

WILL IT BE OF GOD?



Mapping of Theological Inputs
or Talking about Gender Justice
in Abya Yala.

WILL IT BE OF GOD?

Mapping of Theological Inputs for Talking
about Gender Justice in Abya Yala*

**FROM THE GENDER COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
ACT ALLIANCE - LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

**Abya-Yala is a historical, political, and social category taken from the Kuna language, meaning "land in full bloom" or "land in its fullness." The term Abya-Yala was agreed upon in 2004 in Quito, during the II Summit of the Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya-Yala, as a way to understand life on the continent through the interculturality of its territories.*

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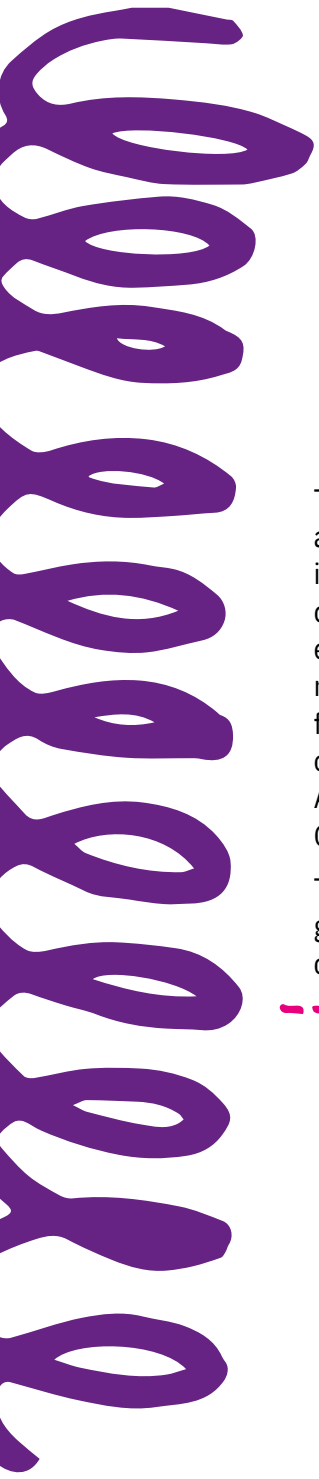
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INTRODUCTION

The ACT Alliance Gender Community of Practice in Abya Yala organises this material with arguments resulting from a dialogue and a broad, plural, and collective process that involved the entire continent. These inputs represent an enormous diversity of experiences, knowledge, theologies, and challenges. This document brings together a mapping that presents some of the most relevant debates around gender justice within the Gender Community of Practice of ACT Alliance in Abya Yala.

Not all the people consulted or cited necessarily agree with all the arguments presented, nor do all the faith-based organisations (FBOs) linked to ACT share these propositions. This mapping shows an important part of the enormous cultural and religious diversity of Abya Yala, with which we work and through which we mutually enrich one another among the faith-based organisations that make up ACT Alliance.

This theological mapping takes an ecumenical Christian perspective, its main reference is the Bible, since it is the sacred book common to the Christian church. Given that we are working with such a well-known and concrete text, we need to clarify the criteria that we are using when quoting the Bible.

We understand that interpretation is always contextual, so we highlight and clarify aspects of our context that we consider key to our interpretation. While it is not possible to isolate one continent from the rest of the world when gathering knowledge and experiences, this mapping is organised based on processes, materials, and exchanges facilitated by ACT FBOs in Abya Yala.

The mapping uses a diverse and inclusive gender perspective. We affirm that all people are created in the image of God, and that God accepts all people equally. We understand that the main problem is people's difficulty in accepting one another. This mapping seeks to contribute to that educational process of dialogue and encounter, to support inclusion and integration among all people.

In the propositions, we consider the history of colonisation of biblical interpretation in Latin America - a reading that persists despite genocides, femicides, and disappearances, among so many other serious crimes. The mapping seeks to reflect and organise knowledge produced and shared in various ongoing liberation experiences in Latin America. The learnings and interpretations of these experiences put into question the theologies and knowledge that are constructed throughout centuries of colonisation to justify all kinds of violence.

This mapping is possible thanks to the faith, struggle, journey, and contributions of people with different identities, practices, and contexts. Each one is a co-creator of this tool. Each one is also a source of consultation for continuing to deepen their concerns, knowledge, and contributions.

The reaction of some religious organisations to the work of faith-based organisations in defence of human rights is mobilising more sectors of society to inform themselves and to work towards access to and dissemination of increasingly responsible criteria for information. The lack of religious education in society, even

with the long-lasting influence of religion on the continent, has led to situations where people often use religious expressions or knowledge without awareness of their origin or meaning.

This argumentario aims to collaborate in this necessary dialogue between society, religions, politics, and the media. This is one of the tasks of diakonia: to facilitate dialogue and build bridges between different positions and actors.

The reading of any text always involves much more than the written words. Understanding a text is always a positioning on issues of reality and of lived life itself. The understanding of texts makes sense when they challenge our identities and orientations, allowing us to be who we are: the personal commitments that identify and condition us, the problems and approaches with which we work, the desires and interests that motivate us, the loves and pleasures we enjoy, and so forth. In this sense, reading enriches and amazes us.

These conditions of our readings and dialogues cut across all people, organisations, and religions. When we read or talk about the Bible—or any other sacred text—the same occurs. Therefore, the most important thing is to try to share these conditions as openly, consciously, responsibly, and carefully as possible, to converse always in an understandable, respectful, and honest way, protecting people’s lives.

The mapping is organised from both reflection and practice. The propositions contain popular wisdom, biblical references, and theological knowledge—that is, information from faith and values—but they also bring experiences from faith-based

organisations and ongoing processes, which help identify how these propositions are translated and what meaning they acquire in dialogue with reality.

This mapping includes a series of propositions that combine technical formulations with colloquial expressions from different regions of Abya Yala, weaving together ways of speaking that connect academic disciplines with everyday language to communicate with people. In the case of some technical categories, there are links that open specific academic explanations in the annex. The aim is to bring “theology” closer in a secular and accessible way. For some key words we offer an interpretive proposal to aid dialogue.

The propositions are organised to help think about a social problem from the perspective of Christian faith, with an ecumenical and interreligious outlook, providing a brief analysis, a discussion, and a theological argument, to facilitate dialogues between faith communities and society in general from a gender perspective. This material is a resource for communication and popular education. It is not a statement, nor a position paper, nor a textbook. Rather, this mapping of inputs is an invitation to a respectful conversation about the diverse realities expressed within the ACT Alliance Gender Community of Practice in Abya Yala.

This material is not meant to be a manual or a pedagogical proposal. However, these arguments can serve as working inputs for workshops with interested groups and faith communities. A diversity of experiences in Abya Yala motivates and continues to nourish the necessary dialogues to keep deepening these arguments in each context and culture. Each proposition evokes experiences and people with whom to continue these ongoing dialogue processes.

In our daily lives, we are flooded with high-impact arguments through social networks that harm millions of people and put more and more lives at risk.

This mapping arises with the challenge of turning theological affirmations into relevant secular arguments for mass communication—a theology for social media, accessible and understandable to anyone.

The propositions are formulated in a theology that seeks to protect, encourage, and sustain both those who are vulnerable due to gender reasons and the teams that collaborate with them.

In some cases, theological arguments are debated with common-sense affirmations that are entrenched in our cultures, even though they are not strictly theological concepts. In these cases, we take on the challenge of rethinking them from faith.

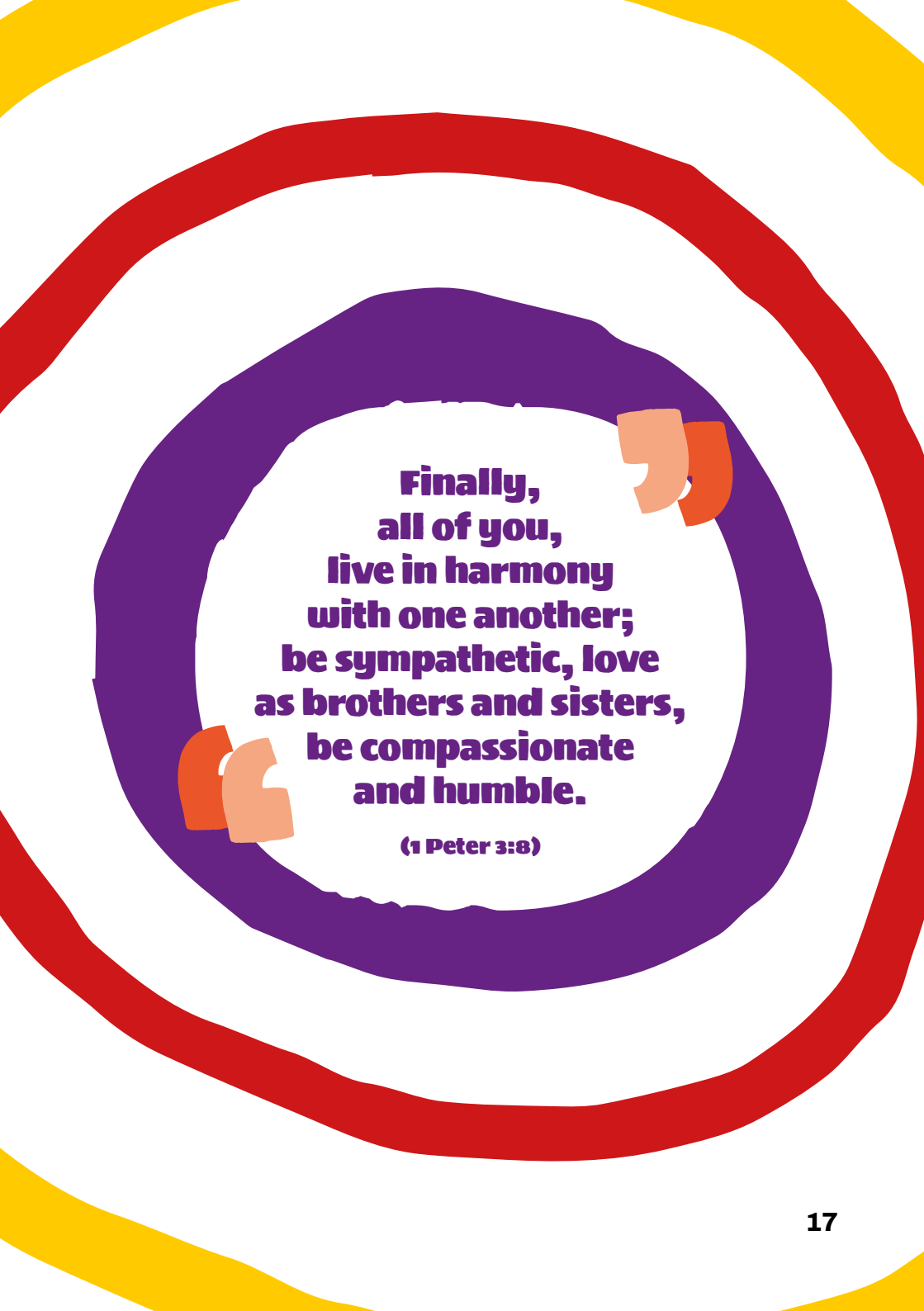
“Will it be of God?” is a popular expression that conveys amazement—and a touch of indignation—at events that generate bewilderment.

However, this expression also questions the identity and sense of belonging of groups that present themselves socially as owners of the monopoly of a “single truth” about faith and the Bible. This material aims to interrogate those “unique truths” from the perspective of Latin American Christian faith experiences and theologies—long-standing, questioning, and constructive—and from other ways of thinking and feeling them, in dialogue with different people and contexts.

We propose a mapping with a whole series of “theological propositions,” recovering a medieval concept dear to evangelical theology: the theses of the Protestant Reformation movement. This religious movement launched a public debate with the dominant religious discourses through “theses,” theological propositions for popular dialogue that updated the demands for equality and gender justice within the dogma of the Christian church. The public dispute over the theological legitimacy of their demands led to these dissenting sectors being labelled and stigmatised as “Protestants.”

Clear impacts of the active presence of women in the Reformation movement were expressed in the universal character of church ministries, open equally to men and women, as well as the admission of divorce and the rejection of celibacy. Today, the human cost of gender inequality and the cancelling, inquisitorial character of many religious expressions move the ACT Alliance Gender Community of Practice in Abya Yala to publicly raise the urgency of these debates in the Latin American religious field.

This work is the result of respect and commitment to greater and deeper communion between Christian communities, religions, and society as a whole. We want to talk about gender now because we believe all these conversations are fundamental to strengthening civil society, protecting people’s lives, enriching faith communities, and defending our democracies



**Finally,
all of you,
live in harmony
with one another;
be sympathetic, love
as brothers and sisters,
be compassionate
and humble.**

(1 Peter 3:8)

preliminary CONSIDERATIONS



The Church shares the same people as society. God shows no partiality among people

God makes no distinction between people

(Acts 10:34).

The people who make up the community of faith are part of society. Life of faith is a spiritual practice of acceptance and mutual learning, enabling us to live better together with all people.

The church is like a sponge that absorbs everything that happens in the society in which the faith community lives, because the people are the same. The church, even if it does not want to, reflects the ways of being of society. The church invites people to “a new life in Christ” and works so that the community may enjoy the gospel, but conversion is not only a one-time decision; it is also a decision and a commitment every day.



The body of Christ is a diversity of bodies, realities, and expectations

We communicate and bear witness to our faith through our ways of being. This way of being includes our body as well as our languages, worldviews, and expectations. Expectations about people's way of being are **"gender expectations."**¹ These expectations, learned from our cultures, and become part of our way of being, our faith, our way of relating.

Every time we interact with someone, we express interests, desires, roles, expectations, etc. These aspects may or may not be shared. **In faith communities the same thing happens as in society**², because in the church we find social identities, pastoral recommendations, and biblical interpretations of what **means to be a man and a woman before God that are influenced by culture**³ (Elaine Neuenfeldt). The problem arises when, in a community or society, it is not possible to talk openly about these gender expectations.

"Since yesterday I am a girl with braids. Why did I braid my hair? It just came to me. When I passed by and saw the girls there, I said: that's it, I'm going to braid my hair. But why? I am of German descent, fourth generation, and speaking of rigidity, women of German descent are very rigid. We see it in their bodies, I see it in my body, wherever we go. They too need our love, our attention, and—as Tânia Sansone says—our 'doloridad,' so that we may be, even if just a little—in the whole world—a people that understands that it is God's creation, not only people, but also nature, the seas, the rivers, the forests, the fields, the springs, that everyone, all, have the right to dignity, to life, preserved. May this be our prayer."

(Cristiane Petry)



The Bible is a translation of ancient writings

The Bible “sets hearts on fire” and “opens eyes” (*Luke 24:31-32*) but it is not today’s newspaper, nor a manual of conduct, nor a history book; it is a library of thousands of years in several languages.

Their eyes were opened... and their hearts were burning within them.

The Bible is a collection of books that calls us to learn about their different contexts in order to understand the value and meaning of their messages.

God inspired many people to share their experiences of faith, and they tell them as they spoke and as they lived them in their place and time. The Bible we have at home is a translation of a text more than two thousand years old, after a whole group of people agreed on how to interpret it and with which words to translate it. Each person who reads the Bible translated into their own language reinterprets it for their life of faith.

The biblical message of liberation arises in a patriarchal culture

Understanding the Bible always requires considering at least three aspects. Each text arises in a community, among different people and contexts, due to being written and rewritten over decades, or even centuries, by different generations. Each book of the Bible has its own process of translation, an enormous number of versions, and its own context. Each person or community, when

reading “their” version of the Bible, interprets “their” reading from “their” own experience, “their” own place, “their” own reality, in their own context and in “their” own confession of faith. The interpretation of the Bible necessarily involves considering a whole series of re-readings through time. In patriarchal culture, biblical texts have been told and retold, then written and rewritten, many times, above all by and around men. **But it is also possible to find messages in the texts questioning oppression.**⁴ In each of these processes, the gender expectations of many people, of various cultures, and in different moments of history, intervene. “Although I am Lutheran, I do not read the Bible as Luther read it, even though I agree with much of what he says.” (Mercedes Bachmann)

The process of contextualisation must consider cultural components and dynamics. Each context will then define the priorities to be applied in that specific environment; one reality cannot be imposed on another to determine what will be important. Mutual learning and the exchange of ideas will enrich the concrete measures taken in all spheres of church and society with a view to achieving gender justice.

(Elaine Neuenfeldt)



Biblical interpretation is a matter of faith

Every person has the right to hold and defend their own spirituality. However, the Christian Church proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:43–48), and for this it is necessary to interpret the Bible.

He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous (Matthew 5:45)

The Christian Church proclaims faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ while respecting the spirituality of all people, without attacking or coercing anyone (Matthew 5:43–48).

When we read the Bible, we interpret it to understand it. The faith we learned, our way of being, our life history, the knowledge we have—all this enables us to see some clues to understand the text. Many other things we do not realise at the moment, and we learn them through life, through the years, through community, through the changes we experience. Without a doubt, in the most well-known theologies there is a patriarchal cognitive bias that considers men, white, property owners, heterosexual, with power, as the most authorised to speak in God’s name. This guarantees the transmission of millennia-old traditions of faith, but patriarchy impoverishes the meaning of “the word,” with its mandates and conditions against women, to maintain the benefits of cis men.

However, there are also theological productions that question and construct meaning from marginalised groups. There are diverse and plural theologies. It is this dynamic and mobility of theologies that this document seeks to highlight.



The prefix cis in relation to gender refers to the classification assigned to the body, that is, female or male. The neologism cisgender, or cis, therefore defines individuals whose gender identity corresponds to their sexual phenotype.

The written text is not the same as the meaning of the text

People's understanding, their relationship with the environment, and the meaning of relationships among themselves are different at each moment, even for each person. Reading the Bible is always a reconstruction that has limits, like every process of knowledge.

Between the present and biblical realities there are more than two thousand years⁵, in addition to the centuries of oral history prior to writing. It is never possible to encompass all the meanings of a text in a single reading. Texts, like works of art, always retain a **reserve of meaning⁶** that remains. Interpretation includes people's lives with their gender, their resources, their history, and their tradition of faith.

The Gender and Religion Program of EST Faculties, in Brazil, organises a forum that brings together biblical-theological research on feminisms, gender, and sexual diversity from across Abya Yala

As a pastor of IELCO, I have been challenged to produce contextual theologies with a gender perspective, inspired by so many social and feminist collectives, from academia and from faith communities.

Angelica Bernate
Pastor of the Lutheran Church of Colombia

The million-dollar question is: What are churches going to do in the face of such a level of violence? Suddenly it is as if I were hearing Jesus say, "...among you it must not be so."

Jorge Weishein
Pastor, Evangelical Church of the River Plate, Argentina



Faith is a commitment to human coexistence

Faith in God is a personal decision grounded in respect for all people and in a daily commitment to justice (Isaiah 61:1–11). Being well informed and taking people seriously is a fundamental Christian commitment (James 3:5–10).

Just as plants grow from the earth.

Christian spirituality is a commitment to coexistence with all creation, based on equal respect for all people and a daily option for justice (Isaiah 61:1–11).

In his movement, Jesus gathered a group of people and dedicated himself to teaching through the villages a liberating faith. Jesus invited people to believe in a new reality he called the kingdom of God. Jesus rejected the abuse of power—both the political-military power to massacre the people and the use of economic-religious power to exploit them. The gospels make clear the use of the temple by the powerful to control the population (John 7:25-31). Jesus reclaimed the value of faith for the people and taught that power, truth, and life belong to God (John 1:3-4; 14:6; Matthew 19:26).

Disinformation as a strategy to discredit human rights

Millions of fake accounts and false information posted on digital platforms around the world function as a parallel virtual reality that erodes democracies and institutions. Disinformation campaigns and allegations of international conspiracy against

people working in the defence of human rights permanently put thousands of lives at risk worldwide. Legitimising these actions from faith constitutes acts of religious violence.

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) inspire their work in the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it is a message of liberation for all people. The message of the gospel proclaims gender justice because it defends total equality and equity among all people in every sphere of life. This equality among people and the active hope in a better world are the foundation of the work of FBOs. The message of the gospel is ecumenical and interreligious because it announces a plural, inclusive, and universal God.

ACT Alliance FBOs work together for the freedom to decide over their lives

ACT Alliance is a coalition of more than 140 churches and church-related organisations working together in more than 120 countries. Gender justice, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, is a priority for ACT Alliance, and we participate in all the pillars of the ICPD Program of Action. Eighty-four percent of the world's population identifies as people of faith, yet the potential of religious actors in all their diversity in promoting sustainable development is often unrecognised. Instead, religion is being instrumentalised to create polarisation and resistance to achieving the commitments of the ICPD. We are working within our own faith communities to expand rights-affirming theologies, transform social norms, and invest in partnerships to address structural and cultural barriers, seeking reproductive justice for all people.

ACT Alliance



Theology is always an expression of a lived reality

Theology is like a fabric woven from thoughtful reflections together with the Word of God (Luke 1:1–4). In Abya Yala, the popular reading of the Bible weaves good living (buen vivir) with the faith of the community, drawing from its realities and cultures.

I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you (Luke 1:3)

A theology is like a fabric of thoughtful reflections that weaves experiences of faith (Luke 1:1–4) with what happens in reality and in communities, across their diverse cultures, for the common good

Intercultural, interdisciplinary, and decolonial biblical interpretation

The collective sense of common belonging to a great homeland—an Abya Yala, plural, diverse, and with so many contradictory projects in its territories—directly influences the reading of the Bible. The reading of the Bible is inspired by the cultural experience of faith, the historical experience of faith, and the life of faith of the people among whom the word of God is read and understood. No one can claim to hold the only truth in the reading of the word.

The popular intercultural reading among Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, and migrant communities rooted for centuries in Abya Yala intertwines their traditions. However,

the religions and spiritualities of women, of Indigenous peoples, of Afro quilombos—with their theologies and worldviews—have been rendered invisible for centuries by coloniality. A biblical reading committed to gender justice interprets the word of God by recovering all these memories and experiences of the peoples of Abya Yala.

Some Indigenous women theologians you should know

My sharing is titled, 'Weaving the web of life with the broken and burned threads in Abya Yala,' in which I invite us to **corazonar** (to think and feel with the heart) about the identities imposed and constituted from the colonial structure. For this reason, I propose the territorial naming of Abya Yala to leave behind the doubly colonial naming of 'Latin America' and instead weave decolonization with the unlearning of hegemonic identities imposed and constructed through a series of constructs. I therefore invite us to make paths of connection with the deep meaning of **the beings that live integrally in the web of life**, from which many of us were uprooted, for assuming imposed identities while a few place themselves at the centre, claiming ownership of life, leaving ruptures in their wake in the multiple interrelations in the web of life in the name of religion, civilisation, development.

I feel that, in the churches, Indigenous women are still not considered, since in the different Christian denominations ancestral spiritualities are still viewed with much suspicion and are therefore often directed by various means to 'civilise' themselves. This leads them to abandon their **ancestral spiritualities**, which they managed to preserve creatively, thanks to their resistance to colonial impositions sustained through education, religion, and other institutions.

(Sofía Chipana Quispe, Bolivia)

1. Gender Expectations. *What are gender expectations? “Simply put, it is everything I expect from a person just because they are a man or a woman. That is, behaviours, thoughts, attitudes, interests, concerns, emotions, etc., that I consider normal if expressed by a man or a woman. For example: men are (or must be) rigid, unemotional, tough, virile, technical, well-oriented, mathematical, analytical, rational, and worry little... while women are sensitive, emotional, conciliatory, interested in beauty, better at child-rearing or domestic tasks, etc. In childhood, it’s the same: boys are active, tough, aggressive, sporty... and girls are calm, studious, interested in drawing, dolls, toy kitchens, etc.”*

See: World Health Organization; Gender and health, at: <https://www.who.int/es/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/gender>

2. In communities of faith, the same thing happens as in society. *The church reflects the gender relations of society “The church reflects social identities, recipes, and interpretations influenced by the culture of what it means to be a man or a woman.”*

See: Elaine Neuenfeldt (Ed); Policy of the FLM for Gender Justice, Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, 2014, p. 28, at: https://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/DTPW-WICAS_Gender_Justice-ES.pdf

3. What it means to be a man and a woman for God,

influenced by culture. *Religion as a “social phenomenon.” Ethnographic studies or opinion surveys do not always take into account the variable of “beliefs” or “religion” when analyzing social phenomena. No analytical perspective, no matter how “secular” it may be, should overlook or disregard the role that family and ecclesial socialization play in citizens’ political decisions. Promoting the value of the separation between Church and State, or between Religion and Politics, does not mean refusing to analyze religion as a social phenomenon. On the contrary, greater objectivity in research requires probing the reasons that lead people to think, act, and believe according to certain value codes. Religion, as a reality present in both public and private life, must be taken seriously.*

Daniel André Gloor, Hanzel José Zúñiga Valerio; Sexualities and the New Testament: Notes on Power, Gender, and Religion, *Revista de la Escuela de Ciencias Bíblicas, Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana*, No. 31, Costa Rica, 2019, p. 7

4. Liberating revelation in patriarchal culture is grace and liberation.

“The culture in which divine revelation takes place is predominantly patriarchal and androcentric; that is, it is seen as natural for everything to revolve around men, with men as heads of the clan or the family. The Bible, written primarily by men in a patriarchal culture, therefore reflects that culture in many texts. However, there is a thread that weaves from the very beginning a voice of concern for women and the marginalized; it is a voice of grace, mercy, and liberation. Patriarchal culture and liberating revelation lead us to conclude that women need a hermeneutic that distinguishes between patriarchal culture

and God's love for God's creatures. The most appropriate hermeneutic to read between the lines what the text says about women is what is known as a hermeneutic of silence or suspicion,^z while at the same time, as much as possible, an approach permeated by a perspective of grace and liberation. Grace and liberation, from my point of view, should be the heart of the sacred text for Christians."

