Negra. Além disso, impõe-se o reconhecimento da imperiosa necessidade de realizar instrução com competência técnica, teórica e ética, referenciadas na formação crítica desses trabalhadores, gestores e lideranças sociais, para que compreendam a partir das diversas formas de conhecimento que compõem o campo da saúde, como as contradições podem impactar na implementação de práticas de atendimento.

Diante disso, o objetivo do projeto foi investir numa formação crítica integrada, com aplicação de metodologia ativa, por meio da utilização do Arco de Charles Maguerez¹³, no qual foi valorizado o saber profissional e popular.¹⁴ A estratégia aplicada de compartilhamento de vivencias presentes no ambiente social e do trabalho em saúde permite desvelar as condições adversas que reproduzem o racismo e, por consequência, as iniquidades em Saúde da População da Negra, para construir oportunidades de experimentação e desenvolvimento de competências para produção de novas atitudes fundamentadas na ética do setor.

Nessa perspectiva, este relato de experiência tem o propósito de descrever a experiência do curso em Saúde da População Negra e contribuir com o debate sobre o uso do método de formação ativa no projeto de formação.

Sobre o Curso em Saúde da População Negra

No curso, os conteúdos programáticos foram organizados por um eixo integrador que buscou desvelar os impactos das contradições presente na organização dos serviços em saúde e dos trabalhadores e trabalhadoras que prestam cuidados, e como eles repercutem nas condições de acesso diferenciadas da assistência à saúde. Para isso, estabeleceram-se processos

¹³ Juan Díaz Bordebane, Adair Martins Pereira, *Estratégias de ensino aprendizagem*. 4. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1988.

¹⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários à prática educativa*. 33^a ed. São Paulo: Paz e Terra; 2006.

contínuos de debates e avaliação mediante análise das diferenças entre os indicadores de morbi-mortalidade dos indivíduos.

A formação crítica em Saúde da População Negra procurou transformar e criar um espaço privilegiado de aprendizado para a intervenção. Isso exigiu a sensibilidade dos profissionais que atuam nesta área, principalmente, sobre a necessidade de um novo modo de fazer em saúde, com competências de natureza e conteúdos diversos, que respondam às necessidades contemporâneas da formação, suprindo, assim, a ausência e/ou deficiência de conhecimentos atualizados sobre as categorias: contradição, historicidade e totalidade.

Marx e os teóricos de Frankfurt destacam a importância de construir condições que propiciem mudanças sociais, em que a ênfase no componente crítico associa o pensamento prático e normativo, de forma a emancipar os seres humanos daquilo que os escravizam. Confrontar-se, portanto, com as condições ou aquilo que a sociedade retira de algumas populações, como por exemplo, dos negros e negras faz parte do processo para eles afirmarem sua própria história, ou seja, viver a existência autodirigida, desenvolvendo o pensar e a capacidade critica necessária para desvendar a realidade da opressão.¹⁵

A perspectiva abordada no curso considerou a relevância do saber-fazer, para propiciar que o aluno experimentasse a situação de complexidade de sua atividade de trabalho e identidade, mediados pelo contexto e os recursos metodológicos apreendidos que levam ao processo de criação de motivação e desenvolvimento do pensar crítico. Essa proposta teve como finalidade fomentar habilidades integrativas, na medida em que reúnem subsídios teóricos, práticos, institucionais confrontados ao contexto político e social do seu espaço de atuação.

A partir da integração da teoria, prática e cultura articulam-se os conteúdos com a finalidade que criar possibilidades/potencialidade sobre o agir cotidiano. Desta forma, o método propicia a reflexão sobre potenciais acontecimentos que permitam preparar a atuação, construindo competências na seleção de recursos educacionais, de informações, avaliação e aplicação de conhecimento,

¹⁵ Henry Giroux, *Escola crítica e política cultural*. RJ: Paz e Terra, 1987.

visando mudar atitudes que reproduzam iniquidades. A abordagem implica em dar significado, sentido e funcionalidade ao conteúdo apreendido.

Assim, o curso foi orientado para o manuseio dos indicadores de saúde, o planejamento e desenvolvimento de ações locais e a utilização de ferramentas, além dos instrumentos referenciados pela Política Integral à Saúde da População Negra, do Ministério da Saúde.

Metodologia do Curso

O curso foi um projeto de extensão em Saúde da População Negra, realizado pela Escola Superior de Teologia (EST) e o Denasus-SEAUD do Ministério da Saúde, no Sul do Brasil. A fundamentação teórica da metodologia da problematização¹⁶ utilizada tem por origem a concepção de educação transformadora, histórico-crítica, para o qual utilizou o método do Arco de Maguerez¹⁷, enquanto estratégia de ensino-aprendizagem para o desenvolvimento das ações.

A diretriz que orientou os conteúdos formativos embasou-se na produção do conhecimento sobre a política pública setorial relacionada com a temática da Saúde da População Negra, por meio de metodologia integrativa entre teoria e prática. Nesse sentido, evidenciam-se os aspectos teórico, metodológico e as demandas oriundas do contexto social, institucional, político e histórico que repercutem num formato organizativo de fortalecimento da identidade e dos processos de promoção do binômio saúde-doença dos negros e negras.

A metodologia pedagógica do curso integrou conteúdos teóricos e elementos oriundos de vivência e experiência dos alunos (gestores em saúde, trabalhadores e lideranças do movimento negro), a partir da análise de situação – fundamentados pela realidade local, objetiva e subjetiva,

¹⁶ Neusa Aparecida Navas Berbel, "A metodologia da problematização em três versões no contexto da didática e da formação de professores". *Revista diálogo educacional*, [S.I.], v. 12, n. 35, p.101-118, jul. 2012. ISSN 1981-416X. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.pucpr.br/index.php/dialogoeducacional/article/view/5014>. Acesso em: 21 ago. 2018. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7213/dialogo.educ.5904>.

¹⁷ Juan Díaz Bordebane, Adair Martins Pereira, *Estratégias de ensino aprendizagem*. 4. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1988.

e as competências adquiridas com as disciplinas e conhecimento das políticas públicas para análise e intervenção na realidade.

A formação para fins desse projeto foi definida enquanto prática pedagógica crítica e reflexiva^{18 19}, a qual deve garantir três aspectos centrais: a) conjugar o conhecimento do contexto histórico, social e cultural da sociedade e da organização da saúde, refletindo sobre as questões étnicas; b) atualizar a instrumentalização teórico-prática para a formação em Saúde da População Negra, planejamento de ações e a intervenção em saúde nos municípios; c) ampliar a compreensão do processo de saúde-doença e seus condicionantes e determinantes sociais.

Essa concepção está embasada nos referenciais de Boaventura de Souza Santos (2007)²⁰, que define a inovação teórica pautada na construção da emancipação humana e assentada em uma nova relação entre o respeito da igualdade e o princípio do reconhecimento da diferença. Para isso, o autor propõe a construção teórica do reconhecimento das diferenças entre os iguais.

O referencial epistemológico adotado foi o método dialético crítico, a partir das categorias totalidade, especificidade, contradição e historicidade, que orientaram a organização e estrutura das disciplinas, referenciadas pelo aprofundamento do conhecimento sobre as iniquidades raciais em saúde. As atividades integradas foram guiadas pela reflexão crítica da realidade em contraposição ao pensar hegemônico da democracia racial e igualdade em saúde, por meio dos conteúdos expositivos, filmes, história oral e popular.

A categoria central, que transversalizou os conteúdos, foi à *iniquidade racial em saúde*, que foi abordada em seus aspectos biológico, social e ambiental, demonstrado pelas evidências das doenças prevalentes por ciclo de vida em negros em relação aos brancos. A estrutura, portanto, foi organizada no tema, em três eixos estruturantes: 1) o estudo da realidade;

¹⁸ Adolfo Sánchez Vásquez, *Filosofia da práxis*. São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2007.

¹⁹ Ilma Passos Alencastro Veiga, *A prática pedagógica do professor de didática*. 11ª Ed. Campinas, SP: Papirus, 2007.

²⁰ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Renovar a teoria crítica e reinventar a emancipação social*. Tradução. Mouzar Benedito. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2007.

2) a organização do conhecimento sobre Saúde da População Negra e, 3) sua aplicação em nível local. Para isso, os módulos foram encadeados para dar sentido a essa perspectiva integrativa de construção de saberes e intervenção em seus contextos sociais e institucionais.

Discussão

A metodologia ativa aplicada e sua operacionalização são brevemente discutidas a luz da experiência do curso de Saúde da População Negra, para o qual são elencados cinco etapas do Arco de Chales Maguerez (BORDENAVE, 1982), conforme Figura 1, estratégia de ensino-aprendizagem a partir da realidade social: a observação da realidade, os pontos-chaves, a teorização, a hipótese de solução e aplicação da realidade.

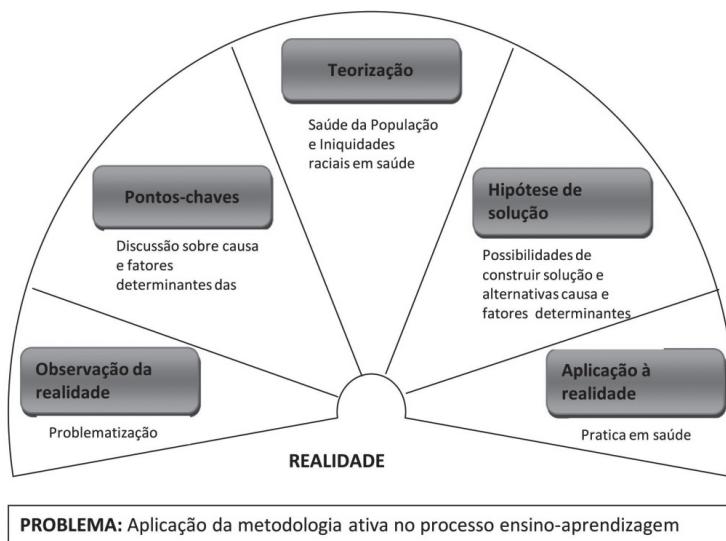


Figura 1. Planejamento do Arco de Problematização de Charles Maguerez.

Primeira Etapa: Observando a Realidade

Nesta etapa foram desenvolvidas as disciplinas de concepção teórico-metodológicas das políticas de saúde, com dados das regiões de origem dos participantes, a partir de um plano de ensino que abordou seis unidades: 1) História da reforma sanitária brasileira e participação popular no SUS; 2) A Política Nacional de Saúde da População Negra e o Racismo Institucional; 3) Epidemiologia e indicadores sociais e de saúde/ as doenças prevalentes na população negra; 4) Gestão e políticas de saúde no SUS e o recorte etnográfico do povo negro; 5) Trabalho de campo: dados epidemiológicos do município e entrevistas com gestores, conselhos de saúde e movimentos sociais; 6) Ação e intervenção, planejamento e plano de ação no município.

Entre os conteúdos desenvolvidos, a epidemiologia foi uma disciplina central pelo seu potencial de instrumentalizar para o uso de indicadores de morbidade, de mortalidade e para as análises de situação no território que evidenciam as desigualdades sociais. Isso quando se relaciona o adoecer e morrer diferenciados entre mulheres e homens negros em relação à população branca, ao mesmo tempo em que explicita a contradição de serem alvos de menos cuidados em saúde.

A escolha do processo de ensino foi a partir de exposições orais, debates com gestores, seminários, sempre contemplando a participação e as experiências dos atores sociais, assim como as inserções de atividades culturais musicais organizadas pelos alunos e que traziam a cultural afro-brasileira a cada abertura de turno.

Segunda Etapa: Identificando os Pontos-Chave

A segunda etapa abrangeu a observação da realidade a partir da análise de situação – fundamentos oriundos da realidade local, objetiva e subjetiva tanto pelos facilitadores quanto alunos representados pelas suas diferenciadas experiências na gestão, como trabalhadores e também usuários do SUS. Desta forma, identificou as influências culturais e geográficas

distintas, já que os alunos pertenciam a diversas regiões do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, conforme pode ser observado na Figura 2.

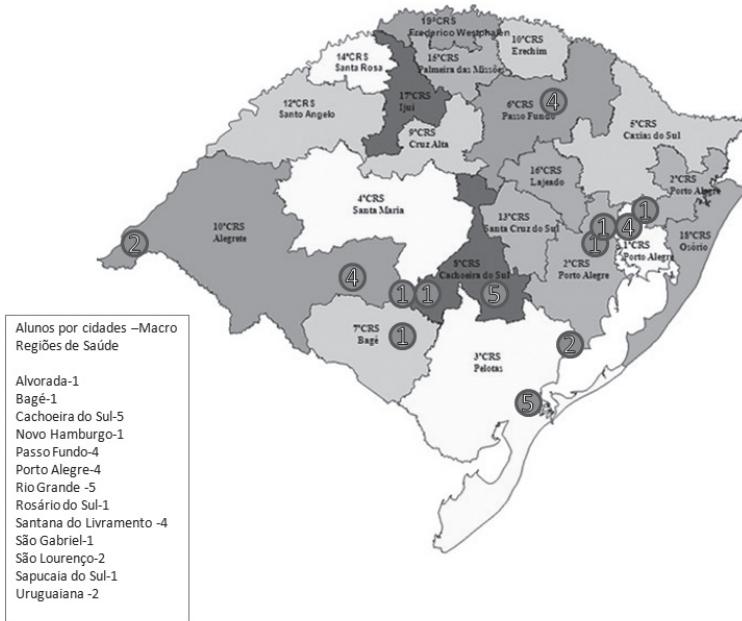


Figura 2. Representação dos alunos da turma do curso por região de saúde no Estado do Rio Grande do Sul.

Nesta etapa, após a construção do problema, são identificados os pontos-chaves para construção de reflexão sobre o tema das iniquidades raciais em saúde. Os recursos indutores de reflexão coletiva foram leitura de textos, relatos, depoimentos, roda de conversa, roda de música, filmes e dramatizações. Após essas atividades sempre foram realizados debates sobre a prática experimentada.

Terceira Etapa: Teorizando

Na terceira etapa proposta pelo método do Arco de Charles Maguerez é momento em que os sujeitos passam a perceber o problema e indagar sobre o porquê dos acontecimentos observados que foram objetos da fase anterior. É justamente neste instante em que ocorrem operações analíticas que propiciam o desenvolvimento intelectual.

A “problematização” que é realizada nesta etapa do processo de formação do curso é desenvolvida numa perspectiva de educação enquanto prática social e coletiva.²¹ Para sensibilizar os alunos para esse processo reflexivo foram desenvolvidos conteúdos a partir de subsídios teóricos e históricos dos acontecimentos que foram analisados a partir de dados, da observação participativa, das histórias documentadas, das pesquisas e filmes que registraram os problemas relacionados às iniquidades e desigualdades em saúde ao longo da história da humanidade.

Quarta Etapa: Identificando a Hipótese de Solução

Na quarta etapa experimentou-se a reflexão sobre construção de hipóteses de solução, a partir de alternativas viáveis, nas quais os participantes utilizaram a instrumentalização adquirida em aula para elaborar suas hipóteses e refletir com os colegas, considerando o confronto entre a teoria e a realidade. Nesse aspecto, observou-se que, o aprendizado sobre acesso e produção de medidas e indicadores e do acesso às principais bases de informações em saúde da região, dotou os alunos de subsídios que fortaleceram sua elaboração de propostas de hipóteses no confronto contra o discurso hegemônico da democracia racial em saúde versus conhecimento científico, amparado em dados epidemiológicos.

²¹ Neusa Aparecida Navas Berbel, “A problematização e a aprendizagem baseada em problemas: diferentes termos ou diferentes caminhos?” Interface: comunic,saúde, educ. 1998, p.139-154.

Quinta Etapa: Identificando Hipótese de Solução

Na aplicação da quinta etapa do método de Arco de Charles Maguerez do curso de Saúde da População Negra, a proposta foi cada grupo de alunos, a partir de seu âmbito de atuação, aplicar os conhecimentos adquiridos na formação na sua região. Para isso, os alunos deveriam levantar os dados de saúde da população negra e seus indicadores para analisar a prevalência de doenças, dados de morbi-mortalidade a partir das competências adquiridas no curso.

Após o levantamento e análises dos números, todos os grupos receberam a tarefa de comparar os resultados com a disparidade social em saúde e fazer propostas para o seu âmbito de atuação – na gestão, no trabalho e nos conselhos. As propostas foram elaboradas com a solicitação de exercitarem possibilidades de transformar alguns aspectos da realidade de suas cidades, secretarias municipais ou planejar ações enquanto coordenador da área de Saúde da População Negra, quer seja como gestor, trabalhador em saúde, ou liderança do Conselho de Saúde.

Os participantes também foram levados a refletir sobre os conhecimentos prévios e os apreendidos, as estratégias potenciais para transformar a realidade, a construção de planejamento estratégico com identificação dos limites e dos desafios, dos sucessos e problemas e das articulações potenciais para atingir os objetivos pretendidos a curto e longo prazo. Ao finalizar as fases com a aplicação do conhecimento no curso, verificou-se que a experiência adquirida e transposta para a realidade com a atividade prática conseguiu atender as etapas do planejamento e execução previstas no Arco de Chales Maguerez, conforme apresentado na Figura 1.

Considerações Finais

Ao refletir sobre o curso, em especial sua proposta de ensino e as vivências dessa prática pedagógica, verificou-se que a abordagem permitiu desenvolver um processo de ação e consciência crítica com desdobramentos na prática a partir

da intervenção dos participantes. Também foi possível promover o exercício dos princípios do SUS e discutir sobre compromisso com a população negra.

Destaca-se, fundamentalmente, a contribuição do curso para a consolidação de uma experiência reflexiva sobre o fazer em saúde e sua potencialidade para o desenvolvimento de processos participativos de reformulação de conceitos, postura, atitudes a respeito do conhecimento instituído e instituinte de preconceito racial e sua reprodução no cuidado em saúde. Esses elementos oportunizaram, sobretudo, a construção de reflexão crítica sobre sua própria prática na área.

A explicitação das etapas de processo formativo à luz da aplicação do Arco de Chales Maguerez, evidenciou com clareza os referenciais participativo, críticos, da saúde coletiva, fundado na prática cotidiana do trabalho em saúde, com capacidade enquanto instrumento de encadear momentos lógicos de potencial de reflexão sobre o fazer e assim possibilitar a revisão da prática no sentido de qualificar a assistência à saúde de todos os indivíduos.

Essa experiência foi bem-sucedida na medida em que privilegiou a dimensão teórico-crítica do trabalho em saúde, articulada ao cenário contemporâneo e às demandas e requisitos aos trabalhadores, gestores e lideranças sociais da área no sentido de superarem o racismo institucional na saúde.

14.

TEOLOGIA PLURALISTA DAS RELIGIÕES E TEOLOGIA DA LIBERTAÇÃO^{1 2}

LUIZ CARLOS SUREKI³

Introdução

A pluralidade das religiões e dos movimentos religiosos coloca aos teólogos cristãos o desafio de desenvolver um estudo que, por um lado, não renuncie a identidade cristã, e que, por outro, tome com seriedade a realidade do pluralismo religioso. Foi justamente na tentativa de dar respostas à esta questão que várias propostas surgiram. A mais representativa é a chamada “teologia das religiões”, que, com audácia profética, assumiu o paradigma pluralista.

Certamente que essa teologia não está isenta de problemas. A principal acusação contra ela é a de que suas ideias, devido às perspectivas epistemológica e metodológica utilizadas, parecem romper com a identi-

¹ O presente texto, resultado da comunicação apresentada no Fórum Mundial de Teologia da Libertação, realizada por ocasião do Fórum Social Mundial, 2018, em Salvador – BA, contou com o auxílio da Capes/Proex.

² Revisão gramatical: Caroline Ferrari.

³ Luiz Carlos Sureki: mestre e doutor em Teologia Sistemática, professor e pesquisador junto ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Teologia da Faculdade Jesuíta de Filosofia e Teologia (FAJE), Belo Horizonte – Brasil. Orcid: 0000-0002-9829-3862.

dade cristã ou, pelo menos, romper com a pretensão de universalidade do cristianismo calcada no seu mediador absoluto da salvação: Jesus Cristo.

Neste contexto do pluralismo religioso, surgia na América Latina uma especial reflexão teológica, que recebeu o nome de “teologia pluralista da libertação”. “A teologia do pluralismo religioso não é mais um campo teológico, setorial, limitado aos especialistas. É sobretudo um novo olhar, um paradigma emergente, que exige reler de forma pluralista toda a velha teologia inclusivista e a fé”.⁴ Este estudo se comprehende, portanto, como ponto de encontro entre a práxis libertadora e a “reformulação” da doutrina cristã à luz do paradigma pluralista. Para os defensores da teologia pluralista da libertação, esta não é uma nova prática, mas um modo de teologizar.

Inicialmente, faremos uma alusão sintética ao processo de surgimento da teologia pluralista da libertação mostrando como se relacionam, em grandes linhas, o estudo das religiões com a Teologia da Libertação.

Um Breve Percurso Histórico

A Coordenação Teológica da ASETT⁵, Região América Latina, publicou entre os anos de 2001 e 2010, uma coleção de livros em torno do tema pluralismo religioso e teologia da libertação. Trata-se de cinco volumes intitulados “*Por los muchos caminos de Dios*”, em português e espanhol. Parte deles já foi traduzida para o italiano e o inglês. Esta obra coletiva, como um todo, representa um enorme impulso na tentativa de relacionar a teologia da libertação com a do pluralismo religioso.

O primeiro volume (2003) traz o título “*Desafíos del pluralismo religioso a la teología de la liberación*”. É uma primeira aproximação ao tema da relação entre libertação e pluralismo e ao paradigma pluralista.