See: Elsa Tamez; *The Women Leaders of Jesus' Movement, the Christ.*

5. An interdisciplinary approach to reconstruct the integrity of biblical worldviews. *The title of this work links three terms that appear throughout our study: power, gender, and religion. This was done to situate the study of sexuality within the broader spectrum where power and cultural codes affect public and private life. Modern notions of "gender" and "religion" had very different connotations from those we hold today. Religion could not be understood except as a political act, nor could sexuality be understood except as an exercise of power, i.e., also a political act. Archaeology, history, and social sciences, especially cultural anthropology, have been our tools for this reconstruction. The interrelation of disciplines has been necessary because sexuality in the ancient world cannot be understood as merely a "private act," but as a reflection of a particular worldview. We cannot make distinctions as precisely as modernity has taught us. The challenge is to understand the personal and social realities of the ancient world as interconnected.*

Daniel André Gloor & Hanzel José Zúñiga Valerio; *Sexualities and the New Testament: Notes on Power, Gender, and Religion, Aportes Bíblicos, 2020, (31), 1-81, p. 72.*

6. The meaning of a text depends on the text itself and the life of the reader. *“Croatto reminds us, together with Paul Ricoeur, that the reserve of meaning of a text does not depend on the historian’s knowledge, but on the text itself and on the life that shapes the prior question brought to the reading. He also notes that there are texts or textualities that enjoy an openness of meaning, such as music, poetry, and bodily and visual symbols. These possess a deliberate polysemy that opens itself to multiple interpretations.”*

Juan Esteban Londoño, Severino Croatto: A Hermeneutics of Creativity, Teounder, July 25, 2020. See: <https://revistas.ubl.ac.cr/index.php/vyp/article/download/470/994/>



GENDER based **VIOLENCE**

The demand for the expansion of new rights by people in situations of vulnerability due to gender-related reasons challenges the gender inequality of heterosexual patriarchal culture. Christian theology has been developed within this millennia-old culture, and this is generating profound theological debates throughout Abya Yala.



Problem

Gender-based violence is an expression of structural gender inequality within the patriarchal system, which currently, in LAC, is articulated by at least three components:

1) The subscription of parliaments to norms arising from international agreements (1948; 1979, 1995, etc) and global governance plans (Millennium Development Goals, 2000–2015; Agenda 2030, etc.) that integrate various responses to gender-based violence.

2) The institutional weakening of States due to the deepening of neoliberal policies at a global level delays the adaptation of public policies to international standards and cancels universal and equal access to rights.

3) The progressive implementation of gender policies in recent decades, at different levels of government in countries across the region, has increased popular reactions to cultural change and intensified gender-based violence, particularly against women (Pilar Cancelo).

The interrelation of these elements leads to the deterioration of democracy, political persecution, and the systematic and unpunished extermination of women’s rights and human rights defenders.

Tension

Sectors of traditional society radically reject the gender perspective and uphold patriarchal social organization when their dogmas, privileges, and interests are challenged. Traditional religious sectors validate the existence of a vertical social order by reading the Bible through appeals to the continuity of a “divine order” from antiquity. Moderate conservative sectors admit gender equality in binary heterosexual terms as God’s creation (Gen. 2:20–24) and understand patriarchal gender roles as divine mandate (Eph. 5:22–33).



Regarding people of diverse gender identity, conservative religious sectors associate identity with willpower, arguing that accepting diverse gender identities is “falling into the temptation” of conditioning “their behaviour” and defining identity by “desire” (yielding to “lust,” Mt. 5:27–28, and the “passions of the flesh,” Gal. 5:16–25), thus denying the spirit and God’s (binary) creation. They do not accept “self-perception” as a criterion for defining a person’s identity, understanding this instead as a condemnable act (Rom. 1:24–32).

These sectors value education as disciplining desire and correcting the will according to God’s wisdom. Conservative political sectors operate with these discourses in the public sphere, thus justifying social inequality. This also forms the basis of neoliberal market theory.

Theological Input

Violence against people is violence against God because people are God’s image. Every person has the right to a life free of violence because God desires abundant life for all, including cultural and gender diversity.

Gender-based violence is not a private matter but a public one, where the State, churches, and society must assume responsibility because violence is a crime, a sin, and a social problem. The cycle of gender-based violence must be broken by denouncing these situations and supporting victims (CEDEPCA).

The justification of social inequality as God’s will, and the denial of the equal human condition to women and gender-diverse people, are theological heresies. The gospel announces abundant life without violence for the entire world.

— Proposition 01

Prophetic diakonia from a gender justice perspective

Mediating, building bridges, and prophetic diakonia: transforming gender and power relations.

**“Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in”
(Luke 14:23).**


Bridge-building. A less commonly used translation understands diakonia as a bridge that connects spaces that are distant from one another, transforming relationships and allowing itself to be transformed as people and as a community (1 John 4:16).

Input: Lutheran Foundation for Diakonia, Brazil.

Axis: Religious fundamentalism.

Among its meanings of service, diakonia includes the task of bringing together spaces that are far apart. Diakonia builds bridges and plays the role of intermediary. Diakonia with a gender perspective builds bridges by doing justice to the work women have been conducting for centuries, which is “crucial” to the ministerial work of the church. Diakonia creates relationships by integrating people inclusively and in solidarity.

In the early church, the person who assumed the diaconal ministry had the function of being “the bishop’s ears and mouth.” This person was responsible for connecting realities, stories, needs from the margins, vulnerable lives, and those experiencing illness or violence with the life of the church. The intermediary’s mission succeeded if distances could be bridged. In these cases, diakonia could contribute to the transformation of the church, both at the centre and at the periphery (DMD/FLM).




The prophetic dimension of diakonia transforms the idea of service into liberating action. Who conducted diakonia in the early communities? In many of the cases, women, and slaves. Why? Because diakonia implied sacrifice, self-denial for the sake of another. This ministry was complex for those with high social status (Mk. 10:21–22). That was precisely the challenge. Faith in Christ places people on equal footing; here lies the realization of justice, dignity, and love (Lk. 14:23).

Empowerment is mutual—through reciprocal recognition of humanity—both for those trapped by the logic of power and social mandates, and for those caught in vulnerability and stereotypes. Diakonia as bridge circulates power, offering the strength to transform relationships and to be transformed as people and as community (1 Jn. 4:16).

This change is fundamental for women and gender-diverse people historically subject to stereotypes that limit their autonomy and agency. What is the relationship between women’s broad presence in diakonia and the church’s decisions and priorities? How many situations of exclusion and injustice affect women especially—and are even addressed by women deacons—while still subject to subordination within the church itself?

“These stereotypical divisions of tasks received a religious and sacred atmosphere in the church, through a theology of service that relegates women to limited responsibilities of care in the community, serving food and caring for the elderly and children, disconnected from decision-making and the exercise of power.”
(Rogerio Aguiar)

Prophetic diakonia keeps a critically supportive perspective when society loses its sense of collective responsibility for what is happening. Diakonia embodies situations of injustice. God, alongside the prophet Jeremiah, weeps in powerlessness before injustices (Jer. 9:1). God promises that the people will weep in



suffering (Jer. 9:10) and calls for professional mourners to teach women to sing funeral laments as public testimony of the people's estrangement from God's word (Jer. 9:20).

How many songs do we know of women publicly voicing the injustices of their people—including against women themselves? In Jeremiah 9, God calls women to express their sorrow publicly as a prophetic mandate. Caring for the people against death is a prophetic action in a society where death is trivialised and injustices normalised. “The Mothers” in Central America, Colombia, and South American military dictatorships are a living example of this prophetic cry against death. Men—especially rulers, wise, powerful, and rich—are to be warned (Jer. 9:23) that if they are to boast of anything, it should be of God's love, justice, and righteousness (Jer. 9:24).

To cry publicly in indignation and anguish is a political act. Tears are acts of resistance and resilience. A critical gender analysis of women's practices regarding care and embodied experiences intertwined with the notion of diakonia as mediation and bridge-building contributes to redefining women's diaconal ministry in the church. Understanding diakonia as connected to embodied experiences, everyday life, and balanced power relations challenges the hierarchical division of domestic service, care work, and church ministries.

This diakonia questions the architecture of power that relegates women to subordinate service roles. A critical approach to diakonia through gender justice lenses introduces the notion of responsibility: care is not a burden or a negatively valued service but is integral to the responsibility of building justice and dignity for all (Rosane Pletsch).



A testimony from diaconal experience

Religious fundamentalism in patriarchal communities and social fundamentalism reinforce one another in the church because they are not present only within the church. Within ecumenical churches and the faith-based organisations integrated into ACT Alliance, defining actions for public witness of prophetic diakonia in defence of people's violated rights reveals great difficulties in occupying public space and taking an affirmative position. This is curious, given that these churches have such a rich theology of social responsibility and public commitment as an expression of love of neighbour. In contrast, conservative and fundamentalist sectors easily occupy public space—holding public office, appealing to politics to participate in the State, and using the paradigm of theocracy as a model of government.

This model is extremely violent and linked to masculinities. What does this have to do with masculinities? Everything. It stems from a principle of hierarchy and a conservative traditional family model in which the man is the head and excludes homosexuals, and trans women, viewing these identities as deviations from hegemonic masculinity. Prophetic diakonia is challenged by two major shifts in the public sphere: the model of the state and the model of the family

(Rogerio Oliveira Aguiar)



— Proposition 02

Let us live in peace!

Life in peace always comes from justice (Isaiah 32:17)

The effect of righteousness will be peace (Isaiah 32:17)

Promoting a life of peace. Jesus' dialogue with the Canaanite woman emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting the rights of all people equally, regardless of their faith or culture (Matthew 15:21).

Input: Nos Contamos, SEDI and Hora de Obrar, Argentina.

Axis: Faith and Love.

The rights of women and gender-diverse people are human rights. Human rights are the secular form of love of neighbour. All people have the right to live a life free from violence.

When Jesus at first wanted to ignore the Canaanite woman because she did not belong to his community or people, she called his attention, claiming that she too had rights. Jesus agreed. At that time, everything foreign was demonised and rejected. Jesus, a Jewish man, did not marginalise her—he allowed himself to be surprised by her faith, engaged in dialogue with her, and as a result reconsidered and changed. Jesus listened to her and healed her daughter (Mt. 15:21–28).

Freedom



The transmedia project **Nos Contamos** works with faith communities to eradicate violence against women and gender-diverse people.

“Our faith tells us that the first commandment is love. And all forms of love need a psychic, spiritual, and social environment in which to unfold. That environment, that framework of freedom, is given to us by the full validity of human rights. **Our faith cannot do without the perspective of rights.** Human rights, with their universality and non-discrimination, apply to all people, and living a life free from violence is one of the most violated human rights. It is not enough for it to be recognised in the most recent international instruments. It is still a conquest, a daily challenge. **Gender equality** which we also pursue through faith, and which is the equitable enjoyment of human rights, **includes fundamental opportunities and freedoms for all of humanity’s diversity.**”

(Pilar Cancelo)



Proposition 03

Neither the Bible or the Law! These are your ideas!

What subordinates women to men is patriarchy. Defending women's subordination through the Bible constitutes gender-based violence in textual practice.

“Fully equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17)

Peaceful coexistence. The task of the Church is to strengthen people in love and justice through faith in order to eliminate all forms of inequality, including those between men and women.

Input: ACT Forum, Peru

Axis: Secularism and fundamentalisms

Using the Bible to legitimise current inequality, whether social or gendered, is religious violence. The underlying question is whether one starts from the common basis of equality among all people when interpreting the Bible. Religious violence promotes a single reading of the Bible, based on sexist values that use “the order” of creation, the “material” used for creation, the “gender roles” of antiquity, “biological difference,” “social institutions,” etc., to justify current inequality. This reading, instead of seeking to interpret the text’s message, focuses solely on the culture of people of that time, seeking to live today as if still in Israel’s theocracy or the Roman Empire. Laws changed—both throughout the Bible and across history—and in our democratic societies we have enacted new laws.

ACT Peru works in the ecumenical and interreligious sphere to challenge the legitimization of patriarchal culture through the Bible by religious groups that transpose ancient Middle Eastern cultural practices into today’s reality. This closed reading does not question human rights violations or the erosion of people’s democracies.

2. Legitimizing inequality as a divine order. The legitimization of inequality as divine order relies on six broad assertions: Man was created first; Woman was taken from his rib; The man as head and father of the family; Woman's submission to man; God created humanity as male and female (Gen 1:27) and commanded them to reproduce; Marriage between a man and a woman reflects the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). This biblical reading, taking isolated words and verses, justifies the vertical order of the church and male-headed families as God's will.

3. An interpretation of the text's message. A contextual reading of the same biblical texts suggests:

- 1) There are no status differences because even God the Creator does not place Himself above people;
- 2) People created from the first creature are equal;
- 3) The Apostle Paul questions gender inequality in the church;
- 4) People share the same responsibilities for care and stewardship in creation;
- 5) People are equal regardless of gender identity;
- 6) God's image and likeness manifests in mercy and commitment to all creation. Humans breathe in God's compassion, generosity, and love, and should exhale the same to others (John Wesley)



— Proposition 04

Mary, “mother of God.”

A disciple committed to life and social justice in her time (Lk. 1:52–54). Motherhood beyond the patriarchal social mandate.

“Let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38)

The diversity of women’s experiences and choices. ¿Do all women always want to be mothers? Mary decides to become a mother (Luke 1:38) and chooses to be a disciple of Jesus (Luke 11:27–28), as do many other women (Luke 8:1–3).

Input: Peruvian Women’s Center Flora Tristán, Peru.

Axis: Children’s rights.

Because knowledges around conception are embedded in a patriarchal culture, it did not recognise—or could not accept—the notion of male infertility. In times of strong concern for maintaining population growth, the biblical culture incentivised and promoted motherhood as the ideal for being a woman, without distinguishing between desired motherhood and unintended pregnancy. These debates are fruits of modern times and cannot be retroactively rejected onto the cultures of the periods when biblical texts were orally transmitted or written down.

Today, the mandate of being only a mother is an enormous burden and cause of long prayers and sacrifices by “sterile” women desiring motherhood. The model of motherhood arising from popular faith’s Marian conception—Mary as holy, sinless woman; virgin; mother of God; intercessor before the Father and the Son; in a role parallel to the Holy Spirit—is a theology that developed after the early Christian church, recognizing a central role of the

feminine in popular religiosity. These dogmas come from biblical theological interpretation and therefore can and must enter dialogue with the lived experiences of women and men of faith.

In Ecuador, according to INEC (2018), 17,448 girls under fourteen gave birth between 2009 and 2016. This equals 2,181 girls per year forced into motherhood—all victims of sexual violence but unregistered as such, preventing access to care, reparation, and justice. Their concealment operates across all State and societal institutions. They are thousands, yet no one sees them.

(Cristina Burneo Salazar, Gender Ideology in Ecuador, in Ana C. González Vélez et al., Unveiling the Rhetoric of Fear of Fundamentalisms, Flora Tristán, 2018, Peru, p. 84).

In Guatemala, congress woman Sandra Morán introduced a bill to protect girls aged 10 to 14 who were victims of sexual violence. The initiative included guaranteeing termination of pregnancy, reparation to victims, comprehensive health care, legal assistance, and sexual education. The bill was rejected by congress in 2018. In 2020, Guatemala's Ministry of Health reported 60,304 births to adolescents, and in 2021, 72,077 adolescent births, of which 2,041 were to girls aged 10–14. CEDEPCA works in violence prevention, including sexual violence among adolescents.

4. Marian dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. *The Roman Catholic Church has four dogmas about Mary: two date to the 4th century (Mary conceived by God's grace, and Mary is the Mother of God because she is the mother of God's son); two date to the 19th and 20th centuries (Mary conceived immaculately because Jesus was born without sin; Mary ascended to heaven because she is the mother of God's son). These dogmas stem from popular devotion in later centuries. Evangelical churches do not accept them. The translation of "virgin" is disputed (Is 7:14; 65:12), often rendered as "young woman," and Mary's divinity is not accepted. Accounts of Jesus' childhood were written much later than the other Gospels. In the Gospels, Mary appears as a disciple, and Jesus speaks of his mother and siblings as friends. Nowhere does Jesus reference these dogmas.*

— Proposition 05

Is Church Leadership Only for Men?

Hierarchisation and masculinisation of discipleship. The model of Jesus and hermeneutical circularity.

“He appointed twelve to be with him” (Mark 3:13–15)

An inclusive and universal discipleship. Emphasizing that Jesus called only twelve male disciples places women and Jesus’ message in a secondary position, because “the twelve” represents the totality and equality of all people before God.


Input: CEDEPCA, Guatemala.

Axis: Kingdom paradigm.

The hierarchisation of men’s roles in church decision-making spaces produces a series of violences because it hides the roles of women in the church, the feminine participation in the Trinity, and years of theological production that seeks to reflect on women’s experiences from gender justice and feminist perspectives.

The interpretation that Jesus called twelve men from his community of followers loses sight of the symbolic importance of the number 12 for the life of faith of ancient Israel.

Concentration of power and Biblical interpretation in churches among men generates a vicious circle of self-justification that is doubly violent: it violates women and transgresses the biblical text. Women played a fundamental role in Jesus’ movement, and many studies have already demonstrated and documented this very well (Elsa Tamez).



The Biblical-Theological Training Program of CEDEPCA seeks to build a proposal integrating pastoral work with the paradigm of Jesus. This proposal aims to reinforce the concept of human dignity in an equitable way by addressing the creation narratives of human beings in God's image and likeness in Genesis, starting from the reality in which communities live.

This approach works with a methodology that includes hermeneutical circularity between socio-analytical mediation, hermeneutical mediation, and developing pastoral praxis. This means working with the conflicts around gender, discrimination, patriarchy, machismo, sexism, language, and so many other inequities present in faith communities. The program assumes that Jesus' paradigm is inclusive, it is the paradigm of the Kingdom of God, in which Jesus' experiences with children and women are central in his mission and occupy a fundamental place in his teachings, sayings, and actions.

(Arnoldo Aguilar)

Proposition 06

Not counting women and children

The concealment of the role of women, children, and people of diverse gender identities in the Church and in the Bible.

“Not counting women and children” (Matthew 14:21)

The presence of women. In the Gospels, Jesus approaches excluded people, does theology with them, and sets them as examples for others. In many cases, these people are women.

Input: Women and Theology Network, Guatemala.

Axis: Restorative justice.

In the Bible, the making invisible of women, children, and gender-diverse people—as with many other aspects of reality—results from a way of looking at and telling the message of the Word. José Ramírez-Kidd says: *“A biblical text is a window. We do not look at the window but through it. The horizon it directs our gaze to is not theology but life itself.”*

The making invisible of aspects denied visibility by patriarchy is a constant in traditional theologies. David Castillo argues that feminist, postcolonial, Black, Indigenous, sexual diversity, and ecological biblical hermeneutics, among others, originate in a critique of the system that victimises their subjects and in the denunciation of religion’s oppressive role over them. The Bible is a tool for identification, comfort, and emancipation of people of faith. Ecological hermeneutics emerged among these movements, placing creation as the subject and concern of biblical interpretation (Isa. 14:8) (David Castillo).



Biblical hermeneutics

is the science of interpretation applied to the books and epistles of the Bible, that is, the interpretation of biblical documents.

The Gospels show that Jesus went out to meet people in situations of exclusion, including women and children. Jesus himself used social problems and situations of vulnerability to explain his teachings. Theological studies and the use of the hermeneutics of suspicion allow us, through critical and contextual analysis of texts, to deduce elements not explicitly stated. In many cases, pastors in churches are trained in patriarchal theology in which women are invisible. Feminist theologians have pioneered making women and children visible through biblical and theological studies. Even today, despite significant theological production over decades worldwide, these works still face enormous academic and community resistance (Cintia Méndez).

The Women and Theology Network of Guatemala offers the course Women in the First Testament, which works with women on their experiences with Mishpat (the biblical idea of restorative justice), drawing on texts such as: Deborah, prophetess and judge in Israel; Ruth and Naomi: two women, one dream; Miriam the prophetess; Esther, Bathsheba, Martha and Mary; Mary Magdalene: disciple and follower; and the Samaritan woman.

Through these stories, they recreate a theology of solidarity around women's friendship and the Mishpat of a woman who fights for her people even as all her children are killed. The women in the course identify with these biblical women and feel vindicated, recognising similar experiences in their own lives with other women, with their children, husbands, and bosses.

This reworking of painful experiences allows them to strengthen their self-esteem, value themselves as women, and begin to free themselves from oppressive relationships. They share this with their families, facing different responses: either to move forward despite resistance or remain stuck because "family comes first."

— Proposition 07

Images of God and the Trinity

Beyond masculine imagery and language: how can we speak of a “God who is both Father and Mother”?

The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 5,7)

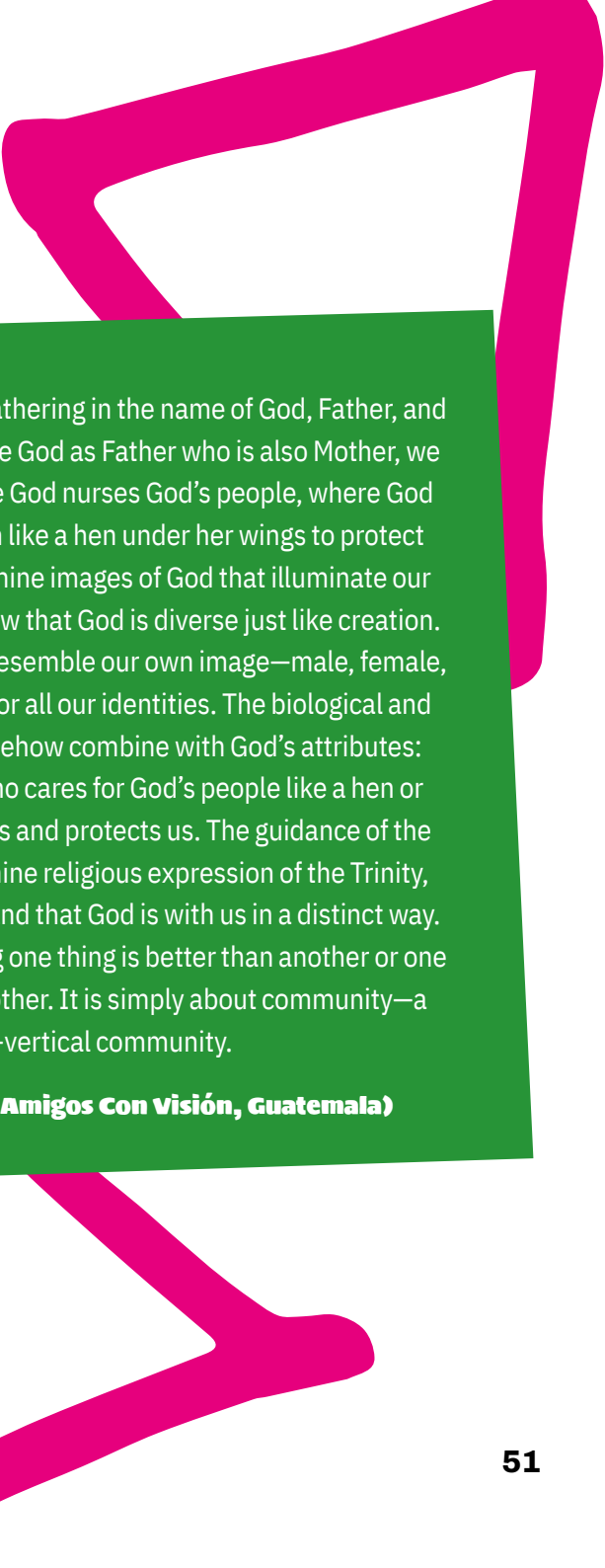
Experiencias con Dios. In addition to portraying God as Father, the Bible also presents God as giving birth (Deuteronomy 32:18), breastfeeding (Isaiah 49:15), and assuming maternal attitudes (Isaiah 63:13; Hosea 11:3–4).

Input: Amigos Con Visión, Guatemala.

Axis: Diverse identities of God

Christian theology uses a special Greek word to speak of the interconnection and interrelation of the attributes of the persons of the Trinity: perichoresis. This is the relational mode in which the Christian community sees itself as in a mirror. The gender roles of the persons of the Trinity are interchangeable. This divine communion is the model of community that inspires the Christian church.

Transmitting only one idea of God through doctrine, with a sexist, patriarchal, and androcentric view, ignores biblical texts where God breastfeeds (Isa. 66:11), is moved with compassion from the womb (Lk. 7:13; 15:20) and assumes different forms and identities (1 Kgs. 19:12; Exod. 33:18–23). The challenge is to know and incorporate into our language images of God that go beyond male and female. The experience of God’s divinity always surpasses our words. God is much more than our vocabularies can express. Listening to and experiencing the divine mystery is the challenge of opening windows to contextualised spiritualities that always make sense in daily life.



We always begin the gathering in the name of God, Father, and Mother. When we name God as Father who is also Mother, we refer to the text where God nurses God's people, where God wants to gather them like a hen under her wings to protect them. These are feminine images of God that illuminate our path because they show that God is diverse just like creation. Our image of God can resemble our own image—male, female, feminine, masculine, or all our identities. The biological and the spiritual can somehow combine with God's attributes: God as loving God who cares for God's people like a hen or a mother who sustains and protects us. The guidance of the Holy Spirit, as a feminine religious expression of the Trinity, also helps us understand that God is with us in a distinct way. This is not about saying one thing is better than another or one being better than another. It is simply about community—a non-vertical community.

(Roberto Armas, Amigos Con Visión, Guatemala)

— Proposition 08

The image of God is immutable— unless... it changes!

Which images of God do we hold and perpetuate in religious discourse, particularly within churches? Which images also perpetuate violence? How can we reconstruct images that care for, welcome, and embrace diversity?

***“Filled with compassion, he ran, embraced him, and kissed him”
(Luke 15:20)***

Inclusive representations of God. Jesus incorporates new faith experiences of the people into his parables about the Kingdom of God and teaches attributes of God that differ from the strong, vengeful male figure found in other theologies.

Input: United Lutheran Evangelical Church, Argentina.

Axis: God as Father and Mother.

There is increasing consensus in theology that the image of God as male, with traditional masculine traits of strength, power, and superiority, underlies sexist and violent attitudes. These “values” belong to patriarchal culture, not to the Judeo-Christian tradition, nor to the diversity of faith experiences of the biblical peoples or of the Christian communities within the Bible itself.

In practice, making this way of believing in God the only possible one justifies inequality, exclusion, and the use of force—particularly the use of violence by the powerful. Jesus deeply revises God’s attributes in his parables about the Kingdom of God. Christian doctrine has an intrinsic commitment to social justice and a culture of peace. Feminist Christian theology reflects and revises these patriarchal images of God.

The task of the Christian church is twofold: to revise the image of God in its theology, and to collaborate with communities on the images of God present in popular religiosity. The church can be a positive factor for living in a more peaceful, less violent world.

Praying to God as “Father and Mother” provokes anger in some people in communities, who insist that God is Father. In these cases, we use the biblical text of the Prodigal Son, when the father runs to meet his son and is moved from the womb (Lk. 15:20). In the original text, “womb” is the word used. God runs to meet God’s children. Thus, God is neither male nor female, but also both male and female.

We work with the texts of the Canaanite woman and the Samaritan woman regarding discipleship, proclamation, questioning, and difference. We use four or five central texts, always dialoguing with the context, looking at ourselves from there, and working on mandates. None of us is fully deconstructed, and that is okay—we are not perfect beings. Sometimes we follow one line, and an edge emerges from where we least expected. Then we must work on it again. We seek justice within our limited possibilities.

**(Mariela Pereyra and Wilma Rommel,
IELU, Argentina)**

— Proposition 09

Does God dwell within us?

Masculinity and femininity are relational and reciprocal.

“The whole creation has been groaning in labor pains” (Romans 8:22)

Bodies formed from the dust of the earth. All creation is the temple of the Spirit, because the Spirit creates reciprocal relationships among all creatures and intercedes for them equally, as experienced in many Indigenous spiritualities.

Input: Ethical Tribunal for Justice and Defense of the Human Rights of Pan-Amazonian and Andean Women.

Axis: Identity and food sovereignty

Patriarchal theologies propose a linear relationship and deny any kind of reciprocity—whether between people or between people and creation. These theologies interpret “stewardship” of creation in terms of “dominion” and interpret woman’s companionship in terms of service. From this relationship arises the right to exploit the land for material production and to subordinate women to men for sexual reproduction. Christian ecotheology understands that human life is integrated with the ecosystems of creation alongside other creatures. The Holy Spirit, present in creation, intercedes for creatures (Rom. 8:26–27). Creation is not conceived as God’s property. Creation is ongoing. Yet inequality generated by humans—among species and among humans—has created a massive imbalance. Christian communities worldwide demand socio-environmental and gender justice because they are two sides of the same patriarchy, based on ownership and exploitation, resulting in structural violence and extractivism.

The affirmation of Indigenous theologies, with the rise of decolonial theory, recovers the value of the presence of sacred beings in nature and the anthropology of “body-territories,” in which

bodies are deeply integrated into environmental balance, the life of living beings, and respect for the sacred. Decolonial theologies challenge the colonization of being, knowledge, and power as a strategy of domination. Among Andean Indigenous traditions, the earth is venerated as a divinity: Pachamama, Mother Earth. The continent is understood as Abya Yala, a land in full maturity. The shared expectation is Buen Vivir (Sumaq Kawsay, Suma Qamaña).

This theology is based on correlation, reciprocity, and mutual care of life in all its biodiversity to remain in harmony. The earth itself is a network of care that integrates human life. Bodies are part of territories, and genders are as diverse as beings: dialectical, not fixed, not binary, not normative. In this theology, no being is more important than another.

The First Ethical Tribunal for Justice and Defence of the Human Rights of Pan-Amazonian and Andean Women was held on April 29–30, 2017, in Tarapoto, a city in the Peruvian central jungle, within the framework of the 8th Pan-Amazonian Social Forum (FOSPA).

On that occasion, cases were denounced of women facing dispossession of their territories and violence in their lives due to extractive activities (Brazil, Ecuador, Peru), torture and degrading treatment for being Indigenous (Chile), as well as the assassination of Lenca Indigenous leader Berta Cáceres (Honduras)—still unpunished more than a year after her femicide—and the case of Peruvian farmer Máxima Acuña de Chaupe, who since 2011 has defended her land against incessant harassment by the Yanacocha mining consortium.

Among the diversity of women, Indigenous women—Amazonian and Andean—are those who face the greatest difficulties in living in peace, because extractivism invades their territory, culture, identity, food sovereignty, and lives with gender violence, tearing apart their community social fabric.

Proposition 10

What kind of man is Jesus?

The masculinity of Jesus—what can we learn from his example?

“Jesus wept” (John 11:35)

Dimensions of Jesus’ masculinity. From the paradigm of the Kingdom of God, Jesus models a masculinity that challenges the logic of heteropatriarchal order structured around power and privilege.


Input: United Lutheran Evangelical Church, Argentina

Axis: Men with privileges.

The Bible recounts groups that treated women in that time as domestic staff, as objects of lust, and as threats to the moral integrity of men. Jesus challenged these stereotypes by relating personally and differently to women, which became grounds for various accusations (Mk. 10:2; Jn. 8:4; Mt. 11:19).

Many of Jesus’ encounters with women are unexpected, and we do not even know their names: the woman with a flow of blood, Jairus’ daughter, Peter’s mother-in-law, the Syrophoenician woman, the Samaritan woman. Mary and Martha had a personal friendship with Jesus. Some of these testimonies in the Gospels highlight Jesus’ ethnic identity and his belonging to the patriarchal culture of his time, but also his openness to the worldviews and arguments of women.

Women acted out of their faith in ways that unsettled Jesus; nevertheless, these texts were recorded in the Gospels because of Jesus’ own learning in each of these encounters. Jesus felt his body, his words, his power, his identity, his knowledge, his privileges confronted.



Men, in contrast, challenged Jesus from positions of power, regarding legal and formal issues, disputing his popular authority. The biblical narratives perform gender expressions that stand in tension with hegemonic patriarchal masculinity—both Jewish and Roman. The paradigm of the Kingdom of God blurs the boundaries of gender stereotypes, creating discomfort. A notable aspect in biblical stories is the high emotional expressiveness of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit—even explaining when they need to pause, to be alone, to take time for themselves.

The texts show Jesus challenged by cultural limits, social and ethnic prejudices, and in these dialogues, he changes his mind. Jesus engages from the paradigm of the Kingdom, respecting singularities. The Gospel accounts of encounters and dialogues have a pedagogical purpose: Jesus opens dialogue, asks people what they need, gives them the chance to express themselves, grants them dignity, listens to them. Words have creative power; the exchange generates connection (Iván Vivas).

Masculinity is subject to expectations from both women and men. The question of what kind of masculinity we are called to build cannot be separated from the question of what kind of Christians we are called to be today. Jesus' dialogues in the Gospels are organised around people's needs, the context in which they live, and the paradigm of the Kingdom (Iván Vivas).

The key learning is dialogue. The question is: what do men need? Men tend to repress feelings, avoid expressing what they feel, dislike showing vulnerability, or refuse to talk about what is happening to them. This repression often triggers arguments or situations of violence, frequently directed at those around them—especially women. Men need to talk about their feelings, to break the silence. But for this, they need safe spaces where they can have these conversations among peers without feeling judged (Felipe Hobus Vollrath).

It is essential to talk about barely perceived privileges, the details, the most naturalised aspects, in addition to the more structural ones often analysed, in relation to gender inequality. Men may feel reluctant toward religious spaces because of public perceptions, common sense, previous experiences, or aspects associated with privilege. These need to be considered in the setting and design of proposals.

“Some time ago, I took a workshop where the facilitator guided us with a quite simple but highly effective exercise. He showed us concentric circles representing a series of privileges. Some circles are not usually mentioned as privileges or we do not realise they are social class, skin colour, being male or female, religion, education level, place of residence, among others. As we coloured the concentric circles, the closer we got to the centre, the more privileges we had in that area. The farther from the centre, toward the larger circle, the fewer privileges. If you ended up with a small circle all filled in at the centre, it meant you had a lot of privileges. If you had a large, uncoloured circle, it meant you had almost none. The facilitator noted that an exceedingly small circle of people enjoys privileges, and an exceptionally large circle of people enjoys few. In some cases, the circles were not perfectly round but irregular or wavy. The dynamic was simple, brilliant, and helped us problematise many aspects of masculinities.”

Iván Vivas,
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida



— Proposition 11

Striving to keep everything the same

What forms of violence are perpetuated through hegemonic masculinities?

“But it is not so among you” (Mark 10:43)

Expectations of transformative men. Christian pastoral work seeks to prevent violence and challenges attitudes of conquest, subordination, and exploitation. It calls men to be merciful, supportive, and committed (Ephesians 5:1–20).

Input: Evangelical Church of the River Plate, Argentina.

Axis: Inequalities and privileges.

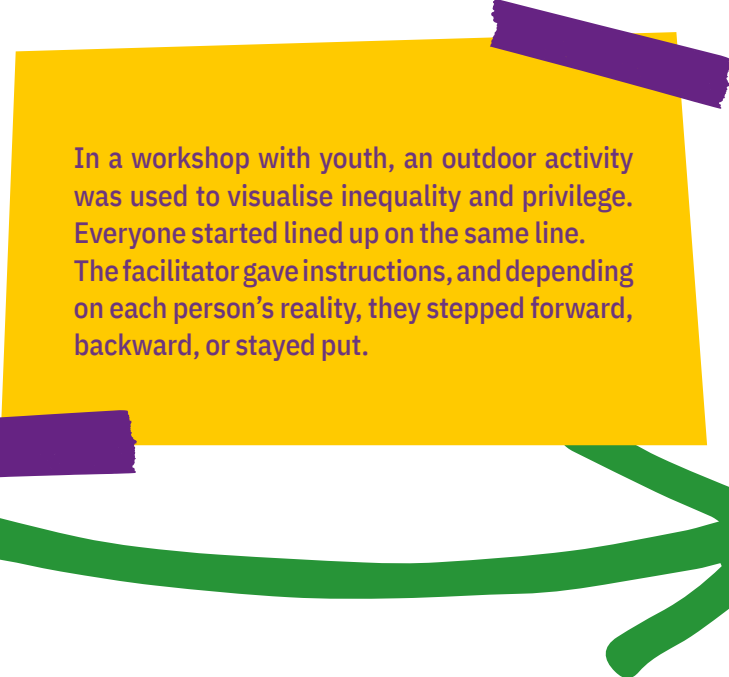
The early Pauline Christian community presents a conflict between models of masculinity in Ephesians 5:1–20, problematizing behaviours that strongly challenged men of that time. This debate questioned how the body was understood, how people related socially, and how wealth was managed.

The Pauline Christian community questioned three aspects of hegemonic masculinity:


- a) **Arrogant men.** Those who **use their bodies to gain privileges**, seeking social recognition through physical appearance or seduction.
- b) **Boastful men. Men unfaithful to their principles**, careless in word and deed, unreliable, whose company is burdensome because of unpredictability.
- c) **Reckless men. Those who sexualise everything**, speak in double meanings, display constant sexual availability, and align themselves with the demands and offerings of the sexual marketplace.

The letter mentions three practices through which men hegemonize spaces: physical appearance, rhetoric, and financial capacity. These practices of conquest, subordination, and exploitation are patriarchal practices that endure through time.

Men need to review how they read the Bible, to recognise themselves in it, think more carefully about what they say, and change the way they live. Adam cries from the effort required to obtain the fruits of the earth. God expresses deep emotions—from anger to joy, from sorrow to delight, from frustration to empathy. Jesus wept with grief at the loss of his friend, wept over Jerusalem’s self-destruction, and was profoundly saddened before his arrest. Jesus spoke with his disciples as friends. Christian communities call men to be merciful, supportive, and committed—not relying on charm, ability, or power, but trusting in what God can create among people in community. It is not about ceasing to be men—it is about being simpler, more human, people of goodness. (Jorge Weishein)



In a workshop with youth, an outdoor activity was used to visualise inequality and privilege. Everyone started lined up on the same line. The facilitator gave instructions, and depending on each person’s reality, they stepped forward, backward, or stayed put.



The prompts touched on family history: who grew up with food on the table every day, whose parents finished high school, who had the chance to travel abroad, who had to care for younger siblings as children, who had to work to pay for their studies, etc., from the most basic needs to educational development and life expectations.

The exercise allowed for personal discoveries that later became the basis for group reflection. It exposed the unequal structure of the society in which we live.

(Jorge Weisheim)

— Proposition 12

You couldn't ask for a better "model"

Common sense applies images of hegemonic masculinity to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (wise, strong, hardworking, self-controlled, brave, gentle, etc.). How can these images be deconstructed?

"Put your sword back into its place" (John 18:11)

An all-loving God. Jesus, as a man speaking of faith and love, reveals a loving God who rejects violence and promotes agape, nonviolence, and peace, breaking with the male stereotypes of his time.

Input: Bartolomé de las Casas Center, El Salvador.

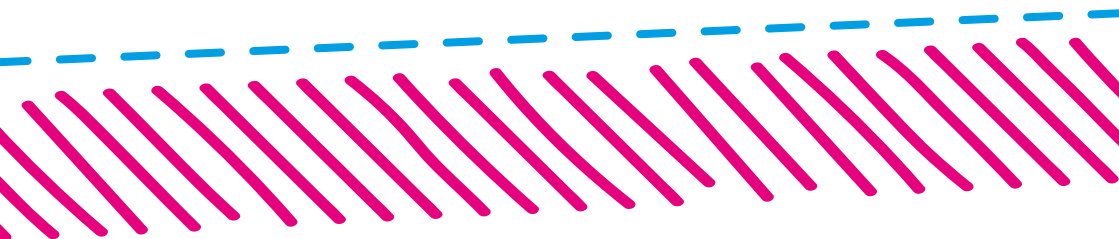
Axis: Masculinities.

The images of God in Christian churches depend on theology, but they often function as an alter ego for leaders—mostly men—who justify particular modes of exercising power. In some cases, this Christian God, especially as inspired by the Old Testament, is presented as Creator, Almighty, Lord of war, a God of wrath, confrontational, and at times accepting or ignoring genocide. This God is authoritarian and conquering, with power based on fear and threats of destruction. A God who does not dialogue but annihilates. A conquering, victorious God, with blood on his hands, justifying hatred and violence. A God who sets norms and behavioural rules functioning as a survival manual which, if followed to the letter, guarantees escape from the wrath of this dangerous God. This image of God is widespread in some churches but is textually and symbolically violent. Violent images of God,

especially in the Old Testament, stem from wartime contexts and abuses of power under theocracies. Yet even in that period, other communal and popular theologies contested such images.

The key lies in the idea of power. The gospel inverts the meaning of power. The God of Jesus is a loving Father. Jesus rejects the violence of oppressive power and replaces it with the idea of agape (love, collective care). During the Roman Pax in Palestine, Jesus teaches an image of God who does not judge but cares, heals, and promises a new “Kingdom of God.” The salvation of this Kingdom embraces all creation. God’s omnipotence ceases to be despotic violence and becomes all love and justice. Jesus embodied this image of God all the way to crucifixion, death, and resurrection.

Jesus embodies hope with a new way of managing public life through faith in a common commitment to nonviolence and peace-making. The Christian community understands Jesus’ rejection of violent power as a salvific act, strengthening the community of faith and projecting it universally as testimony of peace. This is the image of God the Christian community preaches as grace and as the guarantee of Christian freedom. Embodying this theology as a man redefines all gender stereotypes of that time and today.



The 'Escuela Equinoccio' – the equinox school - of the popular education organisation Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, founded in 2000, develops a masculinities program that provides men of faith with codes and resources from a feminist perspective. The program does not start with the Bible but instead creates interpretive codes and a secular framework, which then allows a return to the Bible with tools to critique masculinities in the text. In the Bible, everyone is presented as a King David, a glorious Moses descending Sinai, a Jesus said to be so loving—yet he ignores the Canaanite woman (Mt. 15:23–24), and also ignores the woman about to be stoned (Jn. 8:6, 8).

These displays of indifference to vulnerability are violent. Our practices reflect society. There is a typical “alpha male” at the top of the pyramid—in soccer terms, a Cristiano Ronaldo—and others like a Lionel Messi. Cristiano Ronaldo earns much more because he represents masculinity promoted by society, while Messi is even accused of being “almost autistic.”

(Larry Madrigal)

— Proposición 13

A very human man, loved by many

Jesus proposes a transformative and healthier masculinity. The need to make this masculinity of Jesus visible.

“Though he was equal with God, he emptied himself”

(Philippians 2:7)

Authentic and human men. Jesus fully assumes his human condition, relinquishes divine honor, and honors marginalized and violated people in the Kingdom of God, highlighting God’s revelation in situations of rights violations.

Input: Ecumenical Women’s Team of the World Day of Prayer, Paraguay.

Axis: Men’s health

Jesus refuses to use force to solve problems, rejects charity as a public act with ulterior motives, refuses to follow customs simply for the sake of honour, is not willing to discriminate against others in order to belong to the select group of “real men,” disbelieves in the accumulation of goods as a guarantee of security, questions marriage and having children as a way to gain social status, challenges the reduction of women to the private domestic sphere as a means of authority, freely expresses his emotions in times of anguish or joy instead of pretending strength—among other practices. Jesus questions patriarchal mandates and stereotypes of his time.

Nevertheless, there are also silences, renunciations, and demands in Jesus’ life that reflect exemplary altruism, violent reactions to injustice, and appeals to physical force and symbolic power in uncontrolled ways.

While these acts may be understandable within a culture of honour, in the context of theocracies, and as part of a pedagogy of social reputation, they also embody the violence of patriarchy. Human dignity was tied to honour. Honor granted peer respect, social status, and privileges. Even so, Jesus reveals conflicts with the mandates of patriarchal masculinity, which form the foundation of stereotypes and social marginalisation.

Christian faith conceives all creation as dignified because all creation is the work of God. Jesus vindicates the dignity of vulnerable and marginalised people by honouring them in the divine Kingdom as “the first” and inverting the existing social order. True honour, for Jesus, belongs to those most violated who accept God’s invitation to the Kingdom. The dignity of every person is rooted in being a creature of God. The gospel rejects social mandates turned into law. Jesus’ witness shows that salvation works by God’s grace through faith.

All these cultural mandates led to Christ’s condemnation to death. The law, the logic of the world, what everyone expects to be done—only worsen stereotypes, suffering, despair, fear—all of which lead farther away from faith, hope, love, and abundant life. Christ “dies” on the cross to this oppressive logic of the world with its patriarchal mandates, to rise into a liberated life in the paradigm of the Kingdom of God. The death of Christ marks a before and after in the experience of his friends and disciples.

This self-understanding of Christ in Christian theology is called in Greek *kenosis*: Jesus strips himself of his divine “omnipotence” to re-signify “vulnerability” as a place of divine revelation. God’s power is revealed in vulnerability, in the cross. Early Christian theology speaks of a new creation of the person through faith in Christ. The logic of the patriarchal world is not “eternal life” (*zoe aionios*), not “quality of life,” not “Kingdom of God,” but “death-drive” (*thanatos*). Patriarchy wounds, kills a little every day—

and kills many women and people of diverse gender identities entirely. Christ defeated patriarchy in death on the cross. Each believer, through faith, “dies,” deactivates this power of patriarchy in identification with the body of Christ on the cross and in his resurrection. Faith in Christ is a decision for “new life with Christ,” “a resurrected life” with others as the “body of Christ,” an opening to God’s grace.

The new life in Christ is life based on God’s trust in us, a life in freedom to recreate creation together, to discover together the best of what God has made in us, to be together a more just society, a world transformed as Jesus lived and preached. All of this, which Jesus calls “eternal life” in the Kingdom of God, within the context and imagination of the theocracy of his time, is a humanity liberated in a transformed creation. This place of faith completely rethinks the logic of patriarchy.

The Ecumenical Women’s Team of the World Day of Prayer, with support from the municipality of Santa Rosa del Monday, Paraguay, organises every year the campaign Blue November (Noviembre Azul) in which men from across the city participate. The initiative includes a city walk, and a prevention talk on prostate cancer to raise awareness, educate, and encourage men to undergo regular medical checkups, understand how their bodies work, and overcome fears and taboos.

(Armando Weiss- Iglesia Evangélica del Río de la Plata)

— Proposition 14

The cost of embodying the Word

Women of proclamation and denunciation.

Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She said to him, “Rabbouni!” (John 20:16)

Personal commitment. Jesus affirms women’s faith and commitment by calling them to be witnesses of his resurrection—an announcement of resistance that once again overturns the social order and denounces patriarchal injustice.

Input: Evangelical Church of the River Plate and United Lutheran Evangelical Church, Argentina.

Eje: Gathering of women ministers.

Gender-based violence is the result of inequality produced by denying the other as a person. The revelation of the risen Jesus to women is an act of vindication for women and people of diverse gender identities. This leading role of women in this “Christological event” **highlights gender inequality within Jesus’ own movement.** Women accompanied, supported, and financed Jesus throughout his ministry. How many of them encouraged and supported the women who approached Jesus? Women were with Jesus through betrayal, accusation, and execution on the cross—and at the foot of the cross, along with the beloved disciple. They cleaned and anointed his dead body. The male disciples scattered and locked themselves away, prisoners of fear of persecution.

The experience of resurrection is initially an experience of faith in resistance to the brutal violence of patriarchy and in accompaniment of Jesus. The proclamation of the resurrection is simultaneously an act of denunciation—just as often happens with women’s testimonies of proclamation and denunciation in struggles for human rights, vindicating the fight for dignified life

and justice over death and impunity. Women, in denouncing or simply by speaking from this place and space, are crucified. The current “crucifixions” faced by women are femicides and trans-femicides (Pilar Cancelo).

Ministers of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church organise training gatherings. “This initiative emerged a few years ago as a space for training, reflection, and fellowship for women pastors and deaconesses—as a concrete need to strengthen one another as women leaders in an often-hostile environment for occupying a role traditionally held only by men. While many women have blazed the first trails, there is still a long way to go. As women leaders in our Churches, we have much to do and to say in building a more equitable, inclusive, and supportive proposal. It is undoubtedly valuable for communities to receive women ministers and enjoy the work we

do together. We know it is not easy, but we are more and more, and it is worth it because we have the gifts God has given us. In looking at ourselves, we realised there is no single profile; we are constructing this new role for women, and naturally questions arise: How is it done? Do we wait for opportunities to arise, or do we enter existing structures and struggle from within? Should we take advantage of cracks and fissures, as the women of the Bible did, while supporting one another?”

Estela Andersen
(Iglesia Evangélica
del Río de la Plata)

Proposition 15

That mix of fear and bad habits

Religious violence, racism, and religious racism

“I am black and beautiful” (Song of Songs 1:5)

Respect for cultural and religious diversity. The Bible bears witness to profound intercultural coexistence, including the Afro roots of Israelite culture. This richness is reflected in diverse religious practices led by women.

Input: Black feminist theologians.

Axis: Afro roots of the Bible.

Religious violence and the denial of priestly and pastoral ordination to women are patriarchal practices that prevent associating women with sacred spaces or the administration of the sacred. This violence in religious spaces intensifies as more intersections are included: Black women, women of diverse gender identities, etc.

Religious violence is present in biblical texts and in ancient Israelite culture—but it is also present in current readings of the Bible. The Old Testament mentions religious practices led by women (temple ceremonies, childbirth, and burial rites), or culturally “female” tasks (weaving, decoration) conducted by men. Feminist theology deconstructs religious ideas and practices—fixed and monolithic—of “male officialdom” that mostly hides religious practices and sacred rituals led by women, even in domestic and household settings. This patriarchal religious conception prevents valuing these tasks in parallel with priestly tasks in the temple, since they are deemed secondary due to a racial, classist, vertical, and exclusionary view of religion (Elaine Neuenfeldt).

Jesus, in questioning abuse of power and religious violence, defends life, love, and justice. The Gospel vindicates women and non-binary people. Jesus said: “The thief (murderer, femicide perpetrator, rapist, aggressor of women and girls) comes only to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10) (Erwin José Ulloa Munguía).

A theological reflection from Brazil.

the exploitation of enslaved Black people in church institutions since colonial times, the history of coercion and sexual violence against Black women, the appropriation of their bodies with consequent dehumanisation and stigmatization—all this has led to a more radical feminist struggle. *“Black feminism is not only a struggle for the identity of Black women, it is a struggle for democracy, a struggle for access to public spaces and to be respected like anyone else, to have the same opportunities as white people, access to basic services.”*

In the religious field, Black theology rereads biblical texts reclaiming African traditions denied by patriarchal theologies of white, Western, Christian men. The theological work of Black women addresses how race, gender, nation, age, and religion, among others, are present in the languages, bodies, and vital actions of Black people—in the Bible and today—and exposes how these oppressive factors affect their lives (Campusano, 2008). The inclusion of Black women in churches still leaves much to be desired: *“Inside the church, people seem more cautious when assigning responsibilities to Black people. Leadership positions are not given. I have been in the church since I was nine years old and I am always looking after children and youth. In all these years, I never moved beyond that.”*

Hamilton Matheus Moreira Ribeiro and

Valéria Freitas da Silva e Silva

— Proposition 16

Empowered women of faith and courage

Making visible women's agency, equality and power.

***“At that time Deborah, a woman, was leading Israel”
(Judges 4:4)***

Women as agents of change. For decades, feminist theology has recovered women in the Bible, all of whom played significant roles as prophets, leaders, financiers, entrepreneurs, and models of faith for all humanity.

Input: Evangelical Church of the River Plate, Argentina.

Axis: Women's empowerment.

Much of the biblical-theological narratives established in public discourse are produced from a colonial, androcentric, white paradigm. This reproduces stereotypes that violate the rights of women and people of diverse gender identities, lend themselves to theological manipulation, and legitimise women's abilities for love and caregiving while reserving power for men. Christian feminist theology has revisited traditional interpretations of women protagonists in the Bible and has offered new readings.

1) Miriam

elder sister of Moses and Aaron, is recognised as prophet and singer in the Torah and the Talmud. Miriam took a strategic role during the Egyptian infanticide of Hebrew boys, ensuring Moses' survival through Pharaoh's daughter, suggesting her own mother as wet nurse. **Miriam was a spiritual reference for Israelite women and guided Israel** out of Egypt alongside her brothers.

2) Deborah

Was a prophet and judge of Israel, like Samuel, who governed for decades. She is the only woman mentioned in the Bible with such a role. **She is remembered as a popular educator and a military leader** for the victory over Sisera's Canaanite army.

3) Esther

Wife of Persian King Ahasuerus, intervened in an imperial edict, interceding with the king and **preventing genocide of the Jewish people**.

4) Athaliah

Queen of Israel, is the only woman recorded to have held this office.

5) Phoebe

Financed Paul's ministry, served as a deaconess in the early church, and carried Paul's letter to Rome—crucial for Christian theology and the Protestant Reformation.

6) Lydia

A Christian textile entrepreneur in Philippi, sheltered Paul, and his companions after their imprisonment, exposing herself to stigmatization for defending the gospel.