⁴ Vigil, José Maria, *Teología do pluralismo religioso. Para uma releitura pluralista do cristianismo*. Col. Tempo Axial. São Paulo: Paulus, 2006.

⁵ Asociación Ecuménica de los Teólogos del Tercero Mundo, forma latina de Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians – EATWOT.

O segundo volume (2004), “*Hacia una teología cristiana y latinoamericana del pluralismo religioso*”, tentou dar as primeiras respostas aos desafios atuais do pluralismo religioso. Em sintonia com o primeiro volume, os autores procuraram formular mais precisamente o paradigma pluralista por sua relação à libertação.

No terceiro volume (2005), “*Teología latinoamericana pluralista de la liberación*”, o paradigma pluralista foi plenamente assumido. A reflexão, porém, permanecia ainda nos limites contextuais da América Latina.

O quarto volume (2006), “*Teología libertadora intercontinental del pluralismo religioso*”, faz uma avaliação do desenvolvimento e da situação de uma teologia pluralista das religiões em distintos contextos: América Latina e do Norte, Ásia, Europa e África. O nominativo “libertação” tornou-se um adjetivo “libertadora”. Significa que a libertação não é mais uma teologia particular, mas um elemento ou característica central da doutrinação das religiões que estava sendo praticada.

O quinto e último volume (2010), “*Hacia una teología planetaria*”, é a referência bibliográfica mais importante da libertadora teologia do pluralismo. Nele encontramos, por exemplo, contribuições valiosas de R. Panikkar, M. Amaladoss, D. R. Loy, J. Neuesner, K. L. Seshagiri Rao, J. M. Vigil, P. Knitter, entre outros. O conteúdo deste volume revela que os teólogos da libertação e os teólogos das religiões realmente têm muito o que aprender uns dos outros.

E assim a história da teologia pluralista da libertação está essencialmente vinculada a essas publicações. Uma tentativa de sistematização dessas distintas contribuições foi apresentada por P. Knitter.⁶ Nele nos baseamos para expor essa síntese e, a partir dele, apresentar alguns desdobramentos e algumas questões instigantes para o diálogo atual.

⁶ Paul F. Knitter, “Un diálogo necesario: entre la teología de la liberación y la teología del pluralismo religioso”. In: *Por los muchos caminos de Dios I*, Ecuador: Centro Bíblico Verbo Divino, 2003, 92-111.

Teologia do Pluralismo Religioso e Teologia da Libertação

Entre os muitos “sinais dos tempos” há dois, segundo Paul Knitter, que apresentam grandes desafios aos cristãos: a experiência de que existem muitos pobres e muitas religiões. Não seria de se estranhar, portanto, que duas das mais criativas e vivificantes expressões da vida e do pensamento sejam, justamente, a teologia das religiões, que reage ao problema do pluralismo religioso, e a da libertação, que quer dar respostas aos mais desconcertantes problemas do sofrimento e da injustiça.

O ponto de partida da reflexão provém da constatação espontânea de que a teologia da libertação e a das religiões necessitam uma da outra. Com efeito, a teologia da libertação também precisa libertar-se para poder expandir-se.⁷ Se ela se fechasse sobre si mesma, perderia o seu potencial genuinamente libertador. O movimento de libertação não necessita somente de religião, mas uma versão plural. Com efeito, a libertação econômica e política e especialmente a libertação integral é grande demais para uma nação, uma cultura, uma religião.

A Teologia da Libertação só poderá realizar seus propósitos se transpu-
ser os umbrais latino-americanos do cristianismo ocidental e levar a sério,
não somente a experiência religiosa dos povos ameríndios, mas também
as experiências do mundo.⁸ Se ela quer fincar suas raízes também na Ásia,
precisa entrar em diálogo com as religiões orientais. Ao ser exclusivamente
cristã corre o risco de limitar-se unilateralmente *ad intra*, orientando-se
para uma visão única do Reinado de Deus. Um encontro com o potencial
libertador do budismo e do hinduísmo, por exemplo, possibilitaria aos
teólogos latino-americanos darem-se conta das influências e condicio-
namentos europeus presentes (conscientemente ou não) em sua diretriz.

⁷ Raimon Panikkar, “Teologia da Libertação e Libertação da Teologia”, in: Vigil, J. M., (Org.). *Por uma Teologia Planetária*, Paulinas: São Paulo, 2001, 173-179.

⁸ Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984, p. 223-233.

Uma teologia das religiões, por sua vez, encontra-se frente ao perigo de ser demasiada generalizante e, por isso, abstrata. Caso lhe venha a faltar a dimensão prática, ela corre o risco de ser uma doutrina para todos e, concretamente, uma teologia para ninguém. Os teólogos das religiões perceberam nos últimos anos que a Teologia da Libertação poderia ser de grande valia.

Com efeito, o teólogo que séria e honestamente se compromete com o diálogo inter-religioso não pode simplesmente contemplar as outras religiões ao modo de um indivíduo situado no alto da montanha da sua doutrina. Ele é consciente dos limites e dos perigos de uma atitude demasiado entusiasta frente ao pluralismo existente. Por certo, não se trata meramente de tolerar a multiplicidade dos credos. Os limites da tolerância se revelam nas vítimas da sociedade, disse Dorothee Sölle. “Onde os homens são mutilados, despidos de sua dignidade, violentados e aniquilados, aí é o lugar onde a tolerância chegou ao fim”.⁹

Esta metodologia pode ajudar a evitar posições absolutistas, por um lado, e a não cair no relativismo, por outro. O teólogo Paul Knitter, na obra supramencionada, oferece três princípios da Teologia da Libertação como contribuição para o que ele chama de um “diálogo pluralista”, buscado pelos teólogos das religiões.

Os Teólogos da Libertação e a “Hermenêutica da Suspeita”

Os teólogos da libertação trabalham com uma hermenêutica da suspeita. O risco de que as interpretações das Escrituras e das formulações doutrinais de uma religião se transformem em uma ideologia que defende somente os interesses de um determinado grupo e um status privilegiado que visa assegurar algum tipo de controle da situação, está sempre presente. Uma práxis libertadora torna-se um importantíssimo critério de ajuda para nos desvincilharmos dessas ideologias.

⁹ Dorothee Sölle, *Strength of the Weak: Toward a Christian Feminist Identity*, Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984, p. 66.

A hermenêutica da suspeita é importante para todos os teólogos das religiões que procuram construir sua teoria com uma base cristã. Isso porque o fundamento cristológico da teologia tradicional das religiões gestada em ambiente cristão foi utilizado, muitas vezes, para assegurar o desejo ideológico de superioridade, segundo Knitter. A condicionalidade do Cristo imposta como norma definitiva para toda religião esconde, frequentemente, uma vontade de poder, domínio e controle sobre os outros credos. Se as consequências das doutrinações levam a ignorar a sensibilidade religiosa dos outros, tais se encontram sob a hermenêutica da suspeita. O cristão, especialmente o teólogo, pode evitar esse tipo de perigo sempre e quando, no diálogo com outro, conscientemente perceber, se o outro realmente tem a palavra, se ele pode falar de si e de sua cultura religiosa. Caso contrário, seu proceder teórico e prático cai sob suspeita.

É certo que nenhuma teologia está completamente livre de interesses. Por outro lado, o caráter propriamente prático da teologia tem a ver com a realidade a ser inteligida por ela. No caso da teologia cristã, trata-se do reinado de Deus, da ação libertadora de Dele na história. É da práxis divina que a teologia extraí sua intelecção, e é isso que deve servir. Deste modo, a teoria teológica deve ser verificável na práxis teologal tornando-se, assim, e somente desse modo, relevante para uma situação histórica determinada que, no caso, está marcada pela pluralidade religiosa.¹⁰

A Opção Pelos Pobres

A opção pelos pobres é o núcleo epistemológico da teologia da libertação. O pobre tem o privilégio hermenêutico. Não é difícil perceber que muitos debates acalorados estagnaram nas condições de possibilidade, *a priori*, para um diálogo inter-religioso efetivo.

¹⁰ Francisco Aquino Júnior, *O caráter prático da teologia*. Col. Theologica. São Paulo: Loyola, 2017, p. 68-71.

Para a posição tradicional, o diálogo havia de pressupor a existência de uma base ou campo comum que fosse compartilhado (ou que pudesse ser) por todas as religiões, segundo Knitter. Ela poderia ser algo como uma “essência comum”, uma “fé universal”, ou ainda um “centro místico comum”.¹¹ A suposição de que deve haver algo em comum nas religiões para que a possibilidade do diálogo pudesse ter lugar pode também ser perigosa, caso venha a desaguar em alguma forma de fundamentalismo ou de objetivismo.¹²

Quando a complexidade do universo religioso fica reduzida a uma matriz a-histórica, surge o fundamentalismo. Uma teoria universal das religiões, ou uma fonte comum para todas (ainda que fosse Deus), não faria jus ao pluralismo. Ele não pode, por definição, ser um sistema universal.¹³

Para os teólogos da libertação, esse contexto comum seria a opção pelos pobres deste mundo, o compromisso para com eles. Isso significa fundamentalmente que as religiões do mundo poderiam, em princípio, reconhecer a pobreza e a situação de opressão como problema comum.

Se elas puderem assumir um compromisso comum, de diferentes maneiras, contra tal problema, então encontrariam uma base para o diálogo para além das suas diferenças, sem perder, contudo, a própria identidade que cada uma possui. Aqui a ortopráxis tem primazia sobre da ortodoxia. De fato, se fé (ortodoxia) permanece presa ao assentimento à uma verdade ou verdades (doutrina), tanto mais difícil será o desenvolvimento de um diálogo inter-religioso autêntico, porque lhe falta a dimensão prática (ortopráxis).

¹¹ Arnold Toynbee, *The Task of Disengaging the Essence from the Non-essentials in Mankind's Religious Heritage. An Historian's Approach to Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, 261-183; Wilfred C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, New York: New American Library, 1964, Cap. 6 - 7; Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1972, p. 101-124; Walter Terence Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1960; Frithjof Shuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, New York: Harper & Row 1975; Merton, Thomas, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, New York: A New Directions Book, 1975, p. 309-317.

¹² Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis*, University of Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Press, 1983.

¹³ Raimon Panikkar, „A Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality?“ in Leonard J. Swidler, ed. *Toward a World Theology of Religions*, New York: Orbis Books, 1984.

Deste modo, uma libertadora teologia das religiões não pode colocar em primeiro lugar a pergunta pela “reta fé” na unicidade de Cristo, mas antes deve se questionar, sem negar o Cristo, pela “reta práxis” diante das outras religiões.¹⁴ A preocupação com a ortodoxia somente se justifica por sua necessidade para a ortopraxia. Se, a partir do seguimento de Jesus, sabemos que a práxis dele é libertadora, que se opõe à opressão, e que, como tal, pode transformar a vida para melhor, então a questão da sua unicidade se converte em outra pergunta: se Jesus é ou deve ser, por toda eternidade, a palavra definitiva e normativa de Deus para todas as religiões, e não somente o centro de nosso ser-cristão. “Nem todo aquele que me diz Senhor, Senhor, entrará no reino dos céus, mas somente aquele que faz a vontade do meu Pai que está no céu” (Mt 7, 21-23). A isso podemos acrescentar que o que o Pai quer para todos, nós descobrimos na práxis libertadora e salvífica da vida de Jesus. “Quem não está contra nós, está a nosso favor” (Mc 9,40). Isso significa que quem, como Jesus, se compromete com uma práxis libertadora, trabalha conosco.