7) Priscilla

A tentmaker and businessperson, supported Paul's ministry from Corinth. Together with her husband Aquila, she was a church leader, travelled with Paul to Ephesus, taught Apollos, and preached the gospel. She is remembered for her intellectual and political capacity.

8) Unnamed women of the people

Admired by Jesus for the greatness of their faith, their confidence, and determination—before whom he declared publicly that they were healed by their own faith.

A testimony of a pastor of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate in Argentina:

I conceive my Christian and Protestant feminism as the ability to create spaces where every person is valued. Precisely because of this matter of empowerment, and without hierarchies, so that our groups and the Church itself can have people coordinating spaces—but coordinating does not mean being powerful, it does not mean ‘having power.’ Likewise, I carry out my ministry seeking teamwork, consensus, so that those who participate in the spaces do so because they want to and because they are motivated—not because I tell them: ‘this one must do this,’ or ‘that one must do that.’ That is simply replicating, once again, a structure we know causes harm—because it leaves people out, because it forces people to act in ways they may not feel, just to belong.

Estela Andersen

— Proposition 17

Two out of three: patriarchal, hetero, and binary

How can patriarchal theology be overcome? How can inclusive, Trinitarian communities be practiced?

“Christ has set us free for freedom” (Galatians 5:1)

Inclusive and equitable theology. The theology of grace affirms salvation by faith alone and does not admit heterosexuality, monogamy, or reproductive capacity as moral conditions for salvation.

Input: Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina.

Axis: Women’s rights (John 8:10–11).


The issue addressed here is how a current within theology takes the patriarchal culture of its time, interweaves it with fundamental theological concepts, and turns this mixture of culture and theology into a moral requirement for salvation. Theology always enters dialogue with culture. Every theological formulation is contextual. That is why it is so necessary to read the signs of the times, to understand the context, to analyse reality, and to discern the intertwining between theology and culture. When this process of discernment is absent, the danger of exclusions arises.

People in faith communities who do not adapt to the criteria of this “heteronormativity,” and to the gender inequality implied in its acceptance, are considered “different,” “other,” and eventually, “sinners,” “perverse,” or even “demonic.” This “moral theology” links “the plan of salvation” with people’s “way of being.” This system establishes that “good,” “normal,” and “natural” sexuality is heterosexual, conjugal, monogamous, reproductive, intimate,

natural, and without accessories. How is sexuality lived? As a couple, within the framework of an established relationship, and under the same roof? Any sexual practice involving gender roles beyond “male” or “female” is “bad,” “abnormal,” or “unnatural.” These are the rules for “a sexuality considered normal.”

The questioning of this “heteropatriarchal order” from a gender perspective has produced, for centuries, a religious debate that raises the need to resist this “ideology” that has colonised theology, violating the message of God’s Word. This “ideological entrapment” of faith over time has generated permanent conflicts by legitimising all types of gender-based violence.

The theology of grace challenges this unequal relationship and moral condition for people’s salvation. The updating of theological studies has brought this “heteropatriarchal order” into discussion by integrating new tools of biblical analysis. This has allowed many paradigms and different theologies to begin processes of revision and transformation that are still ongoing. Christian theologies that work from a perspective of equality, diversity, and inclusion raise the need to review the lenses, language, and images of God in order to propose a truly liberating gospel message and to transform relationships both in faith communities and in society (Hugo Córdova Quero)



Heteropatriarchal is an abstract concept used to refer to a sociopolitical system in which men and heterosexuality have supremacy over other genders and over other sexual orientations.

A pastoral testimony:

In the whole process of compiling, writing, and canonizing the biblical texts—which was the work of men, carried out from a male perspective and addressed to male readers—there are clear testimonies in the gospels of the participation and presence of women in Jesus’ movement. In the passion, death, and resurrection narratives, which are the hermeneutical axis of the gospels, women play a prominent role: they are witnesses of Jesus’ crucifixion when all the men have fled (Mark 15:47); Mary Magdalene is cited in the gospels as the first witness of the resurrection (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). In Acts and the apostolic letters, there is mention of female disciples who led churches.

In this protagonism of New Testament women—which later interpretations tried to conceal and which feminist theologians and biblical scholars around the world have long been trying to bring to light—it is quite possible to imagine Jesus, in the streets, with a green scarf around his neck, rallying together with all of us on the sidewalks of Congress, every Tuesday and Thursday, asking you, ladies and gentlemen deputies, paraphrasing John 8: “Woman, where are they that accused you? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you”

(María de los Ángeles Roberto)

— Proposition 18

The eternal struggle

The failure to recognize bodily autonomy as a right for women and people of diverse gender identities.

“The same love as Christ” (Ephesians 5:25)

Recovering personal trust. Jesus challenges the hypocrisy of the system of his time, pointing out the contempt with which the most vulnerable are treated (Matthew 23:24), leading people to resignation and despair (Matthew 9:36).

Input: Ecumenical Women for the Right to Decide, Honduras.

Axis: Women’s self-determination.

The continuity of the States of Abya Yala with the colonial civilizational project invisibilises gender inequality and denies rights based on religious arguments and alliances with the hierarchies of major churches. Colonization and patriarchy have constructed a structure of unequal gender relations with deep subjective impact on people.

The social understanding of women and people of diverse gender identities primarily in terms of their reproductive function and caregiving tasks conditions their public constitution as rights-bearing persons. This situation prevents the free exercise of their right to decide, their appropriation of their own bodies, and leads them to neglect their own rights and assume caregiving duties for their entire family environment—even at the expense of their own health, desires, and cultural expression. This centuries-old social structure determines their capacity for decision-making and their autonomy of action.

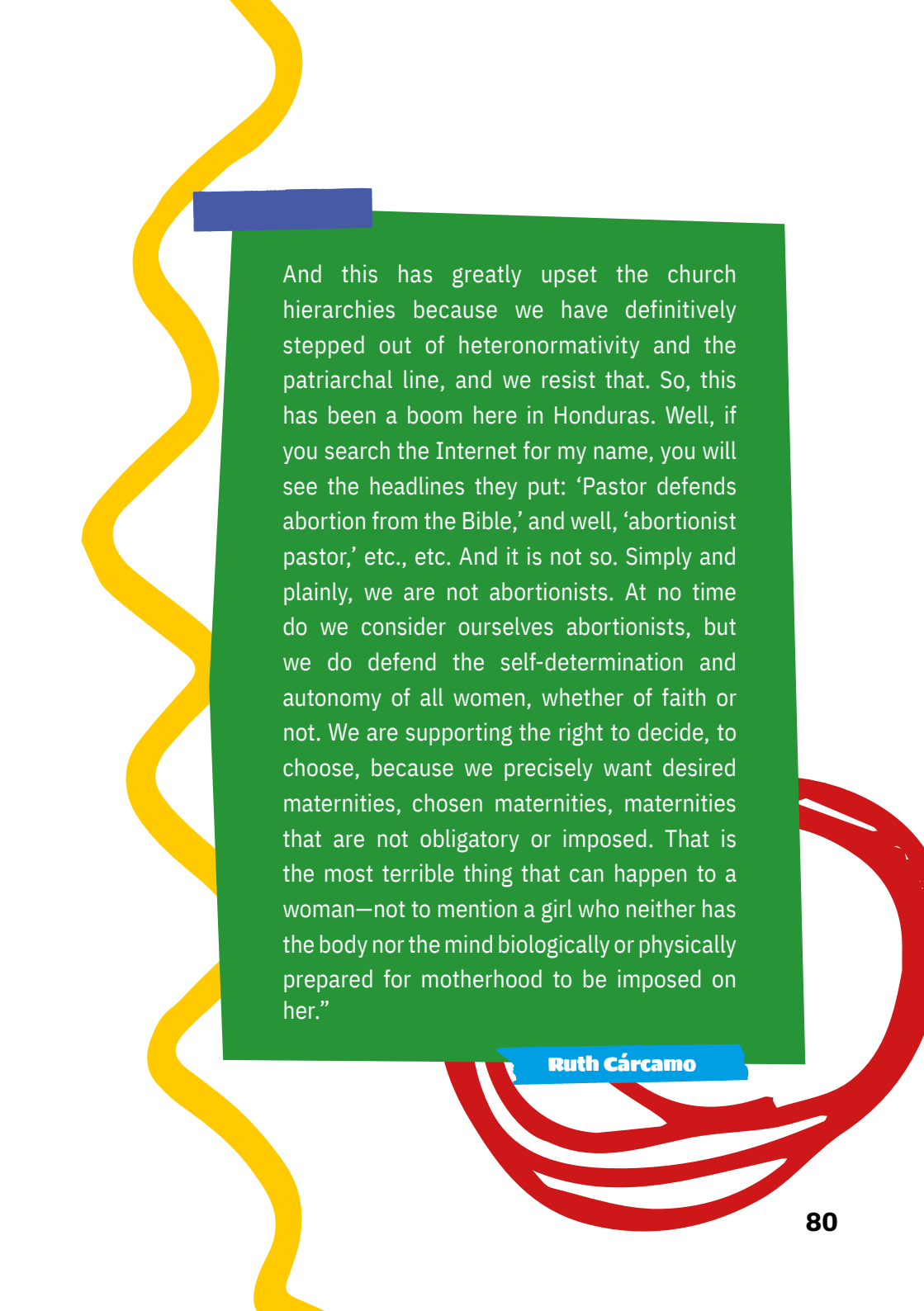
Social justice movements in general—which seek to secure a dialogue between faith and rights, and of which women’s and feminist movements are examples—resist and struggle to overcome and transform this social structure.

Conservative political shifts globally allow for the resurgence of historical patriarchal resistances and regressive postures (“backlash”) that undermine the progressive expansion of rights. These actions can be identified as: denial (“nothing is happening”); disavowal (“not my concern”); inaction (“another priority”); postponement (“someday”); simulation (“yes, but no”); co-optation (“I deserve it too”); dismantling (“they don’t take advantage of it”); justification (“they deserve the rejection”). Among the FBOs, these social processes appear in practices such as: incomprehension (“I don’t get it”); delegation (“it’s their issue”); impropriety (“out of agenda”); delay (“not the right time”); permissiveness (“calm tempers”); concealment (“something more holistic”); defunding (“new projects”); naturalisation (“there’s nothing I can do”). Jesus challenges the heteropatriarchal order of the temple for naturalizing injustices and focusing on outward forms rather than the substance. Jesus tells them: “You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” (Matt 23:24).

A pastoral testimony:

“Little by little we entered this adventure, which has not been easy, because many people of all ages have joined us, and now, with this Green Wave throughout Abya Yala, many young women who identify and self-determine as Christian—evangelical or Catholic—have joined ‘Ecumenicals for the Right to Decide’ across Honduras.





And this has greatly upset the church hierarchies because we have definitively stepped out of heteronormativity and the patriarchal line, and we resist that. So, this has been a boom here in Honduras. Well, if you search the Internet for my name, you will see the headlines they put: ‘Pastor defends abortion from the Bible,’ and well, ‘abortionist pastor,’ etc., etc. And it is not so. Simply and plainly, we are not abortionists. At no time do we consider ourselves abortionists, but we do defend the self-determination and autonomy of all women, whether of faith or not. We are supporting the right to decide, to choose, because we precisely want desired maternities, chosen maternities, maternities that are not obligatory or imposed. That is the most terrible thing that can happen to a woman—not to mention a girl who neither has the body nor the mind biologically or physically prepared for motherhood to be imposed on her.”

Ruth Cárcamo



— Proposition 19

A bit of everything, shared by all

The intersectionality of exclusions that multiply forms of violence.

“You say that Jerusalem...” (John 4:20)

The convergence of dimensions. In Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–42), a dialogue unfolds in which both challenge one another from different intersectional positions, revealing mutual vulnerabilities and opportunities.

Input: Lutheran Foundation for Diakonia.

Axis: Intersectionality and interreligious dialogue.

Intersectionality is an analytical tool that examines the relationship of factors that converge in the life and reality of a person, a group, a sector, a collective, an ecosystem, etc., multiplying disadvantages and discriminations. People are situated in an environment, are part of a history, and live in a sociopolitical, economic, and cultural context. This means that their life trajectories and contexts are the result of a whole series of factors. Critical analysis must keep in mind this entire web of interrelated factors to explain and make visible the different structural aspects that shape people’s lives and realities, their self-perceptions, and their life choices.

Theology cannot speak of “man” or “woman” as a universal person because that is an ideal. In the case of women and people of diverse gender identities, if a person is Black, trans, practices ancestral religiosity, comes from an African matrix, is elderly, is head of household, has a single-parent family, is a tenant, is a migrant, cares for a disabled person, is gender-diverse, works in informal jobs, struggles with language, lacks community

networks, has no internet access, has incomplete schooling, rents on the outskirts of the city, lacks some basic public services, lives far from transportation, is estranged from family, has no health insurance, has no fixed income, has a criminal record—among many other aspects—each of these factors exposes the person to increasing levels of vulnerability, violence, and exclusion due to the accumulation and intersectionality of all these components.

In Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4), there is a dialogue in which a whole series of interactions are revealed as they confront each other from different intersectionalities: their identities, genders, nationalities, life histories, needs, prejudices. The woman is surprised that Jesus speaks to her since she is a Samaritan; his disciples are surprised to see him talking alone with a woman; Jesus reveals in the dialogue that he knows her and her life, knows her difficulties. This woman is convinced and converted when she feels that Jesus accepts her as she is and takes her into account, with all that this implies for her life (Karen González).



A pastoral testimony:

The Gender Practice Community in Latin America and the Caribbean of ACT Alliance exhorts FBOs to take an intersectional approach to gender:

How to approach this theologically from religion, when religious fundamentalism also excludes religions that are not Christocentric? In Latin America, perhaps not elsewhere or in other religious contexts, but in Abya Yala there is persecution against Indigenous spiritualities, against Afro-descendant spiritualities, against other types of spiritualities. We must take this into account in our intersectional analysis. When we talk about intersectionality, it is important to include in the analysis the categories of gender, ethnicity, race (skin tone), social class, age, place of residence, language, and religion. Religion is an intersectional issue. Bodies intersect with religion, with the transcendent. We cannot forget or overlook this. We need to talk about it and open theology in its diversity. One cannot speak from a feminist theology without including intersectionality in feminist theology itself.

Renate Gierus

— Proposition 20

Why don't we talk for a while?

Intersectionality and interreligious dialogue.

“So that the world may believe” (John 17:21)

Weaving bridges between religions. Ecumenical and interdenominational dialogue and commitment are grounded primarily in Jesus' prayer (John 17:1–26) and in the Trinitarian experience of John's Gospel, which integrates the community of faith.

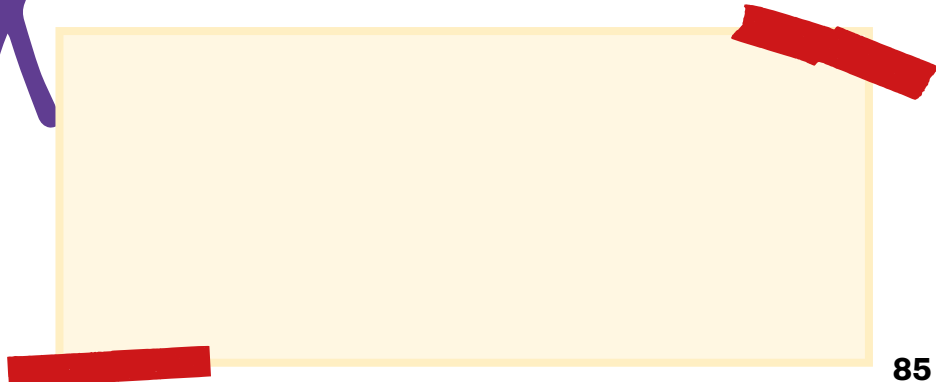
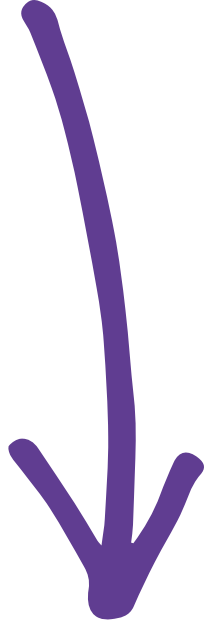
Input: Hora de Obrar with the United Mission Board.

Axes: Ecotheology and forest spirituality.

Christian theologies are based on the study of the Bible from the perspective of the teachings of Jesus Christ. In this sense, Christian theologies are Christ-centred because the gospel message arises from liberating experiences of faith with Christ. The liberating character of this experience with the gospel is the key issue. The difficulties of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in Latin America are conditioned by historical factors due to Christianity's link with the colonial civilizational project of Latin America; by political factors due to the overlap of Christian mission with the expansion of imperial sovereignty on the continent; and by cultural factors related to the theological legitimation of the ethnic subordination of Indigenous and Black peoples for purposes of economic exploitation. The depth of theological differentiations and confrontations among religious groups is determined by the historical unfolding of these structural factors. Christianity is strongly conditioned by colonial, capitalist, and racist components.

The identification of Christianity by Indigenous and Black cultures with “whiteness,” “oneness,” and “otherness”—especially marking uniformity, domination, and expropriation of peoples—expresses three aspects of the systematic violence of the colonial, capitalist, and exploitative model. This theology does not dialogue with theologies of other races, with beliefs of other peoples, or with spiritualities of other religions. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is a tool and methodology to approach these other ways of feeling-thinking (senti-pensares).


The perspective of how reality is approached is one of the most common reasons for religious differentiation. Christianity is “incarnated in” Western culture. The relationship between the expansion of the Christian church and the identification of the church’s mission with different civilizational projects and the implementation of political-economic paradigms and models has been a contentious and debated aspect throughout church history. The background of ecumenical and interreligious theological differences is historical, cultural, and political. The rejection of “ecumenism” by some evangelical sectors responds to objections to “liberal theology.” Ecumenical Christian sectors also maintain interreligious dialogues with different religions on the basis of democratic coexistence, the promotion of respect and religious freedom, as well as the legitimacy of each proposal within the framework of law and social peace.



Since its beginning, the World Council of Churches has promoted open, interreligious, and ecumenical conversations, rooted in contexts and oriented toward justice.

Broad Christian sectors believe that “ecumenism” is theologically totalitarian and ethically permissive. This sector argues differences regarding the “authority” of the Bible, the “deity” of Jesus Christ, the “necessity” of the cross for salvation, the “reality” of hell, among other aspects. They even believe these “errors” are the cause of the progressive loss of membership in most of these churches in recent decades. Objections to ecumenism challenge the use of historical-critical methods for biblical analysis and the liberating premise of the gospel of Jesus Christ for all areas of life and history.

Ecumenical churches critically observe the permeability of these Christian sectors to discourses of order and restriction of human rights, which they see as contrary to the gospel message. Jesus’ prayer (John 17:20–26) for the unity of believers is the foundation of ecumenical and interdenominational dialogue: the common faith in Jesus and the common commitment to proclaiming Jesus’ message to the world. In his prayer, Jesus proposes that his followers be united with one another in such a way that they reflect his unity with the Father. The Gospel of John proposes a Trinity in which the Community is integrated through faith “with the Father and the Son.” This communion is reflected in ecumenical work by taking on the defence of the social, cultural, religious, political, and economic rights of Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities, based on a human rights approach and the affirmation of faith in the universal message of God’s Word.



The United Board of Missions (JUM) of Argentina participated in the Meeting of Indigenous Youth of the Trinitational Chaco along with organizations from Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay. In this space, perspectives were exchanged on environmental care from an Indigenous perspective, on the spirituality of the forest, and on ecotheology (Hora de Obrar). The exchange on ecotheology, from faith and spirituality, questions the paradigms and religiosity of today's society and proposes a new spirituality of environmental care, of preserving the life of ecosystems. The joint work seeks to educate communities and work teams on the protection of our common home and Mother Earth, for respectful collaboration and good use of resources. Dialogue between the Indigenous worldview and ecotheology is a path to alert humanity to ecological disaster. The gods have placed living beings as caretakers—not predators—of our one and only common home.

(Raúl Romero)

— Proposition 21

Imagine—I didn't even see you

Whiteness, racism and gender.

“Just as I have loved you” (John 15:12)

Constructive dialogue among ethnicities and cultures. Interreligious dialogues are grounded in the sacred core of “love” present in religions, with the intention of overcoming discrimination and religious violence rooted in exclusionary doctrines.

Input: Just Associates, Internacional.

Axes: Collaborative strategies with other movements.

Racism in Latin America is organised around the idea of whiteness (in Portuguese often referred to as branquitude). This analytical category makes visible the privileges that come with being a “white” person. Western society is structured on the basis of differentiating factors. One such factor is racism, which generates privileges and advantages from whiteness. In Christian theologies, and in several religions, this historical, cultural, and political component has been naturalised, and anti-racist theological developments are still pending.

There are experiences of biblical reinterpretation arising from ecumenical work and interreligious dialogue that allow recognition that in all religions there is a sacred core rooted in love. These understanding questions, colonial and imperialist readings and practices, whitening and intolerant approaches. Christian proposals based on exclusivist Christological readings see themselves as the only true religion that can lead to God: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father

except through me” (John 14:6). The literal and exclusivist interpretation of these sayings of Jesus leads to discrimination, intolerance, and religious violence. The exclusivist Christological understanding of the gospel leads to fundamentalist positions and endangers the lives of other people. This Christological view coerces people into admitting this dogma as the foundation of salvation under threat of demonization, exclusion, and condemnation.

There are also experiences of community, ecumenical, and theological resistance to totalitarianisms in the Bible and texts that resulted from the struggles of early faith communities against threats to their lives. The early Christian communities bore witness to Jesus’ rereading of “the law” in terms of “the kingdom of God,” and the permanent persecution of Israel’s authorities under Roman imperial rule—up to the conversion of the apostle Paul himself, once a “zealous” defender of the Jewish faith and Roman law, who then became cruelly persecuted by both Jews and Romans (Acts 14:5–6, 19; 19:27–41). The Johannine communities experienced persecution firsthand: they suffered expulsion from synagogues (John 9:34–35; 12:42; 16:2), persecution for refusing to worship the god of the Roman Empire, and persecution from Jews for recognizing Jesus as Son of God (John 5:16–18).

Religious intolerance—whether Jewish (Deut 12:1–3) or from Roman administrations—together with Christian orthodoxy’s own resistance to public recognition, led to the persecution and killing of countless Christians from the early communities, for centuries, in the name of God, faith, and religion. In this context of strong interreligious conflicts, the Johannine community recalls the heart of Jesus’ gospel: the entire ethic of the kingdom of God is summed up in love (John 15:12–17).

IDENTITY

An ecumenical testimony from the global feminist organization Just Associates (JASS) on its experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean:

The social structure is strongly questioned from various social sectors. Feminism in Mesoamerica faces internal debates with so-called ‘essentialist feminisms’ linked to the religious field, which uphold an idea of womanhood based on an imaginary rooted in sex and binary terms. Feminist movements understand these currents not only as ‘anti-gender positions of religious conservatism and the far-right’ but also as ‘racist, colonialist, and extractive formations.’ A better understanding of these overlaps could open space for establishing joint strategies with other movements—not only trans movements—in order to respond collectively to the exclusionary and often aggressive opinions of essentialist feminisms. On the other hand, it is also crucial to reclaim the universality of human rights and, at the same time, to re-politicise feminisms. It is necessary to review the goal of feminisms and to rethink our struggles against a binary, exclusionary, patriarchal, and xenophobic system, and to find new paths that make the political vision of feminisms plural and attractive.”

Mariana Carbajal

— Proposition 22

Let's speak in tongues so we can understand one another

An anti-xenophobic theology.

“God changed his mind” (Amos 7:3)

A theology that embraces hospitality. God changes ways of thinking, acting, communicating, even names—embracing diversity as an essential element for coexistence and the prevention of violence.

Input: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil.

Axis: Haitian communities.

Radicalised Christian theological discourses, organised against the expansion of rights, legitimise the use of violence as an act of restoration and justice under God’s protection. Identifying religious proposals with the plan of salvation leads to violent practices that intimidate, attack, and exterminate people considered “sinners” (adversaries), “enemies” (opponents), or “heretics” (threats). This characterization of theological, cultural, and political differences contributes theological elements to the foundations of extremist groups. The elaboration of “theologies” that promote all kinds of hatred confronts the discipline with its own epistemological status because it contradicts its very reason for being.

Today, we witness contexts where theological discourses prevail that are a religious expression of hate speech. Hatreds have become naturalised within some churches as practices of faith, claimed as acts of love, courage, and justice—when in fact Christianity promotes love with excluded and marginalised people. These expressions of Christianity have embraced xenophobia, aporophobia (rejection of the poor),

misogyny, transphobia, among others, as ethical demands for ecclesial community life. Hate speech targets gender groups as well as migrant and religious groups. These theological elaborations naturalise whiteness and nationalism, promoting fear of everything foreign, everything from outside, and this fear transforms into hatred (Claudia Gómez).

Alongside these theologies and Christian community proposals, there are Christian and ecclesial sectors that propose new readings of texts and theologies, accompanying processes of liberation in the struggles for gender, environmental justice, free mobility of people, and the free and full exercise of citizens' rights. These sectors understand that God continues to recreate creation in history together with people. In the Bible, theologies of the prophets even give an account of reversible processes, where God himself is interpellated by the actions of his people (Jer 42:10; Amos 7:3) and God relents from his sanctions. In other cases, God himself considers having been wrong and repents of his actions. God repents of creating humanity (Gen 6:6–7) when it “deifies” itself and acts in an authoritarian way with total impunity. God defends diversity as a fundamental factor for the coexistence of all creation (Gen 11:7). God condemns uniformity and repents again (Gen 9:11). God repents of supporting Saul’s monarchy (1 Sam 15:11) when he decides to “deify” himself by assuming both religious and political power. God defends plurality in the management of the public sphere (separation of powers). The very Trinitarian idea of God in the Christian faith is communal, diverse, and plural (1 John 5:7). The Bible testifies that God “comes down and sees the suffering” (Exodus), and changes his way of thinking, acting, his name, and his way of communicating, with special regard for people’s reality (Jonah 3:9–10; John 2:4). These biblical theologies present God himself “changing” wherever reality requires “changes” so that something new can be built—where dignified, abundant, and full life for all may become reality: a new creation. (Mónica Hillmann)

A pastoral testimony:

Gunter Padilha, pastor of the IECLB in Itapema, accompanies with a group from the faith community the Association of Haitians of Itapema and Friends (AHIA).

This association exchanges information to support Haitian family members and friends—immigrants on the coast of Santa Catarina—in order to help them find work and access their rights to fully live their citizenship. The faith community acts as a bridge between the association and the municipality, facilitating coordination with the education department to provide a Portuguese teacher, with the health department to facilitate access to the health centre and complete the vaccination calendar, with the migration council to support the development of young women leaders in the community, and with networks of social and solidarity economy for income generation, especially for women.

They also coordinate with the Tourism Department, inviting migrant families to the faith community to share about their culture, lives, and projects. After years of joint work, the migrant community invited the faith community to talk about the “kingdom of God” of which the church speaks. The key biblical texts for the dialogue were Jesus’ encounters with foreign women.

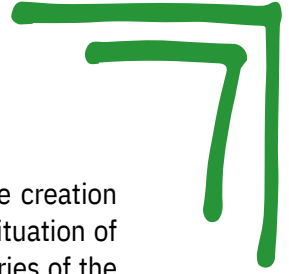
These experiences are written about in a book: [Petit Haiti](#).

(Gunter Padilha)



HEALTH, SEXUAL RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Most countries in Abya Yala have been making legislative efforts for decades to guarantee women's rights and autonomy. Denialist currents emphasize the defense of individual rights and the family against alleged state abuses. From a religious perspective, misinformation and persecution are condemned because they are seen as violations of biblical commandments, especially the eighth and fifth commandments.



Problem

The countries of Abya Yala entrusted ECLAC with the creation of a space for dialogue, debate, and analysis of the situation of women, their rights, and their autonomy in the countries of the region. Since 1977, the Regional Conference on Women of Abya Yala has met for joint work on a regional gender agenda between representatives of the states and civil society. The joint work of this conference makes it possible to note that:

“Seven countries explicitly refer to the duty of the State to guarantee the sexual and reproductive health of the population, or aspects of it, at the constitutional level: Mexico (since the constitutional reform of 1974 and in successive reforms), Colombia (1991), Paraguay (1992), Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1999), Ecuador (2008), Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009), and Cuba (2019). In several of these cases, the guarantee of the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights in their entirety is enshrined, in addition to the power of individuals to freely decide whether or not to procreate... Six countries include within their general health laws regulations for access to and care for sexual and reproductive health: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. In the case of Guatemala, these are included in the 2001 Social Development Law. The equality laws between men and women enacted during the 2000s in five countries—Panama (1999), Honduras (2000), Peru (2007), Nicaragua (2008), and El Salvador (2011)—also include provisions relating to the guarantee of the sexual and reproductive health of women, youth, and girls... There are five countries with specific laws on sexual and reproductive health: Argentina (2002), Guatemala (2005), Uruguay (2008), Chile (2010), and Paraguay (2011).”



Tension

Discourses of viral popular beliefs and related theological currents misinform the population by alleging the implementation of a global plan through public policies aimed at reducing and controlling the population through the States. This idea leads to discrediting scientific arguments by alleging conflicts of interest and concealment by multinationals and multilateral organizations for economic reasons.

Faced with this situation, they recommend to the population: Refusal to attend public health services (such as the administration of vaccines) in order to prevent genocide (sterility, risk of death).

Denial of arguments related to climate change (meat consumption, use of non-renewable energies), affirming that these restrictions on economic activity or consumption privilege the excessive consumption of the concentrated sectors of the global economy.

The defence of individual rights, a family model, values, and defence against abuses by states that infringe upon the freedom of individuals. These arguments constitute an obstacle to the expansion of rights.

Theological Input

Eighty-four percent of the world's population identifies as a member of a religious group. Religious principles and religious and traditional leaders shape social norms and values, while also influencing government policies and practices. A narrow version of religion, in particular Christianity, is often mobilised and instrumentalised in global political arenas, which has blocked progress in achieving universal and interdependent human rights:

“Every time religion enters the public sphere and becomes powerful in politics, it tends to orbit around gender issues. Patriarchal gender norms are packaged in the language of religion because



it legitimises them. It makes them seem divinely ordained and immutable.” (Khalaf-Elledge 2021).

The role of traditional and religious leaders and religious organizations is fundamental to ensuring that the rights and needs of people in communities are respected and fulfilled. It is necessary to work from faith, driven by FBOs, and in close collaboration with different sectors of society, to place on the table, in a respectful way and in dialogue, issues that still represent a great challenge based on the values of religious actors. For example, by investing in new faith narratives and theologies for reproductive justice, confronting growing fundamentalisms, advocating for and contributing to the implementation of Comprehensive Sexual Education.

The use of sacred texts to legitimise this reversal of arguments is religious violence, and the exposure of the population to life risks coerced for reasons of faith is religious violence. The disinformation and persecution of people are repudiated by actors in the religious field who understand these acts as a violation of the eighth commandment (Ex 20:16) and the fifth commandment (Ex 20:13). The commitment to truth in defence of the rights of the vulnerable and the promotion of full life for all people is the basis of Christian theology. Truth is based on the reality of historical facts. Faith evaluates reality in light of biblical texts. This faith leads to the claim of the psalms sung in the temple and in festivals (Ps 82:2–4). This is the basis of the wisdom tradition (Prov 31:8–9), with which authorities are educated, and also of the prophetic tradition itself (Isa 10:1–2), the most forceful expression of the defence of people’s rights, in which Jesus Christ himself is inscribed (Mt 23:13–39).

Reproductive Justice

When in 1994 the historic Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was adopted, a collective of 12 Black feminists coined the term “reproductive justice,” transforming the narrow “pro-life versus pro-choice” debate that dominated the discourse on reproductive, economic, and social rights in the United States of America. Although “reproductive justice” is not based on religious traditions, the concept of justice is intrinsically part of our faith tradition, which also includes dignity, ethics, self-determination, liberation, and autonomy. Justice is embedded in sacred texts and allows people of faith to better understand the interconnected injustices that undermine human rights and dignity.

Weaving rights and sexual health with reproductive justice implies working not only for individual rights—“my body, my choice”—but for sexual and reproductive justice, which emphasises the communal and collective solidarity. This is especially important in many of the contexts in our continent that still have many community-oriented spaces, often organised community life, in groups and associations. This implies reclaiming access to reproductive health in a broader movement of access to social justice. The road to sexual and reproductive justice is long and much is at stake. There are no quick solutions. However, it is essential that we continue moving forward and not give ground to those who want to roll back women’s rights.

Annex

1. Reproductive justice is a human rights-based concept.

The concept of reproductive justice seeks to emphasize the need to distinguish between birth policies and population control policies and places at the center of the issue the social conditions that often prevent these women from giving birth. Thus, the concept is closely related to the concepts of social justice and human rights. (SABÔ, B.; MANCHOLA, C., 2019).

Proposition 23

Strengthening women's decision-making

The decisive role of women in significant events in the history of salvation.

“Blessed is she who believed” (Luke 1:45).


Women as protagonists. Throughout the biblical narrative, women appear as decisive actors in moments of rupture and transformation. Their decisions open paths of salvation history and reveal trust, courage, and responsibility before God.

Input: Ecumenical Women for the Right to Decide.

Axis: Women's autonomy

In patriarchal culture, women's autonomy, capacity, and sound judgment in matters of property, trades, and knowledge are contested. The denial of decision-making power to women in these areas creates situations of absolute injustice. When people cannot decide, they find themselves in one of the most vulnerable situations. The constant challenge to the laws of their time by outstanding women in the history of Israel left seeds for new decisions by new generations.

The story of Hagar calls Israel to reflect—Israel, which escaped slavery so many times—on its own oppressive practices. Hagar, an Afro woman, Egyptian slave of Sarah, escapes twice from the violence she suffers in the house of Abraham and Sarah. On both occasions, she is aided by God, who saves her life: once while pregnant (Gen 16:7) and again while dying of dehydration (21:16). Hagar is the only woman in the Old Testament who experiences a theophany (Gen 16:7–12) and she is the only one who gives God a



name (El Roi, “God who sees [what is happening]”; Gen 16:13–14). The structure of the annunciation of her son resembles the annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26–38) (Elsa Támez).

The Bible recounts stories of women who changed the course of Israel’s history. The decisions made by the matriarch Rebekah undoubtedly changed everything. This autonomy of Rebekah highlights the cultural nature of these customs and shows that culture can change through the decisions of women. She decides whether to accompany her future husband (Gen 24:58), she consults with God (Gen 25:21–26), she determines which of her children will be the beneficiary of the blessing (Gen 27:1). These three actions are decisions that, in patriarchal culture, belong to men. Rebekah is, along with Sarah, one of the most important matriarchs of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

A Transformative Ecumenical Experience of the Gender Community of Practice (COP) of ACT Alliance:

Each year, from November 25 to December 10, more than 20 churches and FBOs share initiatives carried out from Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay, Cuba, Argentina, among others, which demonstrate **strategies, tools, and methodologies to promote public policies, healthy environments, and collective mechanisms** for the respect, inclusion, and welcoming of Afro-descendant women, Indigenous women, women of diverse gender identities, women living in rural and urban areas, who are leaders in faith communities and in social movements and organizations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. This initiative also joins the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence promoted by UN Women. All these experiences are shared in church communities, ACT Forums, and social networks, with the hashtag #ActingTogether (COP).

— Proposition 24

Women's participation in public life decisions

“Blessed are those who hear the word and put it into practice”? Jesus Encourages Women's Public Engagement.

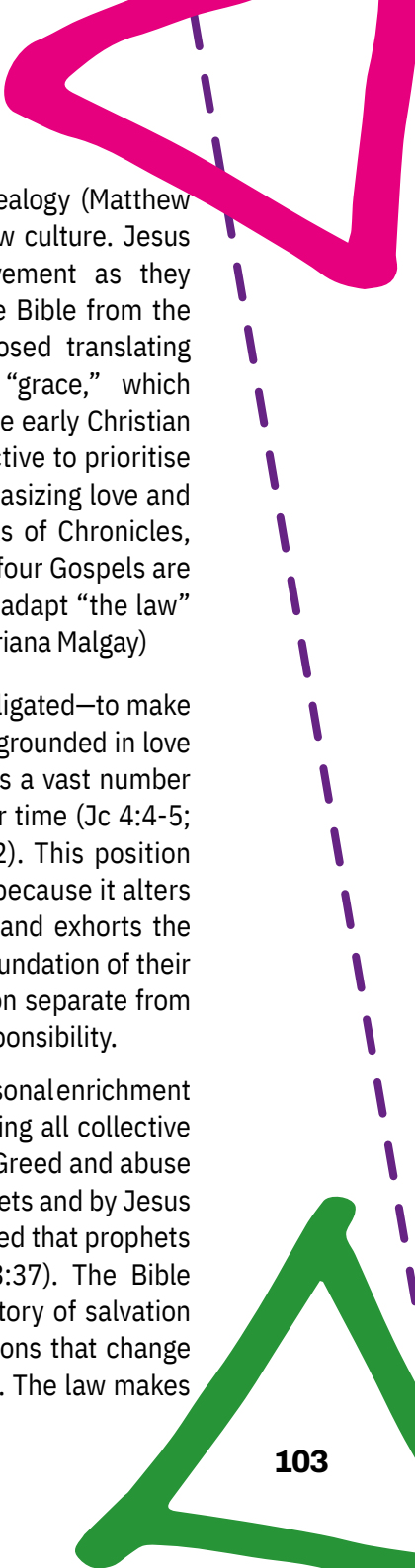
“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice” (Luke 11:28)

Public commitment. Jesus affirms women not only as listeners of the Word but as active subjects who put it into practice, encouraging their involvement in public, political, and community life.

Input: Evangelical Church of the River Plate.

Axes: Women in public leadership.

Throughout the history of salvation, women have gradually gained space by making decisions and changing the customs of the people. The Apostle Paul is one of the theologians of the early Christian community who most clearly highlights these changes, supporting the organization of multicultural faith communities in highly hostile contexts. The history of faith evolves alongside the understanding of its sacred texts. Just as the history of people's changes, so too does the reality of faith communities, because they share the same life and the same events. These changes involve new sectors of the communities, new religious challenges, and new expectations from the people. In this process, reinterpretations of Old Testament texts occur in light of the Gospels, revealing cultural mandates with which Jesus does not agree (Mt 5:43-48). As texts are rewritten repeatedly, new memories and perspectives, from more and more people, are integrated into the history of salvation.



Matthew incorporates women into Jesus' genealogy (Matthew 1:1-6), something completely novel for Hebrew culture. Jesus incorporates women into his itinerant movement as they pass through towns. He proposes reading the Bible from the perspective of love. The Apostle Paul proposed translating Jesus' approach through the concept of "grace," which changes the perspective of biblical reading. The early Christian community abandoned a condemning perspective to prioritise harmonious coexistence amid diversity, emphasizing love and full life. The book of Deuteronomy, the books of Chronicles, the reinterpretations of the prophets, and the four Gospels are excellent examples of how faith communities adapt "the law" over time to the demands of their realities. (Mariana Malgay)

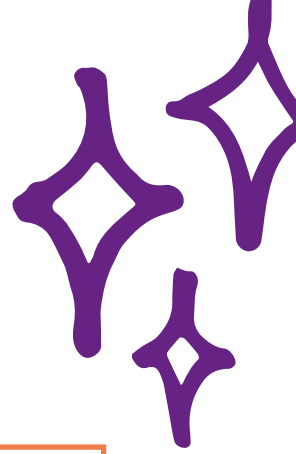
No one is obligated by faith—or will ever be obligated—to make decisions they do not wish to, because faith is grounded in love and respect for each person. The Bible records a vast number of women willing to challenge the laws of their time (Jc 4:4-5; Ex 2:1-3; Est 4:14; 2 Kgs 11:2-3; Nm 27:1-2). This position changes how the word of God is understood, because it alters the approach to "the law." The law engages and exhorts the community of believers who accept it as the foundation of their shared life. The law is not an isolated obligation separate from reality that only demands fulfilling a certain responsibility.

Arbitrary use of the law by the community for personal enrichment or to dominate others against their will, violating all collective processes and agreements, is quite different. Greed and abuse of power are strongly condemned by the prophets and by Jesus (Mlq 1:13-14; Mt 6:24). Jesus himself denounced that prophets were severely persecuted and killed (Mt 23:37). The Bible testifies to various women throughout the history of salvation who undertake prophetic and redemptive actions that change history and the understanding of faith and law. The law makes

sense because it exists alongside the practices from which it arises and is directly connected to how events occur. Therefore, the law continuously transforms over time; if it does not, it ceases to fulfil its basic purpose: to protect all members of the community from injustice and vulnerability. The deeper purpose of the law is to care for people. (Mariana Malgay)

For decades, people of faith worldwide have promoted the “Thursdays in Black” campaign to defend women’s lives. Gender-based violence is a tragic reality in every country. This violence often remains hidden, and victims frequently remain silent due to fear of stigma and further violence. We all have a responsibility to speak out against violence and to ensure that women and men, as well as girls and boys, are safe from sexual assault and violence at home, school, work, and public spaces—in other words, everywhere in society. This is a simple but profound campaign. The campaign slogan is to wear black on Thursdays. Participants are encouraged to wear a badge declaring that they are part of the global movement opposing attitudes and practices that allow sexual violence. The campaign calls for respect toward women who resist injustice and violence and encourages others to participate. While black is often used with negative racial connotations, in this campaign it symbolises resistance and resilience.

(World Council of Churches)



— Proposition 25

Managing women's intimate health

A holistic approach to health based on women's lived experiences

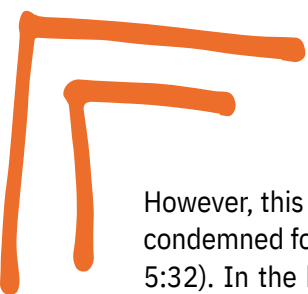
“Your faith has made you well” (Mark 5:34)

Integral health. Jesus restores dignity to women's bodies and experiences, affirming their right to care, healing, and wholeness beyond stigma, shame, or exclusion.

Input: Ecumenical health networks.

Axes: Women's health.


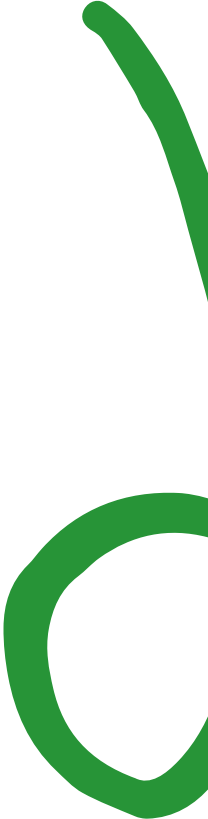
Issues related to intimate health were mostly hidden under the concept of “infertility” and, in some cases, skin diseases (Nm 5:2). Among the violences recounted in the Bible are sexual assaults (Jc 19; 2 Sa 11:13), rapes in battles and conquests between peoples (Nm 31:7-18; Dt 21:10-14), and causes of various ailments and epidemics. Women's intimate health issues became public concerns when they hindered reproduction, often resulting in social exclusion. The religious culture, acting as a medical authority by associating illness with impurity and guilt, did not provide healthcare beyond isolation and prayer. Condemnation and rejection of other religious practices related to sexuality suggest that their healthcare approach may have been broader.



However, this often led to women being doubly victimised, also condemned for idolatry, which was a reason for repudiation (Mt 5:32). In the biblical worldview, health is organically linked to faithfulness to God.

The Gospel recounts the healing of a gynaecological condition, where a woman manages her intimate health by seeking contact with Jesus (Luke 8:43-48). This example illustrates a woman's individual management of her intimate health, who, despite significant health, social, and moral obstacles, accesses Jesus. He is deeply moved and praises her faith and determination to achieve well-being. The Gospel notes she had suffered for many years and spent everything on doctors.

These conditions for women were intricately linked to the possibility of motherhood, with all the associated social recognition or cost. Mothers of sons were far more recognised in patriarchal culture than mothers of daughters. When a woman listens to Jesus, he praises her mother saying, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you,” but he emphasises that it is far more important—even for women—to have the freedom and opportunity to hear God’s word and put it into practice (Luke 11:27-28). Jesus addresses a woman and, in her name, all women. He stresses that truth must be officially known (John 8:32) so that the entire community can live freely according to shared values and mutual respect.



A regional diaconal experience in gender justice

Pastor Mariela Pereyra, of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina, read a joint statement from ACT Alliance with the ICPD at the 56th UN Commission on Population and Development. ACT Alliance addresses the use of religion to polarise societies, noting that since a high percentage of people worldwide (84%) are of faith, religions must be considered key actors in building consensus regarding population well-being.

ACT Alliance's Gender Practice Community aligns with ICPD action plans on gender justice, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. ACT emphasises that education is central, guaranteeing all people—especially youth—the right to education, including comprehensive sexuality education that develops age-appropriate knowledge, skills, and positive values. All people must be free to make responsible decisions about their lives, including sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence.

ACT works within faith communities to expand theologies affirming rights, transforming social norms, and investing in partnerships addressing structural and cultural barriers, ensuring reproductive justice for all. Faith, in essence, is dignity, justice, compassion, and love. Member states are urged to act according to these values to “leave no one behind.”

(Mariela Pereyra)

— Proposition 26

Teach them biology, not ideology!

The denial of humane, cultural, and relational education

“You will know the truth” (John 8:32)

Education for life. Comprehensive education is a human right that enables informed, responsible, and respectful decisions, fostering relationships free from violence and discrimination.

Input: Faith-based educators.

Axis: Comprehensive sexuality education.

Resistance from parents’ groups and organizations to sexual education is based on what they call “*gender ideology*.” The term ideology is used pejoratively, implying a hidden agenda. The difficulty with this stance is that its arguments consist of presumptions and speculations, preventing analysis and debate based on concrete evidence. Using “*gender*” as a synonym for “*sex*” reduces the discussion to biological aspects. The concept of “*gender ideology*” itself poses the challenge of ignoring dialogue and the person, adopting a defensive stance against what is perceived as an international cultural threat to society and bodily integrity.

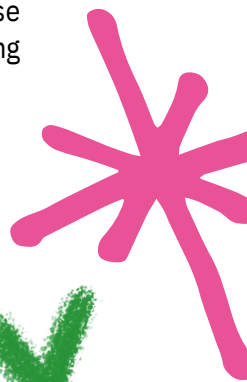
This concept is used by this sector on three levels:

a) Anthropological: “*Gender ideology*” attacks fundamental aspects of human nature, such as the “*original design*” of the heterosexual nuclear family, the existence of only two sexual “*genes*,” male and female, and the existence of sex-differentiated “*vocations*.”

b) Political: Gender ideology is a “*Marxist cultural rhetoric*” of a statist nature, threatening individual freedom and private property.

c) Geopolitical: “Gender ideology” is an “instrument of moral weakening of the nation” for economic colonization by external agents. (Angélica Motta and Oscar Amat y León)

Religions have enormous public and social responsibility in Abya Yala, as faith significantly influences decision-making for many people. People approach religions with their needs and hopes, but—above all—with their bodies and desires, where their spiritual concerns are embodied. In the Christian tradition, the Gospel categorically questions religious violence and abuse of the people’s faith. Jesus asks, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:1-8). This question is clearly directed at religious institutions and leaders, regarding the lack of response to the needs of vulnerable people and faith communities striving for access to rights. (Jorge Weishein)



BODY

**A testimony on the body
in Christian theological reflection:**

Colombian theologian Maricel Mena López reflects on the denial of bodies and bodily diversity, especially the bodies of people with disabilities. She states:

“The denial of the body is very strong. I understand the body as a crucial hermeneutical category because I am a body reading other bodies. I have connected this with the intersectionality of so-called ‘physical deficiencies’ in recent years, after turning 50. Before, I kept it hidden. Now it is part of the encounter—not just with aesthetically ‘perfect’ bodies but showing the body as it is.

The Bible contains many bodies ‘as they are,’ mutilated or broken. Mephibosheth is remembered as ‘crippled feet’—after David killed all his brothers, he spared only this child because of his love for Jonathan and the promise made to Saul. Yet the child was left alive with manipulative interests. How far our societies degrade so many bodies!”

(Maricel Mena López)

— Proposition 27

With my children, my education

Restricting children's rights as a supposed divine mandate.

“Let the children come to me” (Mark 10:14)

Children as subjects of rights. Jesus places children at the center, challenging adult-centered power structures and affirming their dignity, autonomy, and right to protection.

Input: Child protection organizations.

Axis: Rights of children and adolescents.

The use of “gender ideology” as a strategy against the ‘gender perspective’ challenges religious identity (‘original design’), cultural identity (‘human nature’), and national identity (‘global agenda’). A key aspect of the current global paradigm shift is the identity crisis. This crisis is deepened by three moral questions regarding the everyday socialization of people, especially children, adolescents, and youth: ***Who can I form a family with? With whom can I relate? With whom can I live together in my country?***

The association of “gender ideology” with Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) leads to the perception of CSE as a threat to marriage, a danger to affective relationships, and a threat to social coexistence. Differentiating people based on these three aspects is extremely sensitive for human subjectivity and social relationships. In this sense, talking about an attack on the family, the homosexualization of children, and promiscuity and licentiousness in the nation constitutes a clear warning—a red light—for anyone. The Judeo-Christian tradition highly values broad and plural education because it is the foundation for social integration, respect for human rights, and dialogue with other social actors.



People of faith understand themselves as beings created by God and see their bodies as good creations that must always be cared for. Sexuality is integrated with the body as a gift from God. The body, with its sexuality, must be lived freely, not with fear. This implies always caring for and respecting one's own body as well as the bodies of others. Bodies must be cared for, especially those of the most vulnerable and weakest people. Creatures are called to learn to care for their bodies both individually and collectively to prevent abuse and mistreatment. This is a right protected by various constitutions in countries across Abya Yala. Where else should people learn about their rights and responsibilities if not in school? The evangelical and Protestant Christian tradition understands education as a right for all people equally and a public responsibility to form free individuals. In schools, children, adolescents, and youth share their doubts, knowledge, fears, and certainties, thereby informing themselves and learning while continuing their comprehensive formation for life. (Leonardo Schindler)

Resistance to CSE in educational institutions affiliated with religious organizations is often structured by three factors:

- A)** Limited institutional interaction with the community. Educational communities face difficulties participating in updates of educational projects, particularly in secular terms.
- B)** Excessive formality of the educational model. In these institutions, it is complex to implement comprehensive sexual education due to the lack of openness in institutional educational programs toward a more respectful vision of human rights.
- C)** The social communication circle of communities and institutions. Social media encloses users in consumption bubbles through algorithms based on interaction patterns, primarily for economic purposes, to deliver the same type of information and generate more clicks.

This social circle keeps users tied to products that guarantee more traffic, more interactions, and higher sales. Social media treats users as consumers, stimulating consumption by providing personalised information that reinforces remaining in this bubble. These factors reinforce the legitimacy, institutional authority, and social validation of fundamentalist positions due to difficulties in information, innovation, and exchange with other social actors. (Nicolás Rosenthal)

Hora de Obrar annually brings together schools of different educational levels affiliated with or linked to churches in the ecumene to collaboratively address emerging aspects of their work regarding CSE, between delegated teachers and administrators.

In an interview, journalist Florencia Alcaraz asked Pastor Sergio López: **What is the importance of pastors participating in spaces such as the Table of Evangelical Schools for Comprehensive Sexual Education?** He responded:

“The participating schools are confessional schools within the Protestant tradition and historical Protestantism. We pastors were present because it is important to reaffirm, through our presence and work, what our statutes say about attending to human rights broadly. We speak of rights. One thing is medical or clinical aspects; another is the framework of rights. It is not solely the doctor’s responsibility to provide a condom or monitor HIV rates and sexually transmitted diseases. We have a mandate of care, respect, and integrity for people.”

(Sergio López)

Proposition 28

Prevention. Access to contraceptive methods

Women as full persons, equal to men before God and the law.


“God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34).

Responsible parenthood. Access to contraception enables women to exercise their right to plan their lives, protect their health, and participate fully in society.

Input: Women’s health movements.