Um segundo passo seria este: em vez de buscarmos um “Deus”, ou um “Absoluto”, uma “Substância Comum”, ou um “Centro Místico” em todas as religiões, poderíamos reconhecer na opção pelos pobres um *lócus* de experiência que cada religião, ao seu modo, apresenta. No compromisso engajado pela libertação da injustiça com diferentes grupos de oprimidos, os fiéis de diferentes tradições podem experimentar juntos, e cada um por si, o que a sua raiz religiosa representa para suas decisões, o que sua esperança inspira, e que tipo de atitudes suscita na luta contra a injustiça, na promoção da unidade e da paz.

A luta pela justiça poderia ser o lugar onde hindus, budistas, cristãos, judeus podem experimentar o que os une e, a partir daí, falar a respeito de igual para igual. A comunicação possível entre fiéis de tradições diferentes

¹⁴ A Declaração *Nostra Aetate* – sobre a relação da Igreja com as religiões não cristãs – não parte de uma formulação dogmática, mas da busca de uma “atitude correta” da Igreja para promover o diálogo inter-religioso.

não se dá somente em termos de uma experiência mística contemplativa, mas especialmente na comunicação de uma práxis libertadora.¹⁵ Através da práxis poderemos perceber mais profundamente o que Deus, Sunyata, Tupã ou Olodumare (Rel. Yoruba) têm em comum.

A Compreensão do Reino de Deus como Soteria

Conforme assinalamos acima, para a Teologia da Libertação o Reino/Reinado de Deus desempenha um papel decisivo. Isso significa libertação da opressão e do sofrimento, a salvação. A soteriologia constitui o seu centro de gravidade da teologia.

Knitter, em seu livro “*No other name?*”, fala sobre o “reinocentrismo” ou “universal soteriocentrismo” como um ponto de chegada de um longo processo que se desenvolveu desde um eclesiocentrismo para um cristicocentrismo, deste para o teocentrismo, e que agora se inclina para um soteriocentrismo (a salvação no centro).

O que constitui a base e o objetivo do diálogo inter-religioso, o que possibilita a compreensão e o trabalho conjunto entre as religiões, o que une as religiões numa práxis comum, não é o modo e a maneira segundo a qual elas se relacionam com a Igreja ou com Cristo (anonimamente — K. Rahner, ou normativamente — H. Küng), tampouco o modo e a maneira segundo a qual respondem e comprehendem Deus. A resposta está em o *como* promovem a soteria, ou seja, como promovem o bem-estar humano, e como realizam a libertação dos pobres e oprimidos.¹⁶

Propor a soteria como fonte dos critérios éticos para o diálogo inter-religioso pode, contudo, segundo Knitter, parecer uma atitude ingênua. Ainda que haja uma concordância compartilhada acerca do dever de promover da justiça e de se comprometer com a luta contra a pobreza e a opressão, cada religião a compreenderá à sua própria maneira.

¹⁵ Harvey Cox, *Religion in the secular City*, op. cit., p. 238.

¹⁶ Paul Knitter, “Un diálogo necesario”, op. cit., p. 104.

Deste modo, cada aproximação teocêntrica ou soteriocêntrica permanece em certa medida cristocêntrica, budistocêntrica, kishnacêntrica, etc. Cada fiel tem o seu próprio ponto de vista e perspectivas e, além do mais, os mediadores são distintos. Contudo, os critérios segundo os quais nós compreendemos o significado da libertação e, a partir desta, o que constitui a autêntica (ou falsa) salvação, não podem provir unicamente dos (nossos) mediadores particulares.

O universal, seja ele Deus ou soteria, sempre são experimentados, compreendidos e seguidos através de um símbolo ou de um mediador particular. Neste caso, Cristo permanece o caminho, a verdade e a vida para os cristãos. A diferença, então, entre um procedimento cristocêntrico ou teocêntrico e um soteriocêntrico está no reconhecimento explícito de que diante da soteria (a salvação comum) nenhum símbolo ou mediador é tomado por absoluto.

Aloysius Pieris escreve que, a partir de uma experiência na Ásia com teólogos da libertação, as religiões do mundo têm mais pontos comuns em suas soteriologias do que em suas teologias.¹⁷ A perspectiva da soteria, que é dada por algum mediador, permanece aberta a experiências, complementos e mesmo mudanças através do ponto de vista do outro mediador. O cristão busca o reino e a sua justiça *por meio* de Cristo. “Quanto a vós, buscai em primeiro lugar o Reino de Deus e a sua justiça e tudo o mais vos será dada por acréscimo” (Mt 6,33).

Certamente a categoria “soteria” precisaria ser mais bem explicada. Contudo, quando os esclarecimentos pretendem dizer o que alguém deve compreender por salvação, uma tal compreensão já estará condicionada pelo respectivo mediador das distintas religiões e suas próprias convicções. Com efeito, eles ocupam um lugar imprescindível nas religiões porque estão imediatamente associados à constituição e à permanência da identidade religiosa de um determinado grupo ou povo.

¹⁷ Aloysius Pieris, *The place. Speaking of the Son of God in Non-Christian Cultures*, for example in Asia, Schillebeeckx, E.; Metz J. B. (ed.), *Jesus, Son of God?*, New York: Concilium, Seabury, 1982, p. 133.

Assim parece fácil admitir que todos buscam salvação e que todas as religiões são portadoras de uma mensagem salvífica. Mas, supreendentemente, configura-se muito difícil admitir a coexistência de distintos mediadores e, respectivamente, de diferentes *caminhos* como possíveis e igualmente verdadeiros para isso.

Parece que habita em nós um desejo geral de salvação, mas, curiosamente, não uma salvação comum. Isso ocorre porque a pessoa contempla a salvação a partir de sua própria religião, e não sua religião a partir da salvação. Deste modo, realiza uma identificação quase espontânea, mas também problemática, entre salvação e (seu) determinado credo.

Quando considerados sob o horizonte da soteria, conceitos como paraíso, céu, reino dos céus, iluminação, ressurreição, felicidade eterna, sumo bem, vida eterna, futuro absoluto, etc., são praticamente sinônimos para designá-la. Todavia, a partir da particularidade de uma religião, eles já não têm mais um significado comum porque ocorreu um tipo de apropriação da salvação, ou seja, ela ficou condicionada a um modo de proceder e de crer específicos.

Acerca da pergunta pela unicidade de Jesus Cristo como problema para o diálogo inter-religioso, que tanto incomoda os teólogos cristãos, dizem os teólogos da libertação¹⁸ que Jesus de Nazaré não pode ser conhecido se ele não for seguido e se sua mensagem não for incorporada na práxis de nossa vida.

A práxis é o princípio e a possibilidade de constatação para tomar uma teoria ou doutrina por verdadeira, valorosa e consistente. Nesse sentido, escreve Leonardo Boff que nenhum dos títulos que possamos dar a Jesus pode ser absolutizado, pois tudo o que nós sabemos sobre ele precisa sempre de novo ser confirmado, elucidado, ou até mesmo corrigido pela práxis e na prática da vida.¹⁹ O conhecimento de Jesus exige segui-lo, isso exige compromisso com seu conhecimento libertador.

¹⁸ Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, New York: Orbis Books, 1978, 346-395; Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, New York: Orbis Books, 1978, p. 32-48, 264-295.

¹⁹ Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op. cit., p. 229-231

Jon Sobrino, por sua vez, diz que a universalidade de Jesus não pode ser demonstrada por meio de formulações (como as dogmáticas) ou símbolos (como a ressurreição). A sua realidade se encontra a partir da concreta encarnação.²⁰ O tornar-se homem exige um comprometimento prático de Deus na história humana. O diálogo pressupõe o acontecer de um encontro.

Conclusão

Os teólogos na América Latina e América do Norte falam acerca de uma libertadora teologia das religiões. O ponto de partida prático, a opção pela libertação dos pobres e oprimidos, como o campo comum às religiões, não é, contudo, um terreno firme, pois se trata de um caminho em fase de construção.

Esta opção não pode ser uma condição imposta para o diálogo inter-religioso de maneira absoluta. Ela é mais bem oferecida ou sugerida como um convite para uma conversa honesta e eficaz. Não se pode exigir que as religiões carreguem consigo a preocupação pelo sofrimento das nações oprimidas e aceitem a opção pelos pobres como ponto comum de partida do encontro inter-religioso, mas se pode supor que elas podem e o assim desejam.

Também é claro que não há uma única maneira de compreender a soteriologia, o que não significa que a percepção soteriológica cristã deva ser o modo definitivo e normativo para todos. O ponto de partida pode iluminar ou mesmo ser revisto e corrigido ao longo do processo, mas é necessário começar, e pelo menos um início nós já temos.

Por meio da ortopráxis podemos nos converter para uma autêntica e viva ortodoxia e expressá-la com palavras novas.²¹ Também é mérito de alguns teólogos latino-americanos, como Francisco de Aquino Júnior, espelhado nas reflexões de Zubiri e Ellacuría,²² terem nos chamado a atenção

²⁰ Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op. cit., p. 9-10.

²¹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church: The Human Story of God*, New York: Crossroad, 1990, p. 83. O outro fala sobre um ecumenismo da humanidade sofrida.

²² F. Aquino Júnior, *O caráter prático da teologia*, op. cit., p. 130-136.

para a dimensão prática da teologia. Se o assunto da teologia é ação salvífica (soteriológica) de Deus na história, que chamamos Reinado de Deus, então a teologia deverá brotar do nosso ser-afetado por essa ação salvífica de Deus; ação que não se encerra nos limites nem da nossa, nem de nenhuma outra religião ou denominação religiosa, tampouco na soma de todas elas.

Do mesmo modo, é importante tomar a salvação no horizonte do dom. “Porque pela graça sois salvos, por meio da fé; e isto não vem de vós, é dom de Deus” (Ef 2,8). Uma vez desvinculada do campo do merecimento, da recompensa ou da conquista, abre-se o espaço da gratidão, do servir generoso, alegre e humilde. A fé de que Paulo fala já é graça, é dom da bondade, do amor salvífico de Deus. Escrevendo aos Romanos, dirá ele: “Porque em esperança fomos salvos. Ora a esperança que se vê não é esperança” (Rm 8,24). Salvação como dom diz respeito à fé enquanto manifestada em Cristo Jesus, e, contudo, diz respeito à esperança enquanto ela não está disponível, não está totalmente realizada, e não somos proprietários dela.

A mensagem salvífica das religiões anuncia a promessa de um bem definitivo futuro. Por isso, a palavra soteriológica das religiões toca o solo da esperança humana. Se o Mistério dos Mistérios, Deus, origem sem origem, inominável, inabarcável, indisponível, quer dar-se como tal a nós, criaturas finitas, como nossa salvação, então tal lugar de Deus em nós deverá ser a esperança, porque é próprio da esperança, assim como do amor, manter-se como tal pela não conquista objetiva do que se espera, respectivamente, de quem se ama.

15.

LIBERATION OF NATURE:

THE RELATION BETWEEN HUMAN BEING AND NATURE

AS ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL ISSUE

DANIEL STOSIEK¹

Introduction

A central topic of the Liberation Theology is to be aware of the suffering and the urge for liberation particularly of both the exploited and socially excluded people. Thereby, it is learning from Marxist theory that the exploitation of “living labor” of the human being is the direct source of the value, and particularly the surplus value, that constitutes the capital. In my view, however, in learning from the voices and spirituality of indigenous peoples as well as studying theories of self-organization of matter and considering the ecological disaster, one has also to regard the subjectivity of nature. This leads to a modification of the Marxist theory of value: human labor *together* with the labor of nature are the source of material wealth, of value, surplus value and capital. In a social and spiritual dimension, this means to attend to the “cry of nature”, which

¹ Daniel Stosiek is a post doctorand at Universidade Metodista de São Paulo (UMESP). He studied Theology and Development Policy in Germany, and does research on comparing issues of economy, sociology and spirituality between indigenous peoples and occidental society.

Leonardo Boff has been working towards. So, learning from indigenous peoples leads to recognizing a direct connection between the reduced life of both human beings and nature/Earth as well as their suffering and death with the increase of capital. I am arguing that liberation theology should conceive such a dimension by the dialogue with indigenous peoples, because this will enrich its criticism of the idolatry of capital and market. It will also give greater sensibility to suffering and highlight the spiritual and social relation between humanity and nature.

The Marxian idea of *Positive Transformation of Religion*

The German word *Aufhebung*, used by Hegel and Marx, means 1) to suspend (negate), 2) to elevate, 3) to keep (in Spanish *abolir*, *levantar*, *preservar*). It refers to a type of transformation which *negates* an aspect in order to affirm/approve on a higher or more complex dimension. For lack of a direct translation of *Aufhebung*, I want to use the term *transformation*. Positive transformation of religion means here in particular that one maintains religion in a manner whereby it does not reinforce suffering. While the goal is to keep religion, it is done in a way that negates or makes invisible that aspect of religion that reinforces suffering.

A Humanistic way of Transforming Religion

One can find an orientation towards a humanistic way of transforming religion in the formulation by Enrique Dussel, when he writes in his *Philosophy of Liberation*: "The other [human being] is the only really sacred being worthy of respect without limit."² I find corresponding atheist theologies in the texts by Dorothee Sölle and Ivone Gebara (the latter in an extended manner: ecofeminism), but in many theologians works I am missing such courage.

² Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, New York: Orbis Books Maryknoll, 1985, p. 59 (No 2.6.2.3.).

Living Labor and Capital

Starting from this premise which is of most importance for liberation theology – God is not outside the world, but a reality between subjects; we are constituting, setting up God; we should conceive the world in a dialectic from below and not from above – it seems appropriate to move on to the criticism by Marx concerning economy and society. The key terms are the two extremes, on one side the living human being, his living labor which is at the same time his living life, and on the other side value and capital. Marx argues that there is a causal relationship between living labor and capital in such a way that capital is the result of exploitation of human labor, whereby the latter is the only source of capital. Thus, the very nature of capital is negating living labor, is negating the living life of the human being, is negating humanity. According to this way of thinking it is therefore necessary for humanism to abolish capitalism, and likewise, in terms of a transformed religion from the perspective of theology, the abolition of capitalism must be necessary.

Kinetic and Potential energy

One can understand this contradiction and coherence only within a monistic view of the world. Human labor and life as a category of a subject in social relation is at the same time a reality of physics: living energy, *kinetic energy* (energy in movement), expenditure of human *workforce* (*Arbeitskraft*) as Marx put it because the concepts of *energy* according to thermodynamics were in development at this time. The stunning awareness that *labor* (as Marx used the term) is *energy output* and that in turn *value* (as Marx used the term) is *potential energy*, is explained by Wolfgang Jantzen.³ What for Marx is *force of labor*, I want to call therefore *potential energy*, whereas the act of labor is *kinetic energy*. To work is an

³ Wolfgang Jantzen, "Marxismus als Denkmethode und Sicht auf die Welt – eine ständige Herausforderung auch im 21 Jahrhundert?", in Willehad Lanwer and Wolfgang Jantzen, *Jahrbuch der Luria-Gesellschaft* 2012, Berlin, 2013.

act of externalization of the living process of the human being (subjectivity in social relation and kinetic energy). It means to objectify one's own life for others. It is a partial negation of one's process of life (kinetic energy) and its transformation into potential energy for others by means of direct acts, products and services. Not only labor in the narrow sense of the word, but all activities of life in community are transitions or crossovers between kinetic and potential energy. When I embrace or kiss somebody or give him/her a cup of coffee, what in my perspective is *kinetic energy* (movement, life), is for the other *potential energy*, being transformed into his or her kinetic energy, whereby I objectify myself for the other, or the other objectifies me. This objectification is always a certain *negation* of the life at an immediate subjective level. However, within a reciprocal social relation, even within love, this negated life is at the same time transformed into an *affirmation* of life at the level of the social relation. This is *Aufhebung* according to the use of the term by Hegel.

The *value* of products, money etc. is a measure of potential energy. The transformation into an affirmation of life at the dimension of social relation only takes place if there is a social relation with labor as a function of the latter. The only meaningful function of value and products, of potential energy, is that it is a social means for transformation into kinetic energy, into life itself (as categories of subject and social meaning). As soon as value, products, material wealth, thus potential energy, is considered as a purpose or aim in itself, it becomes fetishized. As soon as one strives to increase it as an aim in itself, money becomes capital and that is why, capital and capitalism systematically negate human life. There is an irreconcilable contradiction between capital and human life when the other human being "is the only really sacred being worthy of respect without limit". If the latter is at the core of liberation theology, the criticism of capitalism must be at the core of such theologies.

The Indispensability of Nature as Subject and Alterity in Transforming Religion

Learning and being sensitized by indigenous peoples, by ecofeminist theology (Ivone Gebara, Kwok Pui Lan, Graciela Chamorro) and by Leonardo Boff⁴, but criticizing the standpoint of Franz Hinkelammert⁵, the positive transformation (*Aufhebung*) of religion has to recognize not only the human being, but also living nature, especially the biosphere, the Earth, or in indigenous languages Mapu, Pachamama etc., as *really sacred being worthy of respect without limit*. Earth, or living nature, is an alterity, another subject (or put in plural: subjects). According to the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, for indigenous peoples, the relations between human beings and nature are *social relations*⁶. Among the Yanomami, the shamans *cure* the forest when it is ill.⁴ Humanism has to be completed with the alterity of nature. While for Marx, the *essence* of human being “is the ensemble of social relations” (Theses on Feuerbach, VI), one has to add the social relations with nature: the essence of the human being is the ensemble of social relations among humans *and* between human beings and nature.

⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Ética e espiritualidade*, Petrópolis: 2003. The author speaks about the “alterity of nature” (p. 46: “alteridade da natureza”) and the “cry of the Earth” (p. 52: “o grito da Terra”); so we should “ouvir o grito da Terra, também empobrecida porque injustamente agredida e, de forma sistemática, explorada” (... listen to the cry of the Earth which has likewise been impoverished because it was unjustly attacked and systematically exploited [translation mine].

⁵ Franz J. Hinkelammert, *Democracia y totalitarismo*, San José (DEI): 1987. For Hinkelammert, only the human being and his reproduction is a purpose in itself, the surrounding living nature is not. He writes in p. 8: “El medio ambiente no es un fin en sí, sino la mediación material imprescindible de la reproducción de la vida humana en sus términos materiales.” (The environment is not a purpose in itself, but the indispensable material mediation of human life in its material terms. [translation mine])

⁶ Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Perspectivismo indígena”, in *Instituto Socioambiental (ISA): Visões do Rio Negro – Construindo uma rede socioambiental na maior bacia [cuenca] do mundo*, São Paulo: 2008, p. 84-90.

Idem: A inconstância da alma selvagem e outros ensaios de antropologia, São Paulo 2006 (first edition 2002), p. 459-472.

The Living Labor of Nature and Capital

There is a direct causal relationship between both, on the one hand the living labor of nature, particularly the biosphere and parts of the geosphere *and* human labor which is acting always *together* with the labor of nature, and on the other hand capital, in such a way that capital is the result of the exploitation of the totality of the labor of nature *and* human labor, whereby the labor of both together is the entire source of capital. Thus, the very nature of capital is negating the living labor of human being and nature, negating the living life of the totality of life on Earth. In capitalism occurs the *real subsumption* not only of *human labor*, as Marx argued (e.g. labor in factories)⁷, but also of the *labor of nature*⁸ under capital. Examples are agricultural monocultures and mass animal farming. Subjectivity and the life of nature (Earth, plants, animals) become invisible, and capital itself acquires the appearance of being subject. The result is not only the personalization of objects and the objectification of persons (Marx), but also the naturalization of things and the reification of nature. Therefore, for both a completed humanism which respects the alterity of nature and from the perspective of a theology in terms of a transformed religion, it is even more necessary to abolish capitalism.

Questions of Energy, Capitalism and Alternatives

All nature, and particularly life on Earth (geosphere and biospheres: microorganisms [prokaryotes], plants, animals, humans), can be conceived of as permanent transitions, crossovers between *kinetic* and *potential energy*, that is, between *natura naturans* (nature in process) and *natura naturata* (nature seen as the respective results of the processes). In this

⁷ Marx/Engels, Gesamtausgabe (MEGA), II, 4.1., Ökonomische Manuskripte 1863-1867, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1988, p. 91-121.

⁸ Daniel Stosiek, "Natur und Befreiung", *Politische Ökonomie der Mensch-Natur-Beziehung in der Schule und Schuld bei indigenen Völkern*, Münster: 2014.

sense, the famous insight of the “social construction of reality”⁹ gets a double meaning: the reality, which is the human and the natural, the mental and empirical world at the same time, is not only the *result* of a constructing process (object) but is also the self-constructing *process* itself (subject). It is the process of interaction of all self-organizations, autopoiesis, reproduction between biosphere, geosphere and human world. Each organism, each system of autopoiesis is kinetic energy, energy in movement. While a closed system strives towards increasing entropy until reaching the thermodynamic equilibrium, an open system, in contrast, which is situated in a condition of thermodynamic disequilibrium (in contact with potential energy and is therefore receiving energy flows) tends to continue in relative stability, in an equilibrium flow, a flux balance. This is the energetic situation of dissipative systems (described by Ilya Prigogine) and of all living organisms, including social ensembles such as humanity and the ecology as considered together.