Axis: Reproductive justice

The denial of contraceptive methods, particularly emergency hormonal contraception, is often based on prejudices, such as the idea that women are “capricious” and willing to make “abominable” decisions. Arguments against a woman’s choice not to have children are evaluated as “individualistic and selfish,” and promoting access to contraceptive methods is seen as promoting “sexual corruption.” Public policy is characterised as a social threat because it allows women to freely exercise their sexuality. The denial of access to contraceptive methods is based on prioritizing the right to conception and the life of the conceived over “the right to pleasure and irresponsible reproduction.” This ‘moral panic’ discourse inverts concepts and rights, instilling fear into historically invisible female sexuality in political discourse. The inversion of rights and justice by authorities (kings and priests) at the expense of the most vulnerable is a common denunciation in the books of the prophets (Isa 59; Mic 3).



In work with young women experiencing ‘adolescent unintended pregnancies,’ narratives reveal internal conflicts, especially regarding sexuality as a right, motherhood, notions of romantic love, and the participation of significant men in decisions about terminating a pregnancy. The idealization of motherhood permeates these narratives, leading these young women to consider abortion as circumstantial and contextual. Motherhood is seen as a constitutive element of being a woman, a natural part of identity, with a romanticised aspect attached to all aspects of practicing motherhood: pregnancy itself, giving birth, breastfeeding, and dedicating full time to child-rearing. (Paola Lazo Covera)

All people, especially youth, need access to spaces for guidance and information where they are treated and considered as full individuals with rights, and where their decisions and bodies are respected. People need education with reliable information, not only digital sources or friends. People need safe, friendly, and trustworthy spaces to make free and informed decisions. Churches need to accompany people in these processes to bridge various health situations with corresponding healthcare services, always with the mercy with which Jesus himself was moved by his people, perhaps one reason he was so admired and followed, especially by many women of his time (Luke 11:27).

The Hebrew Bible and Christian writings affirm people’s capacity to make free decisions under their responsibility. Each person is free to decide based on faith in God’s mercy. Theologies about free will specifically work with and debate free will based on individuals taking responsibility for their lives from the moment they understand good and evil (Gen 3:22).

A pastoral testimony from Pastor Estela Andersen of the Evangelical Church of the Río de la Plata, Argentina:

I have found older adult women to be much more open than younger adult women. Younger women are more attached to traditional roles, also fighting for hegemony within those spaces, emphasizing the need to maintain these spaces without many changes. Older adult women have already seen so much that their filters have fallen away. They do not care anymore. There are no appearances left; they are freer. Many widows as well and being widows allows them to shed the need to fulfil certain roles and ways of self-conception. Widowhood is like liberation; that's how they say it. 'I don't have anyone complaining when I arrive.'

Availability of time and their body. The women we work with no longer have this CSE issue. They already have a lot here; they have their own spaces. It's not an issue, even for women in rural areas. We believe as a Church that we are in a place as a Church, but the people in our communities have already progressed further. That is why, for me, the body of ministers is currently the most orthodox and regressive.

(Estela Andersen)

— Proposition 29

I decree that... it is a sin

Preaching as a ministry at the service of the Kingdom of God.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees” (Matthew 23:13)

Ethical preaching. Proclamation must serve life, justice, and mercy, avoiding moralistic judgments that condemn, exclude, or silence people’s lived realities.

Input: Pastoral networks.

Axis: Responsible preaching

Heterosexism is an ideological position widespread in Abya Yala churches. This conditions biblical interpretations and public communication from pulpits where hate speech against LGBTQ+ people is delivered. These sexist theologies function as religious legitimizations for femicides, trans-femicides, and lesbian feminicides. This religious violence forces individuals to choose between living an authentic life while persecuted by churches or practicing their faith while denying their authentic identity. In more and more countries in Abya Yala, hate speech is criminalised.

In Latin American theology, there are broadly four approaches to sexual diversity within faith, offering four explanatory proposals regarding church attitudes: **1)** Complete condemnation of homosexual identity, based on theological and biblical criteria. **2)** Non-condemnation of identity, but condemnation of sexual practice. **3)** Tolerance of same-sex unions within a very restricted framework, following the traditional Christian family model and **4)** Recognition of autonomy for LGBTQ+ individuals and the free construction of their relationships. Most churches operate with the first two approaches. (Juan Fonseca)

There is now significant theoretical and theological production based on the experiences of people with diverse identities. These theologies strongly challenge theologies that justify heterosexual order. No one can exclusively claim the image of God. Humanity was created in God's image and likeness, sharing with God an infinity of images and likenesses. This diverse God saw that all creation was very good (Gen 1:31). The faith community is plural and diverse, and communion in Christ is authentic when it is in solidarity with those who suffer most (1 Cor 12:24). This empathy and solidarity are what the Gospel calls "good fruits," which are the result of faith, not identity (Luke 6:43-45). Bad fruits or "desires of the flesh" are violent attitudes of faith communities toward neighbours (Gal 5:19-20), while good fruits or "life in the Spirit" simply involve love and care for others (Gal 5:21-26).

The Bible reflects cultural practices of an era that, today, lack support thanks to scientific knowledge and education. Customs like not touching, hugging, shaking hands, or attending to a person because she is menstruating or unconscious now seem strange. Laws have changed and evolved. Knowledge, culture, and interpretation of God's word, messages, and church faith proposals are constantly transforming. Jesus knew how to say: "*You have heard it said... but I tell you...*" (Luke 6:27-28). Jesus challenged traditional ideas of religious authorities and demonstrated that continuing to uphold certain biblical interpretations in God's name was violent. Jesus himself understood that theological work is like a person managing a house, taking both new and old valuable objects from their safe (Matthew 13:52).

A pastoral reflection from the El Camino Inclusive Ecumenical Christian Community, Peru:

Churches largely lack a biblical theology of sexuality and technical tools to address issues of diversity and abortion. Theologian Juan Fonseca, who has worked with sexual diversity in Peru for years, proposes exploring at least two approaches with faith communities that enable dialogue:

1) Promoting dialogue between science and religion, reflecting on how scientific discourse challenges traditional theological Christian discourse on sexuality. Experience shows that more informed sectors connected to universities ask this question. Access to discussion on homosexuality, and transgender issues from a scientific perspective facilitates dialogue, especially with youth.

2) Testimonial approach. This pastoral approach asks churches: What do we do with LGBTQ+ people? These people are part of our families, friendships, co-workers, and children's peers. How do we treat them? Do we discriminate or validate violence? What happens if a pastor's child discovers their sexual diversity? How do we coexist as a family? This approach with evangelical churches allows for constructive dialogue without necessarily affirming a progressive stance but reducing violent discourse toward LGBTQ+ people. Jesus' pastoral care for vulnerable people is especially important.

(Juan Fonseca)

— Proposition 30

I like being happy—so what?

God's love challenges human life through dialogue.

“I have come that they may have life” (John 10:10)

Life in fullness. God's love affirms joy, dignity, and relational well-being, inviting open dialogue rather than fear, control, or repression.

Input: Youth and diversity ministries.

Axis: Theology of life

The denial of women's autonomy to decide whether to become mothers, whether to use contraceptive methods, and which types to use is often linked to the condemnation of women's right to pleasure and desire, which is labelled as sinful or immoral.

In the Bible, although obscured by condemnations, euphemisms, legal and poetic language, omissions, and obscenities (Ezek. 23:20; 44:7,9; Gen. 17:11,14,23–25; Ex. 28:42; Lev. 15:2–19), it is possible to identify recreational aphrodisiac and erotic practices. The Song of Songs itself reflects the high value placed on erotic practices in ancient culture, and it remains in the Bible. The book is deeply suggestive, expressing intimate love between two people, without necessarily implying reproductive intent. The books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs explicitly highlight the importance of enjoying life—its various dimensions, such as eating, loving, and having sex—consensual pleasure, and sexual desire.

It is worth asking regarding many condemnations of 'immoral sexual practices,' who condemns them and whom they condemn, to reflect on the specific circumstances and power relations in which these theologies were produced, even within the Bible itself.

Historically, theologies of 'jealousy' and 'anger' of husbands, developed against women's sexual expression—especially by priestly and prophetic authorities—remain, even when accounting for literary and historical context, a serious risk to women and diverse populations today, as they can be used to justify femicides.

In situations where couples could not conceive, the Bible mentions that wives ordered their slaves to bear children for their husbands. References to 'infertility' condemnations, rituals for terminating pregnancies, and miscarriages indicate different experiences of birth control. Regarding men, besides mentions of prostitution, onanistic practices are also referenced. In extreme cases, abuses, rape, femicides, and infanticides are attributed to men in the community. There is a diversity of sexual practices in biblical stories not necessarily associated with reproductive intentions.

A pastoral-theological reflection from experience in the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, Argentina:

We do not have manuals of human conception practices in biblical times, but it is undeniable that women had knowledge of fertility (and infertility!), passed on their wisdom to daughters who would become midwives, and regulated pregnancies as much as possible given the knowledge and biology of their time. For example, Rachel gave Jacob a night with Leah in exchange for the mandrakes found by Reuben (Gen. 30:14–20). We do not know when or how Rachel used them; only that it still took considerable time (several pregnancies of Leah) for Joseph to be conceived. We must turn to Song of Songs 7:13 to find an aphrodisiac function of mandrakes, since these poems do not mention pregnancies.

(Mercedes Bachmann)

— Proposition 31

Come on, sweetheart

Obstetric violence, devaluation, and conscientious objection.

“What you did to the least of these” (Matthew 25:40)

Dignified childbirth. Women have the right to respectful, informed, and violence-free care during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum.

Input: Women’s rights organizations.

Axis: Obstetric justice.

‘Obstetric violence’ refers to the mistreatment of women during pregnancy and the denial of adequate care, access to a ‘respected birth,’ and the right to choose how they want their childbirth to occur. The Bible documents various cases of physical, sexual, and religious violence. It recounts mistreatment of pregnant women and children, including infanticide, all forms of extreme ‘obstetric violence.’ The hegemonic medical system’s control over women’s bodies and reproduction causes deep anguish, especially among women who cannot conceive. The lack of distinction between impotence, sterility, and infertility, coupled with placing reproductive responsibility solely on women’s bodies, intensifies obstetric violence.

Some biblical texts assume women as men’s property, naturalizing control, manipulation, and brutalization through physical, sexual, and religious violence in narratives, legal materials, and prophetic rhetoric (Ezek. 16:1–5). At the same time, the Bible includes protective laws for women, though many passages depict women’s bodies as bargaining tools in conflicts, whether among peoples or between God and His people.

A recurring biblical image in prophetic texts depicts God as husband and Israel as a ‘promiscuous’ wife due to polytheistic practices (Hos. 1:1–11; Jer. 2:20–25), punished with public exposure, nudity, beatings, and rape. These threats and images—often unrealised as God relents—aim to discipline. Simply recounting these stories constitutes symbolic violence because they severely undermine the image of women, and these condemnations are attributed to God by the prophets. References to powerful, faithful women do not compensate for or justify the abusive use of extremely violent imagery against women, neither in biblical times, as it contradicts God’s word, nor today, where it constitutes a crime.

**A pastoral testimony from the Pentecostal
Dimensión de Fe Community, Argentina:**

Our bodies are sacred territory, which is why our self-determination and freedom of conscience matter. Jesus promoted freedom of conscience by prioritizing human life over law and tradition. The 16th-century Protestant Reformation consistently advocated freedom of conscience and “non-imposition of any moral or religious authority over believers.”

(Gabriela Guerreros)

— Proposition 32

Decisions already made

Conditioning women to motherhood for biological reasons.

“For freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1)

Freedom of choice. Motherhood must be a free and conscious decision, not an imposed destiny based on biology or moral pressure.

Input: Feminist theologians.

Axis: Bodily autonomy.

Women, particularly younger women, report resistance from health centres to provide access to contraceptives, particularly tubal ligation, citing requirements such as minimum age, denial to young women, or needing husband’s permission. Women experience rights restrictions due to institutional violence within public health systems. The expansion of [Catholic hospitals](#) in some countries has led to complaints from women’s groups about the denial of contraceptive access, including tubal ligation, due to conscience objections or lack of authorization by bishops’ conferences.

The Hebrew word Adam used for humanity, man, and male, combined with the association of the first creature in Genesis with this universal male prototype, led to the interpretation that women, created from this male, are entirely dependent on men. The repeated use of this patriarchal fallacy, without exegetical support, remains a religious justification for male guardianship over women, restricting their freedom to desire and decide. The paradigm of the Kingdom of God materialises God’s new covenant with all creation through Jesus Christ.

Christ's justice, through His grace, has recreated creation, transforming all relationships (Rom. 5:1–5) and restoring the image and likeness of God in people (Col. 1:1–15; Rom. 8:9–11; Jn. 15:4–5).

Patriarchal attempts to condition women through motherhood appear in popular myths such as “women get pregnant because of a state plan or subsidy” or “girls want to be mothers for social recognition rather than caring for siblings.” UNICEF has debunked these myths, showing that only about 20% of beneficiaries are large families, and having an income does not increase fertility but rather decreases the number of children among new beneficiaries. This aligns with the observed decline in birth rates over the past ten years.



A gender-aware diaconal testimony:

Coinciding with the anniversary of #NiUnaMenos mobilizations and amid increased gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, SEDI Asociación Civil, Fundación Hora de Obrar, and the ECoJ (Youth Coordination Team of IERP) launched a pastoral listening service with a gender perspective for women: “Pastoral Listening Shifts. Do you feel alone, overwhelmed, or experiencing violence? The ‘Pastoral Listening Shifts,’ from woman to woman, offer companionship, listening, and support. This service is provided by a team of over fifteen volunteer women from the Evangelical Churches of the Rio de la Plata (IERP) and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU), offering listening and support to women who wish to be heard, talk, and reflect on their realities. How to call? From any internet-connected device, for free and confidentially, visit <https://bit.ly/GuardiasDeEscucha> to contact a guardian available according to day and time. ‘Pastoral Listening Shifts’ were created as part of the #ProtestantesActivandoDerechos campaign.”

Pilar Cancelo y Mariana Malgay

Proposición 33

Pleasure and desire. Ethical responsibility in autonomous bodies

Questioning women's integrity, desire, and pleasure.

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31)

Ethics of mutuality. Christian ethics affirms responsible, consensual, and respectful relationships that honor bodily autonomy and dignity.

Input: Ecumenical sexuality networks.

Axis: Ethics and desire

Affections, emotions, and feelings are highly sensitive aspects of human sexuality. These aspects form a central axis of comprehensive sexual education because feelings, values, and emotions are fundamental in relationships between people. Sexuality allows us to enjoy our bodies and experience sensations such as pleasure. However, a woman's autonomous management of pleasure, independent of a man's 'consent,' often results in a wide range of symbolic condemnations and physical sanctions.

The reading of the creation myth in Christianity is influenced by the interpretation of Augustine of Hippo (4th–5th centuries). According to this interpretation, human history is marked by the woman's challenge to God when she decides to taste the forbidden fruit and offer it to Adam. This primordial act of autonomy by the woman, in exercising her desire, constitutes the climax of the story. This interpretation explains the subordination of women's desire to men and the subordination of men's will to nature, due to the 'desire' of the woman and the 'consent' of the man. Pleasure is punished with pain.

Women must give birth to their children in pain (Gen. 3:16). Men's 'weakness' is punished with the toil of earning bread (Gen. 3:18). The woman who chooses the fruit is obliged to bear fruit, and the man who accepts the fruit must labour to obtain the fruits (Gen. 2:16–17).

Augustine's interpretation led to the original shaping of gender roles in which caregiving tasks fall to women and the provider role to men (Gen. 3:17–18). Fruit within easy reach is replaced by fruit among thorns. Desire and pleasure in paradise are suppressed by toil and sacrifice for life in the world. This reading inverts the power relationship from "serpent–woman–man" to "man–woman–serpent." The lives of Adam and Eve shift from eternity and security in the spiritual realm to mortality and uncertainty in the earthly realm. Augustine's interpretation of 'original sin' is not shared by all Christian churches, nor by Jewish traditions.

This theology strongly shapes the understanding of desire and pleasure in Christian faith and biblical interpretation. These themes appear in biblical texts, though often it is difficult to identify them because they are rendered in poetic euphemisms or paraphrased with modern ideas. In cases where some translations suggest these words, they are often negatively characterised. An ongoing task in Spanish is the publication of Bible translations with liberating gender perspectives that name bodies, women, desire, etc.—that is, Bibles that reflect all bodies participating in the story of salvation.



A pastoral reflection from feminist theology:

“Beyond the contempt for the human body, the ‘institution’ despised with greater strength and vigour the body of Eve, the female body. Theology and morality created by men could only conceive demons with female faces. Sex has a female face, and sexuality is female. In rejecting sexuality, they rejected women. They confused that body with their existential fears. That is why they fled from it and incited women to do the same.”

(Ivone Gebara)

— Proposition 34

Deconstructing virginity as a male privilege

The patriarchal double standard of women's sin in the Bible.

“Neither do I condemn you” (John 8:11)

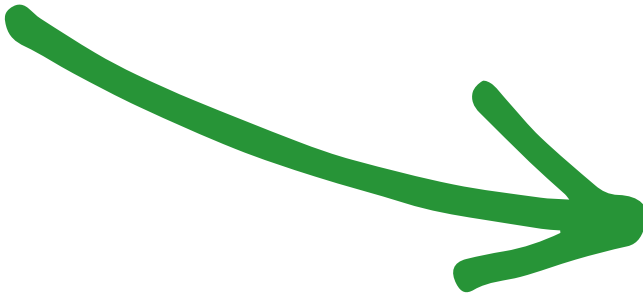
Justice without double standards. Jesus dismantles moral hierarchies that punish women more harshly, restoring dignity and equality.

Input: Feminist biblical scholars.

Axis: Gender justice

Patriarchal culture tied the preservation of power to inheritance and the reproduction of the male lineage through marriage. Women's role in the reproductive chain is central. The demand for virginity and the control of female fidelity are ideological and economic devices that have normalised women's sexual exclusivity and repression. Religions moralise the patriarchal demand for women's virginity and legitimise control mechanisms as religious discipline. Various faith values operate with male-centred ideals such as 'virginity' and 'virtue' in women, rewarding compliance with status. Virginity remains a mandate in religious organizations and communities based on marriage as a reproductive institution. This patriarchal ideology transcends multiple religious expressions, ignoring gender equality and endangering women's health and lives. In Christian tradition, Mary and the Church often serve as the feminine prototype, emphasizing humility and obedience, while God and Christ serve as the masculine prototype, emphasizing authority and mandate.

The history of the Christian church shows a long tradition of asceticism, where renunciation of the “world”—including valuables and property—also extended to hygiene, diet, rest, social isolation, and sexual abstinence. This practice was adopted as a spiritual discipline, a gendered expression associated with men, and as resistance to the prevailing social order and the imperial mandate for women to bear children for home and army. Christian tradition annually celebrates the conversion of Thecla, who, upon hearing Paul preach abstinence, chooses chastity and asceticism over marriage and nobility. Family demands, public persecution, and institutionalisation through monasticism elevated sexual abstinence as an ideal of faith and complete dedication to God, a practice that persists today.



A pastoral-theological reflection:

“The construction of female subjectivity has historically relied on two extreme pillars: on one side, the immaculate image of Mary, the Virgin, and on the other, the sinful image of Eve, the cause of human condemnation. Through history, a series of canons were established for women, where Eve’s essence was ‘naturalised’ as a starting point, and women, as beings in process of purification, had to undergo continuous societal scrutiny to approach the Marian ideal. In Max Weber’s terms (1984), women were ‘negatively privileged’ as opposed to the ‘positively privileged.’ Historically, women were limited to attaining divine or social favour without achieving full status as ‘worthy’ of salvation, defining specific roles and lifestyles based on a single principle: taboo.”

(Ivone Gebara)

— Proposition 35

First, get legally married

Exclusive control over women's virgin bodies

“It is not good that the human being be alone” (Genesis 2:18)

Free relationships. God's covenantal love cannot be reduced to legal control or ownership over women's bodies.

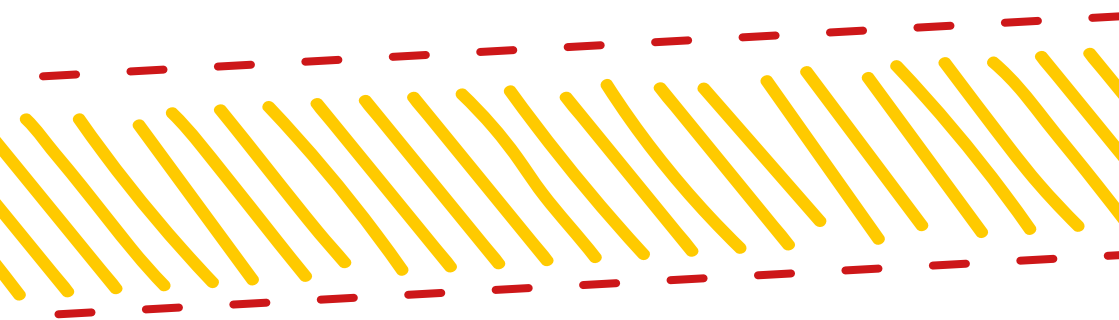
Input: Community-based organizations.

Axis: Freedom and consent.

Cosmivision and cultural mandates regarding relationships without marriage vary across cultures. In patriarchal societies with limited gender-rights development, studies classify non-marital relationships as risky behaviours, alongside substance use, illegal practices, and behaviours associated with dysfunctional families. These studies naturalise cultural practices, reinforce stereotypes, and legitimise gender-based violence. Non-marital relationships, like all aspects of sexuality, should be free acts based on mutual consent. Condemnation of non-marital relationships stems from cultural mandates that view women's bodies as subordinated to male patrimonial privilege, reproductive functions, and the denial of pleasure as a right.

Understanding women as instinctive beings and objects of pleasure negates their autonomy and rights. This is unacceptable under critical and contextual biblical theology. Moral condemnation of non-marital relationships traces back to millennia of patriarchal practices denying women recognition as autonomous persons. Cultural double standards are evident in patriarchal interpretations that allow more flexibility for men, ignore diverse gender identities, and tolerate male sexual violence against girls and adolescents.

In antiquity, sexual relations outside marriage defined women in terms of marital consequences, linking sex to conception and potential pregnancy, which implied patrimonial harm to families. Debates on virginity as a condition for marriage in Christianity, particularly regarding the first conception in marriage, are tied to theological debates about the virginity of the Messiah's mother. In many Spanish translations, the Hebrew word "almah" (Is 7:14) is rendered as "maiden" or "virgin," but it actually means "woman of childbearing age" ('virgin' in Hebrew is betulah). The Septuagint (3rd–2nd century BCE) translated 'almah' as "virgin" (Greek: parthenos), and the Gospels (Mt 1:23; Lk 1:27) adopted this, transferring the idea of 'chastity' and sexual 'abstinence' to the Messiah's mother. Mary's virginity later gained further theological developments over the centuries.



A DIACONAL EXPERIENCE.

Paz y Esperanza, in Peru, works on children's and adolescents' rights. One main obstacle is gender-based violence, particularly affecting girls. Economic insecurity in families creates vulnerability, enabling trafficking and exploitation of girls and adolescents, especially in rural areas and among Indigenous populations. Activities include rights promotion through community health centres with outreach campaigns aimed at adolescents in public spaces, promoting sexual education and health.

Luzmila Quezada

— Proposition 36

Sorry, but I decide this

The equal creation of all people in God's image.

“Male and female God created them” (Genesis 1:27)

Equality in creation. Every person is created with the same dignity, authority, and capacity to decide over their own life.

Input: Ecumenical theology groups.

Axis: Imago Dei

The heteropatriarchal order of subordination and guardianship of women's rights is sustained through myths organizing social and affective relationships according to the patriarchal romantic model: the soulmate myth, marriage for love, eternal love, omnipotence of love, uncontrollable feelings, pairing, heterosexuality, monogamy, Prince Charming, Princess Pink, etc. (Coral Herrera). Breaking from this patriarchal symbolic universe comes at a high cost for women. Theology enforces male-headed authority and views women as emotional, headless beings. This has numerous consequences in Christian theology. Patriarchal theologies justify denying women the right to information, bodily integrity, sexual autonomy, personal satisfaction, and free pursuit of desires, including life planning on equal terms with men.

The Pauline community's image of a dissected body reflects subordination of wives' rights to husbands, citizens carrying Roman imperial rights. Yet, the community challenges this legal order through faith, using Christ's gospel as the criterion for marital bonds—a model for communal life. References to succession of authority, dignity, and legitimacy symbolise social hierarchy of the era (Mt 8:8; Jn 3:16; Jn 19:11), which Jesus critiques for abuses (Mk 10:43–45). Hence, both Jesus and Paul emphasise

profound conversion. Jesus speaks of being 'born again' (Jn 3:3), and Paul's community speaks of 'becoming new creatures' (2 Cor 5:17), returning to the source of spiritual dignity, authority, and legitimacy as people of faith. This is why believers understand themselves as children of God.

The key difference is whether this subordinate relationship is taken as a model, whereas the biblical reference aims to show the source of spiritual communion with God through Christ (Jn 1:3; 14:7; 20:17; Gen. 2:22; 1 Cor. 11:11–12). Literary genre and form are tools for the message. Using these biblical images to justify gender inequality in public religious discourse constitutes extreme textual and religious violence. Such patri-archal theologies ignore genre, context, and interpretive tools (Mk 10:44).

A woman deciding to separate from a man or not to become a mother faces violence; many women are killed. Resistance to male domination and narratives of male headship leads to extreme violence. Christian condemnation of women's reproductive resistance traces back to Thomas Aquinas, who claimed women were created to compensate men's imperfection in original creation via reproduction.

This theology is misogynistic and violent, expressing disdain for women and obstructing autonomy over their bodies, confining their autonomy to men's sovereignty.

A pastoral testimony

Adelaida Jiménez, Presbyterian Church of Colombia and Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Theological and Ecumenical Community, part of Colombia's peace negotiation, participated in ACT Alliance Gender Latin America and Caribbean's campaign #ActingTogether for gender justice, sharing social and academic experiences to transform practices perpetuating violence against women and girls in faith communities. This holistic, humanitarian approach reaches women of faith, fostering participation, freedom of thought, dismantling patriarchy and submission, and promoting respect and cooperation.

(Adelaida Jiménez)

— Proposition 37

That's just how I am, what can I do?

Ethnic differentiation and theological justification of racism.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek” (Galatians 3:28)

Diversity as gift. Christian faith rejects racism and affirms the plurality of identities as part of God’s creation.


Input: Anti-racist faith networks.