Each system of autopoiesis, each living system or organism, exists in a double form: it is *life* and *labor* at the same time. On the one hand and contemplated from within, it is a life process; but on the other hand, and observed from outside, it is a process of labor. In other words, it is not only a life process (kinetic energy) which presupposes a structure of potential energy in order to be able to exist, but at the same time it is a process of labor which *produces* a structure of potential energy. To give an example: a plant receives potential energy (or a condition of thermodynamic disequilibrium) by means of the sun radiation in interaction with the Earth and its outer space, and this condition enables its life process. But the same process is, observed from outside, from the perspective of an animal, a process of production of a structure of potential energy, that is the body of the plant as food. Exactly this potential energy will transit, will cross over to the eating animal and transform itself into kinetic energy of the life process of the

⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Penguin Books, 1966.

animal, the other organism. From heterotrophy right up to symbiosis the whole biosphere is characterized by constant transitions between kinetic and potential energy. The *objectivations*, in other words the transitory transformations of kinetic into potential energy (for instance into food or the usefulness within symbiosis), are always social means, functions within an overarching social relation. Resonance between organisms occurs by means of objectivations. The objectivation is a certain *negation* of the life process at an individual dimension. At the same time, the life process is transformed into an *affirmation* of life at the dimension of the social meaning (*Aufhebung*). Such social processes, *agapespheres*¹⁰, can be observed in the symbiosis, in the division of labor among human beings and in all ecology.

The now thematized transitions of energy occur in nature, especially in the biosphere, among human beings and between humans and non-humans (with the rest of living organisms). Within human communities, the division of labor is ubiquitous (e.g. within a family or within an indigenous community); but it occurs also between different communities where various symbols of equivalency are used in gift and barter and money is used as the measure for comparing the *value* of all concerned objects.⁹ Value is exactly the average potential energy of a given object, the result of the living labor of humans and nature and is the abstract form of the potential energy of the objects and services. The only function of the value of objects are their respective transition into kinetic energy within social dimensions – within the processes of giving, consuming etc.

Capitalism occurs when a subject accumulates objects and the abstraction of objects, money, as if it were a purpose in itself. Then the value becomes a fetish, becomes capital. The accumulation of capital requires the exploitation of living labor (of the life processes which are at the same time processes of labor) of permanently expanding areas of the biosphere of the Earth and of human beings, and it amplifies the real

¹⁰ Wolfgang Jantzen, "Am Anfang war der Sinn", *Zur Naturgeschichte, Psychologie und Philosophie von Tätigkeit, Sinn und Dialog*, Berlin, 2012, p. 180ff.

subsumption of the labor of both because it reduces their life (kinetic energy, *natura naturans*) to mere production of value (potential energy, *natura naturata*). It results in a total negation of life since there is no accumulation of capital without looting the Earth.

A transformed theology which recognizes in the other human being and in the life of Earth the “only really sacred being worthy of respect without limit”, will be looking for an alternative to capitalism. An alternative could happen if in the praxis of exchanging objects, the partly negated life process within labor (of all actors, people, beings of biosphere) were transformed into a total affirmation of life at the dimension of an overarching social relation, or when within a society of exchange the primacy of accumulation were replaced by the primacy of giving.

16.

ECOLOGIA INTEGRAL E GUINADA DE(S)COLONIAL: INTERPELAÇÕES À ECOTEOLOGIA

SINIVALDO S. TAVARES^{1,2}

Introdução: As Interfaces entre Ecologia Integral e Guinada De(s)colonial

A Modernidade inaugurou um processo sistemático de depredação da vida no planeta que, nos últimos quarenta anos, tem crescido exponencialmente. Considerado como primeiro sistema-mundo, na opinião de Anibal Quijano, Modernidade e Colonialismo constituem duas faces da mesma moeda. O protagonismo moderno da Europa, que tem seu cume, séculos mais tarde, na Revolução Industrial, só se consolidou graças a dois expedientes tipicamente colonialistas: a pilhagem dos bens naturais, metais

¹ Sinivaldo S. Tavares é frade franciscano e doutor em Teologia Sistemática pela *Pontificia Università Antonianum*, Roma. Durante 13 anos, foi professor de Teologia Fundamental e de Teologia Sistemática na Faculdade de Teologia do Instituto Teológico Franciscano, Petrópolis. Desde 2012, professor de Teologia sistemática e pesquisador no Departamento de Teologia da Faculdade Jesuíta de Filosofia e Teologia (FAJE), Belo Horizonte. Entre suas recentes obras, publicadas pela Ed. Vozes: *Evangelização em diálogo: novos cenários a partir do paradigma ecológico; Evangelização e Interculturalidade; Teologia da Criação: outro olhar – novas relações; Trindade e Criação*. Em 2016, organizou com A. Murad o livro: *Cuidar da casa comum: chaves de leitura teológicas e pastorais da Laudato Si'*, publicado por Edições Paulinas. Tem publicado ainda estudos em obras coletivas e artigos em revistas teológicas especializadas.

² Revisão gramatical: Caroline Ferrari.

preciosos e especiarias de alto valor por unidade de peso, e a exploração do trabalho forçado de africanos e de indígenas, reduzidos a escravos.

Nos dias que correm, vivemos uma situação de visível colonialidade. O neoliberalismo excogitou um projeto denominado de “financeirização da economia” para justificar a pilhagem de reservas naturais de matéria-prima e energia dos países do Sul em vistas da manutenção de níveis altíssimos de consumo e descarte das populações do Norte. Ademais, tudo isso tem se dado em meio a uma espécie de sequestro de nossas demandas e bandeiras. Assim, por exemplo, solicitações em prol do direito à diferença são manipuladas com a intenção de justificar desigualdades. Quando são em favor da tutela do ambiente são cooptadas pelo mercado e, portanto, reduzidas a meras mercadorias de consumo.

Nosso objetivo aqui é analisar as interfaces da complexa relação entre o paradigma ecológico e “a guinada de(s)colonial”. De um lado, concebemos ecologia como uma singular complexidade entre quatro dimensões: ambiental, social, mental e espiritual (ou integral). De outro, compreendemos “a guinada de(s)colonial” como um processo intencionado a deflagrar o sistema-mundo “Modernidade colonial” (Anibal Quijano) no interior do qual nos encontramos. Nossa análise principiará pela consideração da história passada e presente do Brasil, para depois situá-la no cenário maior da “Colonialidade global”, no intuito de discernir as interpelações que são postas hoje à Ecoteologia.

A História do Brasil: do Colonialismo à Colonialidade

Nosso Passado: Atrelados à Modernidade Extrativista e Escravocrata

A “história oficial”, daquela região que recebeu de seus colonizadores portugueses o nome de Brasil, começa a ser narrada a partir da ocupação de suas terras pelos navegadores ibéricos. Um pesado silêncio paira sobre a história de nossos povos originários e suas respectivas culturas.

O ano de 1492 inaugura o que se convencionou chamar de Modernidade. Todavia, quando se fala sobre esse assunto, pensa-se geralmente no protagonismo exercido pelas monarquias europeias no cenário mundial a partir de então. E isso graças, sobretudo, às invectivas mercantilistas das navegações Ibéricas.

Esquece-se, com frequência, que Modernidade e Colonialismo são duas faces da mesma moeda. Este protagonismo da Europa, que tem seu cume, séculos mais tarde, na Revolução Industrial, só se consolidou graças a dois expedientes tipicamente colonialistas: a pilhagem dos bens naturais, metais preciosos e especiarias de alto valor por unidade de peso, e a exploração do trabalho forçado de afrodescendentes e de indígenas, reduzidos a escravos.

A título de exemplo, bastam-nos alguns dados que se encontram registrados nos arquivos de Sevilha: entre os anos de 1503 e 1660, 185 toneladas de ouro e 16.000 toneladas de prata foram levadas da América para a Europa. Quem ousaria calcular o montante de dólares atuais correspondentes a essa pilhagem?

O Brasil, portanto, irrompe no cenário geopolítico do século XVI como colônia atrelada, de modo servil, ao sistema da Modernidade-Colonial. O próprio nome, Brasil, revela e, ao mesmo tempo, trai sua condição de ser reconhecido e identificado pela referência de um bem natural, entre tantos, a ser extraído e comercializado.

A colonização tinha por objetivo principal fomentar atividades extrativistas e mercantilistas propiciadas por aquela nova estação caracterizada pelas navegações oceânicas. E o extrativismo selvagem em nossas terras foi se intensificando, com o passar do tempo, ainda que seus bens naturais fossem se diversificando. À extração do Pau-Brasil, seguiram-se outros ciclos não menos selvagens, do ponto de vista do extrativismo: do ciclo do ouro e da mineração em geral, da cana-de-açúcar, da borracha, do café e, simultaneamente, do gado. Em suma, as colônias surgem como produtoras de bens materiais e força de trabalho empregada na transformação desses mesmos bens em mercadorias comercializáveis.

Há ainda outra anotação a ser feita e diz respeito à relação dos países do hemisfério sul com os países do hemisfério norte, seus históricos

colonizadores. Esses últimos também depredaram a natureza de seus próprios territórios e de grande parte das terras de suas antigas colônias. Isso se deu no contexto de políticas mercantilistas coloniais, no passado, e continua acontecendo através de políticas imperialistas de corte neoliberal.

No entanto, desde a década de 60 do século passado, os países industrializados começaram a se preocupar com a questão ambiental, instituindo políticas específicas para atenuar esses impactos em seus próprios territórios. Com isso, iniciaram processos de exportação de suas tecnologias “sujas” e do próprio lixo para o território dos países pobres, suas antigas colônias. Também esse fato agrava e muito as desigualdades entre norte e sul do planeta.

Nosso Presente: Reféns da Globalização Neoliberal Colonial

Nos dias que correm, o capitalismo neoliberal se apresenta com o atraente nome de Globalização. E esse fenômeno é extremamente complexo.³

Há quem distinga criticamente os processos de diferenciação, desigualdade e desconexão, desmascarando, portanto, a caracterização mais complacente e difusa da Globalização como simples aproximações entre o que é distante e como interconexões crescentes e progressivas. Ao reorganizar a produção e o consumo em vistas do crescimento e da maior concentração dos lucros, o estilo neoliberal de globalização tem convertido as diferenças em desigualdades.³

Assim sendo, ela desglobaliza muitas localidades e regiões, chegando ao ponto de reduzir maiorias populacionais a minorias culturais. Em suma, “globaliza-se a riqueza e localiza-se cada vez mais a pobreza” (Baumann). Dessa forma, uma das principais características desse interregno em que vivemos é o crescente divórcio entre o poder e a política. O poder se tornou global e a política não tem conseguido transpor o local.

³ Cf. U. Beck, *O que é Globalização? Equívocos do Globalismo. Respostas à Globalização*, São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1999.

³ Cf. N. García Canclini, *Diferentes, desiguais e desconectados*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 2007; *A Globalização imaginada*, São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2007; *Consumidores e cidadãos*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 2008.

Em tal contexto, convém introduzir uma segunda distinção, dessa vez, entre “colonialismo” e “colonialidade”.⁴⁴ Este processo de colonialidade, protagonizado pelo neoliberalismo, tem se apresentado, sobretudo, mediante nomenclaturas mais abstratas e pretensamente neutras como, por exemplo, “financeirização” ou “monetarização” da economia. Esta seria, no fundo, sua face mais complacente, expressa na ideologia que intencionalmente encobre a produção material que continua para além (e aquém) da alienação propriamente financeira. E isso se agrava, especialmente, se levadas em conta suas consequências em termos de depredação da vida no planeta.

Houve, de fato, um processo de “financeirização” crescente da economia. Ele inicia nos anos imediatamente posteriores à Segunda Guerra Mundial, quando se começa a gestar um novo padrão internacional de poder que vai se manifestando na formação de grandes corporações empresariais transnacionais. Nesse contexto, destacam-se corporações institucionais como, por exemplo: ONU, FMI, BID e BIRD. E os famosos acordos de Breton Woods, no que diz respeito, mais especificamente, aos aspectos econômicos desse processo.

Outras decisões, tomadas unilateralmente, ampliam o caminho para a gradativa “financeirização” da economia mundial, com repercussões drásticas sobre o sistema de produção, provocando a exaustão dos recursos do planeta. Em 1971, os EUA rompem com o sistema fixo de câmbio e com o padrão-ouro, e, a partir de então, o dólar, que apenas os EUA podem emitir, é instituído como o novo lastro monetário, imposto de maneira arbitrária a todos os demais países.

⁴⁴ ³ O primeiro se refere à ocupação política e institucional dos territórios das colônias por parte dos colonizadores com vistas a justificar a pilhagem violenta dos bens naturais e o regime de trabalho forçado para a transformação da matéria prima em mercadorias aptas à comercialização. Colonialidade, por sua vez, remete-nos ao período histórico sucessivo à colonização propriamente dita, no qual as antigas colônias se tornaram independentes politicamente sem, contudo, conquistarem sua autonomia econômica, social e cultural em face das nações nordatlânticas. Não pretendemos, com isso, negar o caráter de superação manifestado pela fase sucessiva em relação à fase anterior do processo de globalização. Há sim um processo de superação entre as várias fases que se sucedem, apenas que esta superação se dá a modo de incorporação, e não propriamente de supressão, das fases anteriores. Em suma, na opinião de A. Quijano, o moderno se define a partir da invisibilização do tradicional. A tal propósito, remetemos aos autores que constituem o grupo de pesquisa “Modernidade-Colonialidade”: A. Quijano, W. Mignolo, E. Dussel.

Outra decisão unilateral e arbitrária diz respeito à relação entre nações credoras e devedoras. O período que se estende de 1971 a 1999 assinala um aumento vertiginoso da dívida externa dos países devedores. Assim, em menos de duas décadas, a dívida dos Estados mais pobres subiu de 615 bilhões de dólares para cerca de 2 trilhões e 500 bilhões de dólares. Na América Latina, a dívida cresceu 21 vezes, passando de US\$ 46,3 bilhões para US\$ 982 bilhões; na África, o crescimento foi mais de 22 vezes, e, na África subsaariana, ainda maior, de 55 vezes; na Ásia, não foi diferente, aumentou de US\$ 190 bilhões a US\$ 1 trilhão e 74 bilhões⁵.

Situação parecida se dá também no interior de cada nação, no tocante à relação entre ricos e pobres. É visível o acirramento das relações de poder mesmo no interior da nação mais rica do planeta, os EUA, onde o número de pessoas que se encontra em situação de pobreza crítica aumentou, durante o mesmo período, de 11,6% para 13,3%. Estes dados confirmam uma suspeita, emersa no século XIX: o capitalismo estaria operando um crescente processo perverso de concentração de renda.⁶

Estas manobras podem nos induzir ao engano caso julguemos postos diante de um simples processo de monetarização da economia. Se, todavia, buscarmos compreender essa nova configuração à luz da geografia social, que indaga acerca da problemática suscitada a partir das territorialidades e dos inerentes processos de territorialização, dar-nos-emos conta de tratar-se de um autêntico processo de colonialidade.

O processo descrito acima como financeirização ou monetarização da economia instituiu um sistema no interior do qual as nações credoras impõem suas regras do jogo comercial por meio daquelas instituições corporativas internacionais. Ingerências justificadas por critérios financeiros. E é precisamente aqui, nesse particular contexto, que aquelas

⁵ Estes dados estatísticos bem como outros tantos que serão citados no decorrer do texto se encontram em: C.W. Porto Gonçalves, *A globalização da natureza e a natureza da globalização*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2013.

⁶ Cf. Th. Piketty, *O Capital no século XXI*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Intrínseca, 2014.

medidas arbitrárias e unilaterais, lembradas acima, se conjugam a ponto de formar um emaranhado complexo e bem articulado.

Das nações devedoras, exige-se a constituição do assim chamado *superavit* primário, uma reserva substancial em dólares norte-americanos, que seria o índice de estabilidade econômica de uma nação no concerto das demais. Arma-se, desse modo, uma trama bem orquestrada países credores para manter os devedores enredados em suas poderosas malhas.

A partir do momento em que as nações devedoras se encontram impossibilitadas de emitir dólares, restam-lhes apenas duas vias de possível aquisição da moeda estadunidense: as exportações em grande escala e o aumento considerável dos juros para atrair investimentos externos. Como se vê, ambas as possibilidades são, para todos os efeitos, marcadamente colonialistas. Pois, ambas fazem funcionar o processo colonialista de produção e consumo. E assim oneram gravemente o planeta, seja no extrativismo em larga escala dos bens naturais e das energias fósseis, seja na excessiva produção de lixo ocasionada pelo desmesurado consumo das nações ricas. E instaura-se, assim, um círculo vicioso entre o famigerado extrativismo e o desmesurado consumismo.

Dados publicados pela ONU, em 2002, com o título “Consumo Privado de Recursos Naturais no Mundo”, revelam que 20% das pessoas mais ricos consomem 86% dos recursos naturais do planeta. Isso significa que os restantes 14% dos recursos devem ser disputados por 80% da população mundial.

Com base em tudo isso, talvez fique mais clara, por exemplo, a posição do Brasil no atual cenário da globalização neoliberal. Para constituir e manter seu *superavit* primário, país precisa investir pesado na exportação de grãos, como a soja, e ainda na exportação do minério de ferro e petróleo, fornecendo assim matéria prima e energia para a crescente industrialização das nações credoras. E, além do mais, aumentando consideravelmente a taxa de juros, para atrair os investimentos dos grandes conglomerados transnacionais. Explicitado este cenário, talvez se comprehenda melhor o engodo de iniciativas promovidas por entidades internacionais, inclusive a ONU, como, por exemplo, “desenvolvimento sustentável”, “economia verde”, “créditos de carbono”.

Os dados relativos ao que se convencionou chamar de *pegada ecológica* estão aí para confirmar o que estamos dizendo. A pegada ecológica mediria o impacto que a população produz sobre os ecossistemas do planeta, no ato mesmo de produzir e de reproduzir a vida. E, nesse sentido, constitui um sintoma claro da relação intrinsecamente colonial pressuposta nas relações de produção e consumo de nossas sociedades contemporâneas.

A título de exemplo, de 1970 a 1996, a pegada ecológica mundial teve um aumento de 45%, aumentando de 11 bilhões para 16 bilhões de hectares. Todavia, esse crescimento não foi provocado pela expansão demográfica do planeta, como era de se esperar. Na medida em que a pegada ecológica das nações do hemisfério sul se manteve, apesar da ampliação significativa de sua população, a pegada ecológica das nações do hemisfério norte cresceu consideravelmente, mesmo levando em conta o decréscimo crescente de sua população.

Posto que a média mundial da pegada ecológica é de 2,85 hectares *per capita*, vejamos o seguinte quadro: na África a média é 1,5; na Ásia e no Pacífico, ela sequer alcança 1,8; na América Latina e no Caribe, no Oriente Médio e na Ásia Central, ela está em torno da média mundial; na Europa Central e Oriental, se aproxima de 5; na Europa Ocidental, chega a 6 (210% da média mundial); nos EUA, a média é de 12 hectares *per capita* (425% da média mundial). Em poucas palavras, um cidadão americano médio consome o equivalente ao mesmo conteúdo de 10 africanos ou asiáticos.

Está aí posta às claras a face mais autêntica, apesar de oculta, das novas relações coloniais entre o norte e o sul. Por essa razão, o período histórico da globalização neoliberal é aquele que mais tem provocado a destruição da natureza, uma vez que, desde 1492, os índices que revelam o grau de devastação do planeta nunca foram tão elevados como nestes últimos trinta anos. E o que é mais grave ainda, a globalização neoliberal opera uma espécie de sequestro, uma verdadeira apropriação indevida, de nossas reivindicações e bandeiras.

Assim, por exemplo, ela busca se apropriar de nossa reivindicação com respeito ao direito à diferença para justificar as desigualdades mantidas.

Como também procura se apropriar das reivindicações com relação à defesa do ambiente assimilando-as à lógica do mercado, no interior da qual nossas bandeiras ecológicas são reduzidas a meras mercadorias, verdadeiros fetiches.

A Colonialidade Global: Mercado, Tecnociência, Mídia

O cenário atual resulta configurado pela cumplicidade entre mercado, tecnociência e mídia. E é responsável por três transformações em curso no seio da civilização contemporânea: da economia de mercado à sociedade de mercado, da técnica como instrumento à emergência da tecnociência como horizonte e da comunicação como meio à mídia como ambiente. Essas mudanças são, juntas, a “grande transformação” que, como uma engrenagem, põe em movimento a civilização contemporânea em seu tríplice processo: “mercantilização”, “tecnificação” e “midiatização” da vida.⁷

No *primeiro caso*, constatamos um processo em curso descrito como “absolutização do Mercado”. Trata-se daquela “grande transformação” descrita por Karl Polanyi como passagem da “economia de mercado” à “sociedade de mercado”.⁸ O mercado vai se impondo, sempre mais, como único cenário de nossa trama civilizacional atual. Esta nova configuração produz um fenômeno correlato: a “mercantilização da vida”. Nossos fluxos vitais são reduzidos impiedosamente a simples mercadorias de consumo e de descarte.⁹

Quanto ao *segundo*, desde algumas décadas, estamos assistindo a uma expansão vertiginosa das novas tecnologias a ponto de caracterizar uma autêntica virada epocal: da idade da técnica para a era da tecnociência. De

⁷ Para um maior aprofundamento destas três transformações, remetemos ao nosso “Entre a cruz e a espada: a religião no mundo da tecnociência, do mercado e da mídia”. *Horizonte*, Belo Horizonte, v. 12, p. 382-401, abr./jun. 2014.

⁸ Cf. K. Polanyi, *A grande transformação. As origens da nossa época*, Rio de Janeiro: Campos, 2000.