Axis: Ethnicity and faith

Discussing the sexual identity of LGBTQI+ people as a right implies that Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), whose mission involves diaconal actions, integrate into their work the basic principle of “Do no harm.” Denial of identity by the State leads to failures in fulfilling fundamental state obligations for these individuals in relation to: their rights to health, housing, access to social security, freedom of movement and residence; and it also fuels discrimination, violence, and exclusion in social environments, including educational and work settings.

Gender self-determination is the cornerstone of a person’s identity. States are obligated to protect against discrimination and ensure equal protection under the law, privacy, identity, and freedom of expression (OHCHR).

The gospel calls for profound personal change through reconnection with the source of full life, which is God Himself. Jesus presents Himself as the way to this true life (Jn 14:6). These changes involve different aspects related to being male or female that harm interpersonal relationships and the relationship with



God. Jesus points out violent practices by male authorities that discourage people from believing in God and having hope in Him (Mt 15:1-20). The call to conversion is a deep community and individual process of restoring gender justice in the world. The enormous resistance, especially among men, to Jesus' gospel stems from a lack of awareness of privileges as a social organizing principle in God's kingdom. These heterosexist patriarchal practices that affect community life are the subject of extended reflection by both Jesus (Lk 18:9-14) and Paul (1 Cor 4:1-20).

Heterosexism is an ideological system that rejects, discriminates against, and stigmatises any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship, or community. The term "heterosexism" is used instead of "homophobia" because it more accurately describes the social reasons behind sexual prejudice against sexual diversity. Denying LGBTQI+ people's identity from certain Christian theologies deepens social marginalization: it stigmatises "homosexuality" as a sin, restricting rights such as sexual identity, adoption, marriage, and the right to live, among many others.



A pastoral testimony

Two years ago, Sergio López, pastor of the Evangelical Church of the Río de la Plata, married his husband, Renato. They first had a civil marriage, followed by a religious ceremony. “For us, marriage is not a sacrament; it is a blessing as long as the State recognises two people as married. Before the Equal Marriage Law in Argentina, it was impossible to access the marriage blessing. People, regardless of gender, must be married under the law. Whatever the law defines as marriage, our Church blesses,” he explains. For him, it was very important “to break with the structure, with that heteronormative hegemony, and to propose another model of family where there is no longer the pastor’s wife, but the pastor’s husband.” “Just as in the Catholic Church, the celibate priest implies total consecration to God; in our Protestant tradition, the pastor was always married, as an example and model of family with wife and children. My husband proposes another model: we both iron, we both cook, he participates in church and collaborates. The community values my work as a pastor.”

(Sergio López)

— Proposition 38

No, thank you. I look great being who I am

Conversion through spiritual coercion denies creaturehood.

“God saw everything that he had made” (Genesis 1:31)

Respect for identity. Faith cannot be imposed through coercion or forced change of identity; doing so denies God’s creative work.

Input: LGBTQIA+ faith groups.

Axis: Spiritual violence

Binary theologies do not consider the existence of diverse identities, and thus do not recognise them as persons, often publicly labelling them with the biblical concept of “demons.” Jesus was accused by the religious authorities of the temple of being a “demon” because His way of being did not fit the gender identity parameters of a male nor the Jewish identity of the time. Understanding transgender identity as an “aberration” or “monstrous thing” argues that God only created man and woman, and that trans identity falls outside this paradigm, thus concluding it is “unnatural” (Alexa Araya).

Names in the Bible always consider attitudes, ways of being, hopes, values, places, and events. A name is a structural component of identity and the life of biblical characters; however, they are not associated with genitalia. Most biblical names are gender-neutral. A person’s identity is linked to life experiences. In God’s case, God’s name changes in the Bible according to the relationship with creation. Similarly, biblical figures change names: Abram becomes Abraham, Jacob becomes Israel, Simon

becomes Peter. Names are often associated with deep spiritual experience (Is 43:1) and connection with God, spanning one's life, context, or moment of formation (Jer 1:5).

Defining identity solely by genitalia ignores the multidimensionality of persons. This medical practice originated from attempts to surgically "correct" intersex infants. For decades, these procedures inflicted enormous trauma on millions worldwide. Today, there is medical consensus that these surgeries should no longer be performed. Imposing a way of being on a person is not only impossible but prohibited.

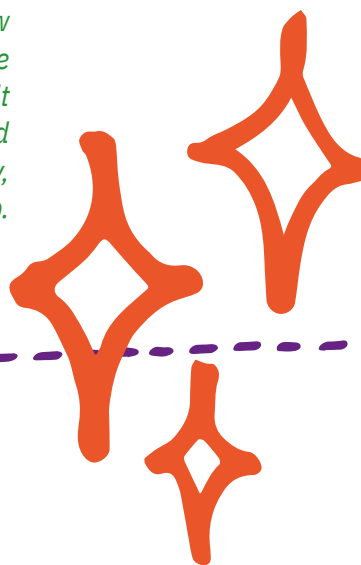
The incarnation of God's word in Christ and Jesus' transfiguration before the disciples expresses a stance challenging the hegemonic masculinity of His era. The early community's testimony portrays Jesus as a man who cares for marginalised individuals, loves and welcomes the sick and socially discriminated. These practices challenge hegemonic and toxic masculinities today. Gospel stories emphasise Jesus' humanity and God's closeness to humanity.

Christian memory values these aspects of Jesus, distinguishing Him from violent, abusive men. The gospels show Jesus correcting His disciples for authoritarian (Lk 9:55-56; 12:8-12) and exclusive behaviours (Mt 19:14).

Rejection of transgender people in Christian faith must be questioned because the gospel prioritises faith beyond identity. The creation narrative shows all people as equally created in God's image. In Christian theology, conviction and conversion are works of the Holy Spirit through faith and personal decision.

A pastoral testimony

***Alexa Araya** trained for pastoral ministry in the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica. She began in the church choir and, after losing her parents, sought a church where she could be free. She discovered the Lutheran Church, a place of freedom and human rights advocacy. Gradually, she co-founded a trans community. Alexa emphasises that trans realities differ from homosexual experiences: employment and education opportunities are scarce; many resort to sex work for survival. She believes LGBTQI+ people have the right to faith. She came out at 28 and now is 54. "I'm one of the few trans people whose sexual orientation is straight; I've never felt good with men," she says. **Alexa** dedicated herself to creating a trans pastoral ministry, recognizing the unique struggles of this group.*



— Proposition 39

When not even considered a person

The structural denial of the humanity of trans people.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35)

Recognition and dignity. Denying trans people their humanity is a form of structural violence incompatible with the Gospel.

Input: Trans-inclusive ministries.

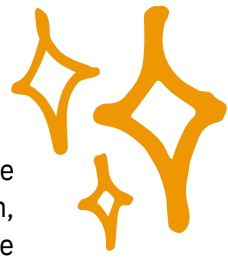
Axis: Trans rights.

Gender-based violence is expressed in its most extreme form against trans people. The presence of trans individuals has been documented throughout human history and across all cultures and religions. Judeo-Christian religious intolerance, rooted in monotheism, associated religious plurality with unfaithfulness to God and polytheistic religions with trans-sexuality, and transsexuality with sexual immorality. Many biblical texts speak of ‘sexual immorality,’ ‘infidelity,’ or ‘prostitution’ to stigmatise and deter Indigenous religious practices, or those of neighbouring peoples, from being adopted by the people of Israel. There is evidence within the Bible itself of polytheistic traditions among the people of Israel. This negative use of sexuality to condemn other cultures and identities persists today. The popular use of sexual epithets to socially delegitimise and condemn the dissent of other groups remains a widely practiced patriarchal social norm. The argument that trauma causes diverse identities, without questioning the causes of society’s discrimination against these individuals, is nonsensical. Cisgender people are not asked about the causes of their sexual identity and have no explanation for it

because their identities are hegemonic and naturalised according to their real social power and influence.

This gender-based violence is mostly visible from heterosexual men. Phobias against people with diverse gender identities lead to moral disqualification, social condemnation, legal punishment, and even death. The structural nature of discrimination within the heteronormative and life-denying order subjects' people with diverse gender identities to social vulnerability, hindering access to fundamental rights essential for life. The organic adaptation of society to this ideology across broad social sectors creates a network of power relations, due to the disciplining nature of gender-based violence, which deepens all forms of exclusion and marginalization over time. Denial of access to health, education, work, housing, and culture, among other areas, is a frequent subject of complaints about transphobia.

The extreme nature of Judeo-Christian violence against people with diverse gender identities calls for serious reflection on the very heart of Christian faith. The Johannine community, one of the early Christian groups most persecuted for xenophobia, religious intolerance, and gender-based violence, organised its written memory of the gospel message around the central idea of 'agape,' usually translated as 'love,' although it refers to a socially responsible ethic of public solidarity among all people. Promoting and defending human rights is an act of 'agape' that responds to the message of equality for all people and God's justice toward the most marginalised. The gospel calls for building relationships of friendship with these individuals to strengthen social and community bonds (koinonia) and share the 'quality of life' that Jesus proclaims in the gospel (zoe aionion), often translated as 'eternal life' or life after death. Jesus emphasises that the 'kingdom of God' is now, in this life, in this world, and is ongoing, transforming people's lives and all of creation. In the face of the



‘injustice’ (adikia) of social marginalization by those who believe themselves the owners of truth, even within Christian tradition, and think they have the right to decide over others’ lives, the Johannine community asserts that those who cannot love (agape) their neighbor are not of God. “Whoever does not act justly is not of God, nor does he love his brother.” Agape is a commitment (opheilomen) inherent to belonging to the community (1 John 3:16) (Maricel Mena López).

A Diaconal Experience:

A feminist network in Lima, Peru, conducted a solidarity action during the pandemic to support access to housing for trans people who are homeless and engaged in prostitution. These women of diverse gender identities have no home because they live in the hotels where they attend clients. This problem became publicly significant during the pandemic when hotels permanently closed, leaving them on the streets. The network reflects: How can this keep happening? How is it possible that they have no rights in our countries? Those who most ‘demonise’ and control this population are churches that, from their pulpits, condemn them as satanic. These churches do not recognise them as people but as ‘demons of Satan.’ Trans people are always placed at the lowest level, associated with ‘the satanic,’ with no opportunity for dialogue about their realities.

(Denisse Chávez)

— Proposition 40

A matter of indicators

Structural limitations on the development of long-term life projects among trans populations.


***“I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly”
(John 10:10)***

Structural justice. Social, legal, and economic indicators reveal systematic exclusions that prevent trans people from planning and sustaining long-term life projects with dignity.

Input: Trans-inclusive faith networks.

Axis: Social indicators and rights

The visibility of LGTBQ+ identities and their organization in politically active collectives is not matched by sufficient resources from States and funding agencies to support development projects. The binary gender perspective, shaped by the heteropatriarchal order, associates gender with women and gender injustice with inequality between men and women. Community projects with a gender perspective allow for understanding differentiated needs between men and women; however, LGTBQ+ individuals face obstacles in accessing initiatives aimed at life project management and economic empowerment. This exclusion from participation in the social-economic structure exposes this population to labour precariousness and practices that conflict with the law. The limited labour inclusion of LGTBQ+ people is culturally conditioned by the heteropatriarchal order, steering their work toward caregiving roles, occupations linked to female aesthetics, and attention to diverse communities.



The type of relationships among people of faith is explained through different ‘figures’ in the New Testament. Major disagreements regarding translations of these figures arise from a lack of a gender perspective, particularly in cases involving men and women. The most paradigmatic cases relate to ‘love’ or ‘charity,’ ‘service’ or ‘diakonia,’ and ‘submission’ or ‘subordination.’ Curiously, using the same terms in the community context does not indicate differences in power or gender: ‘submit to one another’ (Eph 5:21; 1 Pet 5:5); ‘love one another’ (Rom 12:10; John 13:34); ‘serve one another’ (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10). Toward the end of his letter, Paul summarises in Rom 13:8: “Owe nothing to anyone—except the debt of love you have to one another; for the one who loves their neighbour has fulfilled all the law.” This concept of ‘debt of love (agape)’ in the honour culture refers to the moral obligation inherent to Christian faith. Mutual solidarity among people does not imply that one person is superior or inferior to another. It simply reflects shared responsibility from the outset in caring for creation. The early Christian community did not accept any inequality among people.



A Pastoral Testimony Raising Awareness of Trans Realities

“I am convinced that in this era, where diversity and inclusion have emerged as hallmarks of the times, Christians are called to bridge human distances with the situation of trans people, to make the greatest effort to listen, understand, and accompany their suffering, hopes, and demands. This conviction is not based on adopting ‘politically correct’ attitudes, which dilute authenticity, nor on a liberal interpretation of faith—with all the positive and negative connotations of this term in political, ideological, and theological spheres; nor do I believe we should take heterodox paths on this issue. On the contrary, in this matter, as in all issues imbued with suffering, our commitment must align with the most faithful biblical orthodoxy...

Let us briefly review Philippians 2:5-11 to confirm this faith journey in one of the earliest Christian confessions: Orthopathy: ‘Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus’ (v.5). Orthopraxis: ‘He emptied himself [of his divine status], took the form of a servant, and became human’ (vv.6-8), that is, he identified with human suffering and was willing to love and serve those who suffer. Orthodoxy: ‘God gave him the name above all names...so that every tongue may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord’ (vv.9-11).”

(Raúl Sosa, Uruguay)

Proposition 41

Who do you think I am?

Condemnation, demonization, and pathologization of people of diverse gender identities.

“Do not judge” (Matthew 7:1)

Pastoral responsibility. Faith communities are called to reject discourses that stigmatize and dehumanize, and instead to accompany people with care, respect, and justice.

Input: Ecumenical pastoral teams.

Axis: Non-discrimination

The first Yogyakarta Principle states: *“Human beings of all sexual orientations and gender identities have the right to the full enjoyment of all human rights.”* On May 17, 1990, the World Health Organization (WHO) removed homosexuality from its list of psychiatric illnesses. However, this has not yet translated into recognition of equal rights for sexual diversity. In the case of the trans population, the DSM-V replaced the term “Gender Identity Disorder” with “Gender Dysphoria,” described as “a certain degree of incongruence between one’s assigned sex at birth and one’s gender identity.” This ‘distress’ frames the sexual transition as a pathology. Various gender collectives challenge this category, arguing that existing distress stems from cultural and social reasons rather than subjective identity changes. Instead, they demand that the DSM affirm the importance of trans people having full access to the health system, among other rights.

Regarding civil rights, in several countries there is no legal



The Principles from Yogyakarta


They are a set of principles on how international human rights standards and legislation apply to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

provision for same-sex civil unions. For instance, in Paraguay, Article 52 of the Constitution states: “On Marriage. Marriage between a man and a woman is one of the fundamental components in the formation of the family.” Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean continue working gradually toward recognizing rights for people with diverse gender identities, including marriage equality, adoption, legal gender changes, and the condemnation of ‘conversion therapies’ as torture. Diversity collectives demand participation in these spaces and decision-making processes.

Gender inequality for trans people undermines their quality of life and reduces their life expectancy to half that of the heterosexual population. Denial by certain religious sectors of the existence of diverse gender identities, as well as their right to identity and autonomy over their bodies, is compounded by the provision of treatments in ‘conversion clinics,’ which use the heteropatriarchal order and the nuclear family as a model, and fundamentalist biblical anthropology as a diagnostic instrument.

Among the biblical arguments historically used to condemn “effeminate behaviour” is the translation of the Greek word *malakoi* in the New Testament (1 Cor 6:9). The term originally described a lack of self-control, weakness, cowardice, and laziness. However, because heteropatriarchal culture historically associated these behaviours with women, biblical translators chose to render this word as referring to ‘effeminate men,’ thereby condemning ‘homosexual practices.’ This translation is doubly prejudiced, stigmatizing both women and LGBTIQ+ individuals.

A text historically used to condemn homosexuality is the ‘destruction’ of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19). However, the Bible itself interprets the cause of condemnation as pride (Ezek 16:49-50) and lack of hospitality toward strangers (Isa 1:16-17;



Matt 10:14-15; cf. Josh 6:22-25), among other social injustices. Jesus rejects xenophobic and genocidal responses (Luke 9:52-61). In sum, regarding sexual diversity, the Bible disapproves of neglect and mistreatment of others. The Bible does not condemn love and mutual care between people, regardless of sexual identity. In contrast, using biblical verses as ‘clubs’ to punish homosexuality is morally objectionable, as it reproduces religious violence. Using the Bible to violate the rights of people based on sexual identity denies the universal message of love in the gospel and places people of faith in God’s position to judge others, when even God does not condemn them (Hugo Córdova Quero).

In these theologies, God distances from people with diverse gender identities because of the ‘sin’ of being inhabited by a demon, which must be exorcised through confession, discipline, and conversion. This anthropology, based on a binary reading of the creation story, does not consider—following a literal logic—that creatures are created in terms of opposites, including a vast variety of species (asexual reproduction, sex-changing, multiple habitats, etc.) not mentioned in the biblical narrative but undoubtedly part of God’s ‘good’ creation. Likewise, the reference to male and female encompasses a wide spectrum of human gender identities, each equally loved by God without distinction. Moreover, the account of a first creature later divided into two reinforces God’s recognition of human diversity, as the original creature embodies both genders, reflecting God’s own diverse identity in image and likeness.



A life testimony by theologian Hugo Córdova from the Instituto Superior de Estudios Interreligiosos y Sociales, Argentina:

“From the age of 13, I realised I was attracted to boys. I started dating one who was part of my evangelical church at the time. That church did not accept me because I was gay, so I left. But my grandparents, who were ministers, defended me. My grandfather once told me something unforgettable: ‘If a church does not see all that you have done and the potential you have, does not see the richness you bring, and only worries about what happens in your bed, then that church does not deserve you.’ It was the ‘70s—imagine a minister saying that to you! It meant everything!”

(Hugo Córdova Quero)

— Proposition 42

To each their own

The limits of religious and state jurisdictions in public governance.


“Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21)

Democratic coexistence. Respecting the distinction between religious and state spheres safeguards pluralism, freedom of conscience, and equal rights for all.

Input: Faith-based civil society organizations.

Axis: Church–State relations.

The weakening of states in contemporary capitalist societies has called into question their political capacity and, consequently, their secular nature. The separation between the Church’s sphere of responsibility and the State’s administrative domain has been a feature of Christian tradition since its beginnings, finding new approaches and nuances in implementation during the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment. The debate centres on the scope of each entity’s jurisdiction and the limits of sovereignty. The emergence of modern states consolidated agreements of non-interference based on liberal principles. State sovereignty organises public space. Church sovereignty organises religious life. The civilizational project of capitalist modernity, rooted in Christian hegemony and progressive deregulation of exploitation and capital accumulation, weakened democracies and eroded both the legitimacy of the state and the credibility of the Church. The market has historically contested meaning and interests, intervening in civil, religious, and political spheres.



The development of the market as a 'third entity' competing for its own sphere of sovereignty builds autonomy in tension with both the Church and the State, altering power relations. This late-capitalist emergence has increased the vulnerability of human life, fostered new political actors, deepened secularization, and expanded religious pluralism. Public institutionalization of cultural and religious diversity and social validation of ideological plurality in democracy prevent thinking about Church-State relations in binary or exclusionary terms. Reconfigurations of some states as Plurinational States structurally modify social organization.

Concordats between the Vatican and certain countries in Abya Yala condition political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice, creating privileged religious sectors that restrict access to universal rights. In this context of dissolution of historical modern agreements, social fragmentation, structural uncertainty, and paradigm shifts, different political proposals emerge, with varying degrees of dialogue and coordination: in some cases, restorationist, emphasizing order; in others, disruptive, emphasizing deconstruction of the political system; and in others, progressive, anchored in social and environmental struggle movements.

The colonial agreement between Church and State assumes the binary conception of the heteropatriarchal order: The State works toward 'justice,' exercising sovereignty over the body by guaranteeing rights and managing responsibilities; the Church works toward 'peace,' exercising sovereignty over the soul through symbolic mediation and ethical instruments. The Market, historically integrated with the State and Church, contests its autonomy as a 'power factor,' influencing labour sovereignty and the distribution of surplus value. The neoliberal market normalises its presence in social structures through economic, religious, and political fundamentalisms, legitimised by the media, and through everyday decisions among individuals. The market operates

with religious actors and the State but distinguishes itself as an independent political actor allied with fundamentalist sectors and supporting violent management models. This constitution of the Market as an independent political actor modifies the sovereignty of the historical actors of the 'civic-religious' paradigm of Western modernity and challenges their privileges. The network of alliances and tensions in these power relations challenges classical theology, public agenda, governance, secularism, human rights, democracy, quality of life, and the future of the planet.

A pastoral testimony

from the Peniel Presbyterian Church in Guatemala

“Historically, Guatemala recognises itself as a pluricultural and multilingual state. In this context, it acknowledges ethnocide and epistemicide experienced by thousands of people since 1492, and even since the formation of the modern state in 1526. Today, it is recognised that religious hegemony has prevailed, and this is not natural; it was intentionally imposed by modern European states and is not divine will. This union has been favoured by powerful actors in modern Europe and continues to this day. Not all individuals in Guatemala today are represented, including those with non-Christian or indigenous spiritualities rooted in ancestral traditions. If we wish to engage in the 21st century with democratic arguments grounded in Christian faith, we must also consider all spiritual and religious traditions and allow dialogue that shapes society and promotes harmonious coexistence.”

(Azucena Rosal)

— Proposition 43

The world is a small place

The conquest and colonization of state governance as an act of faith.

“My kingdom is not from this world” (John 18:36)

Decolonizing faith. Christian faith cannot be used to legitimize domination, conquest, or political control over peoples and territories.

Input: Decolonial theology networks.

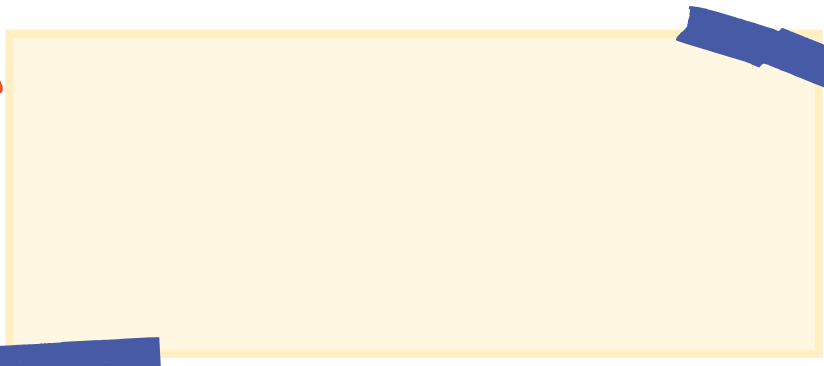
Eje: Colonialism and power.

Latin American academia has observed for decades the limits of the epistemological paradigm of European or U.S. capitalist modernity, established as “the model,” “the only one,” or “the exception,” and calls for a shift to a knowledge model that conceives globalization as a complex of multiple modernities. The new paradigm seeks to overcome the fragmenting tendencies and the ‘Cartesian categories’ of ‘classical epistemology’ and ‘empirical sociology’ to address a diverse and plural Latin American reality. The emergence of new religious actors as factors of power in the public sphere is understood within the framework of the crisis of colonial modernity. The colonial model of knowledge construction organises social relations through instruments that represent reality according to Western thought structures and language. This ongoing paradigm shift is highlighted by the ‘sociology of religion’ as a crucial factor linked to the difficulty of naming and critically evaluating this phenomenon.

Certain sectors of the religious field have aligned themselves with the transnational business expansion model, with a headquarters and various branches in different countries,

adapting business models to local demands. This globalization model is fully developing in the religious field of Abya Yala and assumes an ethnocentric church-planting format, each with distinct characteristics that diversify its brand. These centres—or religious supermarkets—especially rooted in the evangelical tradition, deploy various simultaneous strategies to secure population loyalty using religious symbols. This phenomenon is critically observed by progressive sectors due to the high level of acceptance of their ways of thinking and life proposals, particularly among the most vulnerable groups.

These religious proposals, associated with conservative sectors and based on strategies of profound social differentiation, lead to discursive practices and public actions against Afro-descendant communities, indigenous peoples, feminist collectives, LGTBIQ+ organizations, progressive political sectors, historic churches, etc. These practices are publicly justified through ‘moral panic’ strategies aimed at provoking false perceptions and disproportionate reactions in targeted social groups via mass disinformation campaigns using propaganda techniques. These mass actions are accompanied by organised interventions before national and international organizations, where they dispute the meaning of key terms and defend the heteropatriarchal order as a unique, natural, and universal model.



A pastoral testimony from Brazil

*A few years ago, a CLAI project in partnership with UNFPA worked with regional churches to promote sexual and reproductive rights. As a result, a highly enriching training guide for community diaconal work was developed: **Las iglesias y los derechos sexuales y reproductivos** (2013). This project promoted various meetings, celebrations, and theological debates in churches. One recurring topic was the ‘Church-State relationship.’ Consultations in different Latin American countries emphasised the importance of religious freedom, individual autonomy, private liberties, the conception of the State, and key aspects related to sexual and reproductive rights. “The exercise of rights involves personal freedoms, which in turn require social obligations. These involve the public sphere, as the State must ensure adequate conditions to secure the safe exercise of rights for all citizens. For women, this means that the decision to have or not have children belongs to the private sphere of the woman or the couple, but the State must guarantee the necessary conditions to exercise this decision properly.”*

(Romi Marcia Bencke)

— Proposición 44

People just like us

The coming of Christ used to justify xenophobia and racism.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35)

Hospitality without borders. The Gospel calls communities to welcome migrants and refugees, resisting nationalist and racist interpretations of faith.

Input: Migrant ministries

Axis: Migration and hospitality

Conspiracy theories of anti-gender movements have been fuelled by conservative sectors of the Christian religious field. At least three actors have been key: the Catholic Church globally, the Orthodox Church—particularly in Bulgaria and Russia—and evangelical and Pentecostal churches in Latin America and Africa. Radicalised sectors conceive the expansion of gender rights, which they call “gender ideology,” as ‘a strategy’ and ‘an ideology’ resulting from a ‘cultural Marxist’ conspiracy aimed at seizing power and imposing deviant and minority values on the entire population. These sectors defend values grounded in ‘common sense,’ supported by social communication, contrasting sharply with academic language associated with Marxist analytical frameworks, and adopting an anti-intellectualist stance, appealing to common experiences and everyday expressions to assert their position. The similarity of strategies, languages, messages, and logos reveals a global organization and a transnational movement. (Conny Roggeband & Andrea Krizsán, UN Women)

The bodies most affected by these fundamentalist discourses are women, the LGTBIQ+ population, and indigenous peoples. This discourse refers to an original time and appeals to an 'original imaginary' functioning as a 'myth organizing' their societal vision. It is colonial and reaffirms its patriarchal, racist, and violent character as an 'effective' and 'competent' value for 'social reordering.' Discriminatory expressions invoke individuals' capacities as criteria of human dignity.