⁹ Cf. G. Lipovetsky, *O império do efêmero. A moda e seu destino nas sociedades modernas*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2006; Z. Bauman, *Vida para consumo. A transformação das pessoas em mercadoria*, Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2008; H. Assmann – F. Hinkelammert, *A idolatria do Mercado. Ensaio sobre economia e teologia*, São Paulo: Paulinas, 1989; J. Mo Sung, *Idolatria do capital e a morte dos pobres*, São Paulo: Paulinas, 1989.

mero instrumento de dominação à disposição do ser humano, como era a técnica, a tecnociência tornou-se horizonte último no interior do qual se desvelam todos os âmbitos da experiência, e chega a condicionar, inclusive, a maneira de o próprio ser humano se autoconceber. Fala-se, a tal propósito, da co-presença de dois processos simultâneos: a “emergência da tecnosfera” e o “deslocamento da subjetividade”. A tecnociência tornou-se o horizonte de fundo dentro do qual a própria ciência encontra ou não sua legitimidade.¹⁰

No tocante ao *terceiro*, falávamos antes de Meios de Comunicação Social (MCS), porque de fato, se tratava de meios através dos quais emissores comunicavam mensagens a eventuais receptores. Hoje, falamos em Mídia e não mais em simples meios de comunicação. O termo nos remete a um horizonte a partir do qual é possível compreender a totalidade dos fenômenos, uma autêntica mundividência. Na verdade, a Mídia não se tem caracterizado apenas pelo conjunto de instrumentos novos e mais sofisticados, mas tem se tornado um “ambiente vital”, um “conjunto de valores”, um “estilo de vida”. Com razão, fala-se hoje de uma “cultura midiática”.¹¹

Tem se tornado impossível uma experiência diferente da proposta pela Mídia que, ao transmitir, constrói fatos e situações mediante sua interpretação interessada. Mesmo ostentando uma pretensa neutralidade asséptica, ela não transmite informações de forma objetiva. No ato constrói realidades, fazendo com que a “opinião pública” seja idêntica à opinião que se publica. E ao fazê-lo, ainda que de maneira sutil, trai sua posição face ao que transmite. E isso se passa a despeito da tão propalada isenção na transmissão de notícias.

¹⁰ Cf. U. Galimberti, *Psiche e techne. O homem na idade da técnica*, São Paulo: Paulus, 2006, p. 391-393.

¹¹ Cf. M. Castells, *A sociedade em rede*, Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2003; A. Lemos, *Cibercultura – tecnologia e vida social na cultura contemporânea*, Porto Alegre: Sulina, 2002; M. Sodré, *Antropológica do espelho: uma teoria da comunicação linear e em rede*, Petrópolis: Vozes, 2002; consultem-se ainda as obras de J. Puntel: *Cultura Midiática e Igreja. Uma nova ambiência*, São Paulo: SEPAC/Paulinas, 2005 e *Comunicação. Diálogo dos saberes na cultura midiática*, São Paulo: SEPAC/Paulinas, 2010.

Por fim, a combinação entre mercado, novas tecnologias e mídia tem se revelado profundamente eficiente. Por um lado, os interesses escusos do mercado se fazem sutilmente presentes na mídia em seu caráter profundamente sedutor e, por outro, só se constituem como tais os aparatos tecnológicos rentáveis no mercado. Excelentes estudos têm mostrado uma forte cumplicidade entre os três instrumentos e a manutenção dos processos descritos acima.¹²

A Ecoteologia Face aos Desafios Postos pela Colonialidade Global

A Ecoteologia se apresenta como uma espécie de ponte entre ecologia e teologia. Mais precisamente, é a expressão daquele discurso regrado e articulado que procura deslindar as mútuas e recíprocas implicações entre os desafios postos pela atual crise ecológica e o anúncio do “evangelho da Criação” próprio da fé cristã.

De um lado, a crise ecológica se apresenta como um dos mais urgentes e complexos desafios para a tarefa teológica hodierna. De outro, o “evangelho da Criação” constitui a utopia permanente das relações harmoniosas e ternas que buscamos construir entre todos os seres, verdadeiros “filhos da Terra”, nossa Casa comum.

A Ecoteologia se propõe a tomar como ponto de partida a gravidade da crise ecológica fazendo com que as questões postas irrompam no cenário teológico contemporâneo, impondo-se como os mais relevantes e urgentes apontamentos da agenda atual. Neste sentido, a Ecoteologia acolhe os desafios postos pela crise atual, tão bem expressa nas palavras iniciais da *Carta da Terra*, documento assumido pela UNESCO e no qual aflora a consciência ecológica da Humanidade: “Estamos diante de um momento

¹² Cf. A. Moreira (Org.), *O capitalismo como religião*, Goiânia: Ed. da PUC Goiás, 2012; A. Moreira; C.T. Lemos; E.G. Quadros (Org.), *A religião da mídia e a mídia da religião*, Goiânia: Ed. da PUC Goiás - Gráfica e Editora América, 2012; H. Assmann; F. Hinkelammert, *A idolatria do Mercado. Ensaio sobre economia e teologia*, São Paulo: Paulinas, 1989; J. Mo Sung, *Idolatria do capital e a morte dos pobres*, São Paulo: Paulinas, 1989.

crítico na história da Terra, numa época em que a Humanidade deve escolher o seu futuro... ou formar uma aliança global para cuidar da Terra e uns dos outros, ou arriscar a nossa destruição e a da diversidade da vida."

Imersos nessa precisa configuração, não podemos nos furtar às seguintes questões: é viável continuar nessa mesma direção imposta pelo paradigma contemporâneo fortemente caracterizado pelo Mercado, pela Tecnociência e pela Midia? O que fazer para que essa "lógica" da acumulação e do consumo, de crescimento linear e desmedido, seja desmascarada como principal responsável pela depredação dos recursos naturais e pela ameaça do futuro do ser humano e da vida das demais espécies do Planeta? Calar-se face aos desmandos do atual paradigma civilizacional ou, pior ainda, legitimá-lo? Seria uma posição eticamente responsável por parte da teologia?

Vivemos em um mundo extremamente complexo. Percebe-se uma interconexão que atravessa a totalidade dos fenômenos. Em virtude de sua intrínseca heterogeneidade, nossa realidade exige a eleição de uma perspectiva a partir da qual buscar compreendê-la, situando-se no interior de seu intrincado emaranhado de questões e de situações. Porque limitados, devemos renunciar a toda e qualquer pretensão de totalidade. Na melhor das hipóteses, poderemos ensaiar achegas distintas à realidade no seu complexo. Tais achegas, contudo, serão sempre parciais e fragmentadas. Nada além de simples clareiras que se abrem a partir de distintas perspectivas parciais. Esse é nosso limite, mas é também nossa chance, possibilidade privilegiada de compreensão da realidade na sua irredutível organicidade.

Além do mais, uma específica parcialidade inerente ao fazer teológico cristão provém da consciência da imprescindibilidade de nos mantermos fiéis à parcialidade testemunhada por Jesus em sua vida e pregação. A despeito daquela pretensão de totalidade que ronda a teologia cristã ocidental, somos desafiados a manter uma sadia solidariedade para com Ele na sua parcialidade de pregador enviado a anunciar a Boa-nova aos pobres e excluídos. A assunção dessa diferenciação evangélica permitir-nos-á ver determinadas coisas que só é possível ótica dos pobres. E o que é ainda mais importante: levar-nos-á a uma correção da própria maneira de pensar e de conceber

as grandes questões que assolam a grande maioria de nossas populações condenando-as à trágica condição de vítimas indefesas e inocentes.

Mais do que nunca, os pobres têm sido hoje relegados à margem de nossas relações econômicas, políticas, sociais e culturais. E a maior exclusão talvez seja a de sequer prestar ouvidos aos clamores deles por mais vida. Até sua súplica tem sido hoje silenciada mediante o recurso a tantos expedientes escusos e sofisticados. Chega-se a provar, em nossos dias, em não poucos ambientes, uma resistência ferrenha em apenas mencionar sua existência. Eles se encontram, de fato, completamente excluídos de nossas preocupações.

A partir da experiência de solidariedade com os pobres, a teologia assumirá outra perspectiva, muito a fim à primeira, que lhe é inerente enquanto propriamente cristã: sua intrínseca dimensão escatológica. Este estudo restitui à teologia cristã seu peculiar dinamismo, por trazer em seu próprio bojo uma reserva subversiva, porém criativa, com respeito ao tempo presente. Ela recria a relação, para todos os efeitos, vital para a teologia: a relação com a vida, com a cultura, com a sociedade e com o inteiro cosmos nas suas mais distintas formas e modalidades.

Resgatando, portanto, suas mais genuínas raízes, a teologia se desobre em condições de despertar sonhos adormecidos, propiciando o florescer de utopias. E, assim, ela mais facilmente será capaz de desmascarar ideologias, falsasseguranças, idolatrias e estereótipos vários. Somente em tal caso, a teologia poderá realizar uma de suas tarefas primordiais: abrir trilhas na direção do futuro, forcejando o emergir do que ainda não é.

Todavia, esta utopia que a teologia encarna não se confunde com uma espécie de esperança cega, ilusória, ingênua. Ela não tem nada a ver com doutrinas surpreendentemente alienantes e anestesiadoras. A esperança cristã se encontra ancorada no mistério pascal de Cristo. Assim compreendida, ela resgata a “memória perigosa de Jesus” (J.-B. Metz), revelando seu caráter intrinsecamente subversivo com respeito a toda ordem instituída.

Trata-se, portanto, de uma esperança contra toda a esperança, por ser, em última instância, algo que brota dos porões mais obscuros do sofrimento e da morte assumidos como conseqüência do empenho pela justiça e pela

paz. Neste sentido, a esperança cristã radicaliza a noção do memorial bíblico, na medida em que: desestabiliza o presente, questiona os cânones das evi-dências hegemônicas e do progresso linear, e defende as causas perdidas dos vencidos cuja esperança foi frustrada pelos detentores do poder estabelecido.

Conclusão: Gemidos da Criação e Grito do Pobre

A gravidade e urgência das questões atinentes ao discurso da Ecoteologia exigem que todo discurso teológico responsável e que, portanto, não se deixa tragar pela indiferença e pelo cinismo, seja construído a partir da condição dos pobres e numa perspectiva esperançosa e utópica. Daí a necessidade de, ao articular o grito da Terra com o grito do pobre, poten-cializá-los ao máximo, ressignificando-os no bojo da utopia e escatologia cristãs. Um discurso acerca da tutela da vida no Planeta que não incorpore as questões da pobreza e da fome, da injustiça social e das contradições da Modernidade Colonial peca por ingenuidade e conivência. De igual forma, quando se fale acerca do “evangelho da Criação” e não considere, de maneira esperançosa, a pergunta pela sua destinação última e pelo seu inerente sentido, acabará sucumbindo a um pessimismo trágico. Por esta razão, quanto mais o discurso ecológico afundar suas raízes no terreno sofrido dos pobres e das vítimas, mais ele se fará sensível às dimensões da esperança e da utopia. E, quanto maior o número de pessoas que se deixar perpassar pela esperança escatológica maior será o alcance da população sensibilizada face às demandas vitais dos pobres e marginalizados do Planeta.

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