Disdain for feminists, people of diverse gender identities, and migrants is consistent with this discourse. The religious validation of this disregard for the humanity of certain societal sectors socially enables hate speech. The bodies of children become sites of power struggle. Public state institutions are represented as disciplinary bodies co-opted by international cultural Marxism. The State is associated with an imposed order that restricts population freedom. Human rights, basic democratic rights such as the right to protest, as well as human rights organizations and advocates, are labeled as ideological control instruments.

This social phenomenon is plunging churches into a profound identity crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic due to communication and institutional organization difficulties. Social division from this phenomenon affects all churches. The most vulnerable sectors amplify their demands, sometimes resulting in disaffiliation or desertion due to lack of guarantees for basic rights. This phenomenon spans society, prompting different alliances between ecclesial and political sectors within the same denomination. In some churches, citizen and ministerial responsibilities of religious leadership become blurred, with leaders heavily involved in public function, political campaigns, pastoral work, and community tasks. (Silvia Regina)

Evangelical fundamentalism is an anti-modernist Protestant movement originating in England and the United States in the late

19th century, in conflict with the Enlightenment, during the Cold War, and amid social changes. In the 1970s, it resurfaced in various Christian communities, polarising sectors, and dividing churches. This process solidified during Abya Yala's dictatorships. Christian fundamentalism, championing the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, harshly attacked liberal churches incorporating historical-critical methods in biblical interpretation. For decades, it defended traditional certainties and the fundamentals of Christian orthodoxy. Neoliberal projects in the region reinforced this religious role of Christian fundamentalism, politicizing it as a 'public moral reserve.' (Maricel Menna López)

Historically, the progressive Christian current has faced three major challenges, which, in the context of polarisation, de-collectivisation, and radicalisation, require urgent reflection on two levels:

Practical reflection:

Ethnocentrism: Engage in joint workspaces with others, sharing spaces of diversity and pluralism, abandoning exclusive religious claims.

Self-referentiality: Work in advocacy from integrative perspectives, moving beyond purely ecclesial or social frameworks, reviewing dichotomous visions of reality.

Dogmatism: Commit to collective construction of political consensus and reconsider dualistic metaphysical visions and claims to absolute truth.

Faith-based reflection:

Key tools from the attributes of the kingdom of God:

Universality: The 'kingdom of God' focuses on building a new community, a new cosmos, not only among churches or believers but among all, encompassing our shared reality and common home. It is inherently plural and diverse.

Reflexivity: Biblically, the kingdom of God is linked to social justice and inclusion of the excluded, with a concrete ethical-political dimension.

Transitoriness: In the kingdom of God, the final word in history belongs only to God. (Nicolás Panotto)

A diaconal testimony

ACT Peru is developing an observatory project that collects and reviews various bills from a gender perspective, regardless of parliamentary status or party affiliation, to track gender arguments in political proposals from different parties in the National Congress. The observatory recorded bills reinforcing women's productive roles, human development in relation to family formation, marriage as between a man and a woman, adolescent pregnancy, etc. This observatory enables ACT Peru's gender table to identify bills of interest for common advocacy work. Advocacy aims to debate these bills both with ACT Peru member organizations and publicly with Peruvian society. ACT Peru has requested input from an interdisciplinary expert team on strategic topics to have resources to publicly argue regarding these bills.

(Nathaly de Jesús Huapaya Zavala)

— Proposition 45

Believe it or else

Using salvation history as a historical resource of oppression.

“The truth will make you free” (John 8:32)

Liberating memory. Salvation history must be read as a narrative of liberation, not as a tool to justify violence, coercion, or exclusion.

Input: Liberation theology networks.

Axis: Memory and justice.

The millenarian paradigm is one of the five pillars of ‘evangelical fundamentalism.’ This theological element links the evangelical field with fundamentalism. It is key in fostering the identification of conservative sectors of evangelical churches with the political project of the United States and its foreign policy toward the State of Israel. Millenarianism holds that Christ’s return, in global theocratic terms, depends on the full restoration of the people of Israel in Palestine. Jesus will come and reign on Earth for a thousand years once Israel takes full possession of the Holy Land. The spiritual war against the powers of evil translates, geopolitically, into a justification of the ‘fundamentalist regime’s’ war in Israel against ‘terrorism’ in Palestine, along with U.S. support for the State of Israel.

The ‘historical fundamentalism’ of the 19th century is organised around five core truths, essentially in opposition to ‘theological liberalism’: biblical inerrancy, the virgin birth of Christ, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, the physical resurrection of Jesus, and the imminent return of Jesus to judge and bring his followers to glory. These ‘fundamentalist’ evangelical groups initially sought control of theology faculties to ensure the


church's persistence in the true faith. Difficulties in achieving this goal led to the creation of their own seminaries and missionary organizations, especially in the southern United States. (Karla Koll)

The term “fundamentalism,” however, became popular following the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and acquired the connotation of militant traditional religion. In the 21st century, the term is widely used in global mass media to describe extremist violent actions, especially by radical Islamic groups. This usage has resulted in a negative connotation and stigmatization, falsely associating Islamic religion with fundamentalism. In common understanding, the term is used synonymously with radicalism and extremism. (Magali do Nascimento Cunha)

This religious worldview of conservative Christian and Jewish sectors, framed as the salvation of the world, reinforces xenophobic practices rooted in Abya Yala since colonial times and severely undermines democratic institutions. White male patriarchy, colonial latifundia, and enslavement—manifested also in racism and the rejection of indigenous peoples—are constitutive of the conservative agenda. These religious sectors seek power, with evangelical leaders, charismatic Catholics, conservative politicians, extractivist entrepreneurs, and financial sectors converging on a common vision. The civil-religious alliance for public power, while maintaining religious functions, reflects the original colonial theocratic ideal. In some countries, both Catholic and evangelical sectors have publicly opposed this theological vision and these pastoral practices. (Wilson Brasil)

Ethnographic research highlights processes of transnationalisation of religious practices previously deeply anchored in traditions, territories, and social groups. These processes lead to reconquests of religious spaces, initiation of new adherents, and globalization of rites and symbols, transcending ethnic, cultural, and national borders. Such social changes provoke diverse responses, from acceptance and cultural reconfiguration to objections and





rejection. These cultural shifts occur alongside processes of de-collectivization reinforced by the political logic of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism operates in two simultaneous and opposing movements: one of depoliticization, reducing citizenship to individuals, democracy to laws and institutions, social rights to particular cases, while protecting property rights and the right to vote; and one of re-politicisation, establishing the religious field as a public manager of subjective discipline through 'a pastoral' of individual subjectivities sponsored by the State. (Magali Cunha)

The modern Western idea of universal secular knowledge is problematised by decolonial theory. The secularization process in Western modernity deconstructs the hegemony of religious worldview in understanding the public sphere, conceiving the religious as a particular social factor and a private aspect of each individual. This historical process excludes theology and faith perspectives from knowledge construction and reality comprehension. Simultaneously, it prioritises social sciences as valid instruments for constructing hegemonic knowledge, differentiating science from theology and knowledge from faith.

This secularization process in the West has often been critically viewed from the East, where denying the structural character of their religious tradition in knowledge construction implies alienation from culture and identity. In the West, decolonial thought, from a historical-critical and contextual perspective, recovers this Eastern approach through the validation of indigenous worldviews as instruments of local knowledge and factors for regional socio-environmental integration.

(Nicolás Panotto)

A diaconal testimony from Paz y Esperanza, Peru:

Something that must always be central in the proposals we make, and that we are currently implementing, is the concept of human rights. This is something we have mentioned many times: linking it to human dignity and a condition that cannot be contradicted or denied. Dignity is recognised to the extent that people's rights are recognised. I believe there is still work to do here, and I also believe in discussing secularism, the secular state, as the right to freely practice our faith without expecting everyone to value everything according to our faith, and without expecting the State to legislate for everyone based on my faith. Concepts as basic as that. Just as many evangelical and Christian people are concerned about what happens in some Muslim states with anti-rights readings, they worry here, pray, and campaign. From this, they should understand that we should not advocate anything that reproduces these forms, in this case, from our beliefs. I think this is something that needs to be understood and could be further developed. I reiterate that for me, discussing rights is fundamental, speaking about non-discrimination, because contexts change. We may currently be in a supposedly favorable context for our beliefs and ideas, but it could have been different, or could be different in the future. Therefore, what we propose as valid should be valid for everyone. I think we should start from basic notions.

(Germán Vargas)

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The extractivist model leads to species extinction and social inequality. This economic order normalizes discrimination through hierarchies, lower pay, and more precarious working conditions for women and people of diverse gender identities. This situation is legitimized by patriarchal theologies that associate women with emotions and the private sphere, while linking men to reason and the public sphere, thereby perpetuating gender inequality and the sexual division of labor—in contrast to the message of the Gospel.



Problem

The neoliberal model in Abya Yala turns entire territories into sacrifice zones, systematically destroying the cultures and economic structures of communities, leaving a traumatic impact on the environment, local populations, and people's lives, while dismantling the social fabric of societies and the chains of ecosystems. Species extinction and social inequality are integrated into the same violent dynamic of the extractivist model. This development model offers no solutions to structural poverty or climate change because these are its consequences. The social and solidarity economy recovers ancestral cultures and traditions, agroecological techniques, and fair trade practices, rebuilding the connection between producers and consumers, and between people and the environment. This social process fosters a transformative spirituality of relationships, people, and realities.

Tension

The economic structure in Abya Yala is patriarchal, colonial, racist, and unequal. Within this structure, women are economically dependent on others and assigned to care work (unpaid domestic labor), and when they have access to formal employment, their income remains lower than men's for the same work. Women's and gender-diverse people's work tends to be lower in hierarchy, subsidiary to cis male work, poorly paid, with precarious working conditions—especially in rural areas—and considered an “economic disadvantage” in terms of “costs” during their fertile years, solely due to their gender. Work plays a structural role in constructing social and personal identities. Each individual connects to the social fabric through work from a particular position that gives singular meaning to their life.



Theological Input

A theology of care for creation without demands for socio-environmental and gender justice is historically irrelevant. Creation has always been structurally unequal and inhabited by different species that do not live under the same conditions. Liberation theology has addressed the biblical idea of the “poor”—oppressed people whose rights are violated in socioeconomic terms, etc. However, these individuals are affected by multiple factors of exclusion and oppression, including sex, gender identity, skin color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, education, labor participation, and other key aspects for full social integration.

Life in creation is structurally different for women, gender-diverse individuals, and children than for heterosexual men. Water scarcity, water, air, soil, and food contamination, floods, and droughts disproportionately affect children and women due to their household and care roles. Drought affects women working seasonal jobs in harvests. Biodiversity degradation and deforestation impact women gatherers. Women play a central role in food sovereignty and security, yet in Latin America and the Caribbean, they hold 30% of land ownership, 10% of credit, and 5% of technical assistance.



Women defend territories against multinational incursions, becoming targets of all forms of violence, including physical attacks, rape, and femicide. Women's average income relative to men in Abya Yala is 83%. Economic and financial power, as well as scientific and technological knowledge, are predominantly occupied by men (Arianne van Andel). Dominant patriarchal liberal theology in the ecumene is anthropocentric and associates women with emotions, nature, and private space, while linking men to reason, culture, and the public sphere. This naturalization of gender inequality, the sexual division of labor, and the differential legal status of people is fundamentally at odds with the mission of the gospel message.



— Proposition 46

Changing course is possible

The responsible and shared use of creation as an ethic of the common good—stewardship.

“The earth is the Lord’s” (Psalm 24:1).

Care for creation. Christian ethics affirms the collective responsibility to care for and administer creation for the well-being of all.

Input: Ecumenical environmental organizations.

Axis: Stewardship and common good

Colonial culture fragmented communities and territories, cultures, and ecosystems, theologies, and life throughout history and across the planet. Colonial culture divides and classifies people, resources, knowledge, and power. Viewing land and people as resources profoundly changed social relationships in Abya Yala. Solidarity and inclusive economies aim to restore relationships between people and the environment, working collaboratively to build a productive model that integrates care for life, understanding the economy as collective governance of the common home.

In Christian faith, the risen Christ and faith communities ‘become’ one body such that both identity and the distance between parts are open to the work of the Holy Spirit throughout creation. Christian ethics arise in this communion with Christ for love of the world (John 3:16-21). Ethics of the common good emerge in conflict with systems based on utility calculation. Ethics of the common good operate from within reality, introducing values that confront, transform, and intervene in the system. Essentially, it is



an ethic of resistance, confrontation, and intervention.

Its basic principle is the recognition that no one can live if “the other person” cannot live. The social and solidarity economy is based on respect for human beings, life in all its dimensions, and respect for the life of nature.

This implies that the individual receives according to their needs and can achieve self-realization as fully as possible. At the same time, each person, as a communal being, contributes to society according to their acquired capacities. The starting point is that self-realization—becoming a fully alive person with rights—is only possible “with” and “alongside” others. The common good surpasses utility calculations. This approach points toward an alternative economy. [Numerous social and solidarity economy experiences exist in Abya Yala](#), many lasting several decades.

The Lutheran Diaconal Foundation (FLD) is a diaconal organization created by the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) in 2000. It works with small projects, agroecological farmers, recyclable materials collectors, indigenous communities, and diaconal projects. FLD also manages projects such as the Fair Trade Network, the “Not So Sweet Home” Exhibit, and the Pampa Project.

In the Pampa Project, FLD supports small agroecological producers to develop an alternative to the hegemonic agro-export economic model. FLD’s long journey is grounded in Jesus’ words in John 12:47, promoting justice for territories and communities subjugated by the Roman Empire through rights violations and elite enrichment. Salvation of the entire world is based on sharing (John 6) and mutual service (John 13).

Proposición 47

Women at the forefront

The collective distribution of care work.

“Serve one another” (Galatians 5:13)

Shared care. Care work must be recognized, redistributed, and valued as a collective responsibility, not as a burden placed on women.

Input: Women’s movements.

Axis: Care economy.

Redistribution and Recognition of Care in the Economy

Discussions about care—for people, others, and the planet or common home—are gender debates. We need to transition to new paradigms that recognise the value of care and redistribute it among all people, creating a more sustainable and equitable economy.

The reality is that the logic of care is incompatible with the logic of the market. Neoliberal hegemony, emphasizing individualism and private property, neglects and abandons dreams of generosity and care for others. Economies committed to human and environmental life adopt a different perspective. Domestic, volunteer, pastoral, and other human work generates wealth oriented toward the service of life rather than monetary expression. Care manifests in relationships with others and with nature. (Wim Dierckxsens and Sílvia Regina de Lima Silva)

In the Gospel of John, community care is linked to love for Christ (John 21:15-17). John presents Jesus questioning Peter three times consecutively about his commitment, reliability, and

friendship. Peter affirms his commitment each time. The verb Jesus uses is “agape,” generally translated as “love.” Each friendly response is accompanied by Jesus’ request to “feed my sheep,” a metaphor for collective and communal care. In the Johannine community, mutual care practices are so important that they declare, “Whoever does not love has not known God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8).

The Center for Support and Promotion of Agroecology

(CAPA) of the Lutheran Diaconal Foundation in Brazil works with various agroecological producer groups (Semeando o Bem Viver). Producers share their experiences: “We can plant with love and care. We can provide healthy products to consumers and live from this work. Everyone can live well. It is possible to produce food for our people on our land. If I want a good product for myself, I also want a good product for my neighbor in the city. This work requires effort but brings great satisfaction. This is agroecology.”

**Rede de Comércio Justo
e Solidário - FLD**

— **Proposición 48**

Woman without children wanted for general tasks

The denial of economic rights on the basis of gender

“Workers deserve their wages” (Luke 10:7)

Economic dignity. Discrimination in employment and income based on gender violates justice and human dignity.

Input: Labor justice networks.

Axis: Economic rights.

There is no economic justice or recognition of women’s work without a Life Free from Violence. Economic violence is one of many types of violence affecting women and gender-diverse people. Primitive communities teach not to exploit or abuse one another, but to care for and responsibly perform one’s role, collectively looking after each other (1 Thess 4:1-12).

An alternative economy seeks to build a society of free and equal human beings while creating individuals capable of imagining the future. It challenges the view of humans as mere resources or means for accumulation. This economy envisions and works for a society where humans labor for life itself, not sacrificing life for the economy. The market, as a totalizing system, treats human life and ecosystems as “distortions,” seeing them merely as resources. Market logic functions as an end in itself, but from the perspective of human and ecological life, this totalitarian system reveals itself as a distortion of creation, producing increasing vulnerability. (Wim Dierckxsens and Silvia Regina de Lima Silva)

Alternative economies will truly be universal when the totalizing market logic is overcome, and human and environmental life become central to social and economic organization. This requires a shift in mindset, a new logic, a new paradigm. Building this paradigm requires recovering integral elements of identity and human beinghood. Key elements include solidarity and care as strategic principles for reorganizing how we exist in the world and building a new ethics in economics. This paradigm shift involves the religious sphere, as it requires deconstructing dominant religious-political-economic discourse and strengthening mutuality and community stewardship through theology and faith experiences, restoring the social meaning of the economy.”
[\(Wim Dierckxsens y Silvia Regina de Lima Silva\)](#)



The **Projecto Mulher Catadora é Mulher que Luta**, is run by the Lutheran Diaconal Foundation together with the National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors. It addresses the challenge of combining skilled recycling services with democratic management and cooperative, solidarity-based relationships grounded in gender justice. Its actions aim to promote social rights and strengthen organizations, including strategic planning and equipment acquisition. The project empowers women to assert their rights, speak up, and make decisions at home in situations of violence and collectively within the recycling organization, as well as at national movement gatherings or public institutions. It strengthens women's access to economic and gender rights, allowing them to lead collective enterprises and become a source of pride for their families

FLD



— Proposition 49

Is my money worth nothing?

The utilitarian view of women's bodies for sustaining life.

“You are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:31)

Valuing women's labor. Women's work and bodies must not be instrumentalized or exploited for economic survival.

Input: Feminist economists.

Axis: Gender and economy

The global economy is systemically organised around minimizing costs and maximizing profitability. In this economic order, unpaid work plays a key role. One of the system's crucial contributions is women's invisible labour in caregiving tasks at home and in communities. The feminist approach to economics questions this structural problem of the capitalist economy because it jeopardises the reproduction and sustainability of life for women in service of capital accumulation and market maintenance. The central concern is distributive: ensuring the viability of life's maintenance and reproduction. The supply of paid work is regulated by negotiation possibilities within households regarding the distribution of unpaid work dedicated to life-sustaining tasks. Feminist economics seeks to modify gender inequality to achieve socioeconomic equity for the entire population. (Corina Rodríguez Enríquez)

The early Christian community was organised based on a solidarity-oriented economic ethic, grounded in God's ownership of all creation and humans as temporary stewards. The faith community is exhorted to ensure that no one lacks necessities and that everyone can live. Social inequality and insensitivity to those in need are subjects of reflection and sanction: *“But if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in*

need, yet closes their heart against them, how can the love of God be in that person?” (1 John 3:17).

“Care is part of human nature. It is a way of structuring and expressing the self. We do not have care. We are care. Care has an ontological dimension integral to human constitution. Without care, we cease to be human. This dimension of life, deeply tied to human identity, disappears in a market economy under the categories of ‘productive’ and ‘unproductive’ work or appears in an exclusionary dualism: on one hand, work linked to production, which receives monetary recognition; on the other, life reproduction, often not even considered work. It is important to call many more activities ‘work,’ to reclaim invisible activities, highlight the characteristics of ‘other work’ and ‘various works,’ and name their protagonists. This involves rejecting the market and monetary system as the sole axes of analysis. It means prioritizing the maintenance of life and the time of life. In this reflection, we must not forget the power relations involved in the distribution of work, its fruits, and wealth.” (Wim Dierckxsens and Sílvia Regina de Lima Silva)



A Diaconal Experience:

The FLD's project with urban recyclers generates knowledge through collaboration with the university. The university creates a space for integrating enterprise and politics with local government. This shifts the university's perspective, generating social knowledge with the social movement to change the city's culture and elevate the value of recycling work. The meaning of work changes as it acquires new social value, and workers gain awareness of their work's importance.

This modifies their social status, as recognised labour leads to broader social acceptance. Organization is essential for integrating knowledge, accessing funding, advancing professionally, securing formal employment, fostering collective learning, and promoting ethical, social, and professional development, while strengthening national organization. The social movement gains funding for projects that improve workers' quality of life, expanding social, political, and economic engagement with new actors. *"This is impossible to achieve alone."*

FLD, Catarmos nos

Proposición 50

It's just to give a hand

The unpaid nature of care as a result of the sexual division of labor.

“Do not grow weary in doing good” (Galatians 6:9)

Recognizing care. Unpaid care work sustains life and economies and must be made visible, valued, and supported.

Input: Care collectives.

Axis: Unpaid labor.

Faith-based organizations have long questioned the dysfunction between economic production and the reproduction of human life. The capitalist economic model commodifies care work as a comparative advantage, deepening gender inequality. This division of labour along gender lines has produced a **‘care crisis’¹** affecting society. Care work related to life reproduction includes preparing food, clothing care, household maintenance, rest and recreation provision, and reproduction-related care such as pregnancy, childbirth, and newborn care. It also includes care for the elderly and the sick. These care tasks are not recognised in a market-centred economy. ([Wim Dierckxsens y Sílvia Regina de Lima Silva](#)).

In this economic model, care work, performed by women, becomes unpaid labour. This is common in faith-based organisations. The lack of consensus on task distribution in the faith community leads to normalisation of inequality, as overlapping tasks not shared by others associate work with particular people. When women care for their families, they cannot work outside the home and must remain in the household. Even if they work outside, they still carry household care responsibilities.

This naturalization of gender inequality in community spaces conflicts with the original idea of ecclesia, or church, which stems from classical Greek city-state democracy, where freedom and equality applied equally to all citizens. In the Hellenistic world, ecclesia retained this sense of political organization and was never used for religious assemblies. Paul, recognising that God's love and baptism are universal, conceived of freedom and equality in the church for all people. Equality and freedom are gifts from God for living a full life.

This shift in social status within religious life is ritualised in baptism, where the community celebrates an individual's participation in God's kingdom and their role in communal authority received from God for social commitment (diakonia). Jesus models this theology, viewing discipleship as a ministry among equals (John 13:4-15; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10). Paul affirms that in Christ's communion, distinctions between Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female are inadmissible (Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The early church's community theology distances itself from Greek androcentric democracy, deepening the notion of democracy through equal rights for all members. Unlike Greek democracy, where only adult male citizens had political rights, the early church embraced equality and freedom for all.



The United Evangelical Lutheran Church

addresses the naturalization of inequality in debates with fundamentalist movements. A frequent argument concerns the division of labour and roles in communities. When task division subjugates one person to another, work is incomplete for both. Social and sexual divisions of labour are seen as injustice, not God's will. This social order is cultural, imposed, and constructed—not an expression or anticipation of God's kingdom and justice.

(Mariela Pereyra)

1. Care work as (un)paid labour

The care model crisis has existed for centuries, resulting from resistance and conflict that produced public policies and laws worldwide. The system naturalises care, giving it ethical and moral value. When care becomes denaturalised, it assumes economic value as labour, impacting men's income and capital accumulation. Patriarchal sectors aim to preserve these economic advantages because they lose market competitiveness. Feminism has denaturalised this "economic condition" by recognizing women as legal and economic subjects, autonomous and independent. A conflict once private now enters public and systemic political-economic spheres. The phrase "It's not love, it's unpaid work" transformed the political-economic scenario because women move from contesting household economic decisions to claiming recognition for their participation in income generation and wealth distribution in society.

— Proposition 51

Caring for everything, even if it costs me my life

Care associated with sacrifice as a spiritual merit.

“I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Matthew 9:13).


Life-affirming spirituality. Christian faith does not glorify exhaustion or self-destruction but calls for justice, balance, and shared responsibility.

Input: Pastoral care networks.


Axis: Spirituality of care

Women are responsible for food, child-rearing, schooling, and care for various household members. Inequality in task distribution and accumulation constitutes violence, impacting women’s personal development, career advancement, social networks, and health self-care. This situation limits labour market access, income levels, and participation in decision-making spaces, as well as access to healthcare, recreational opportunities, education, political activism, and artistic expression. Rural contexts exacerbate the issue, restricting women to private and domestic spaces, particularly in extended families and where care extends to farm animals, natural resource preservation, territorial defence, and Earthcare—sometimes at life-threatening risk. (Renate Gierus)

The structural nature of this issue necessitates public policies establishing care systems among community, market, and state, from a human rights perspective to ensure equal opportunities. Proposed measures include paternity and adoption leave, childcare facilities in workplaces, and flexible hours to reconcile work and family life.



The patriarchal, androcentric capital accumulation model is challenged across disciplines for its exclusionary, extractivist, extremist, and biocidal nature. The neoliberal development model's global failures compel societies to develop new cultural and economic paradigms. Jesus' gospel critiques the "*mammon economy*," or the economy of love for money—an economy of excess that neglects neighbours, humanity, injustice, and interdependence within creation. Jesus asserts that people cannot serve both money and God. Gospel justice is gender justice, prioritizing fidelity to God as the principle of shared care for creation. Jesus protects people from risking their lives for endless accumulation and shields the marginalised from suffering. The gospel highlights men associated with wealth and women in extreme vulnerability.



In Nicaragua, the Interchurch Center for Theological and Social Studies, in coordination with a violence victim assistance centre at the Nicaraguan Evangelical University “Martin Luther King,” provides pastoral care for survivors of gender-based violence.

The first challenge is recognizing women’s bodies as crucified by neoliberal policies that exclude and impoverish. Women on the frontlines, especially in hospitals, faced the pandemic directly. *“We need church leaders sensitive to restoring women’s full citizenship and rights—sexual, reproductive, access to services with autonomy and integrity, a life free of violence. We must believe women when they say: ‘They are killing us,’ when they say: ‘No.’”*

(Blanca Cortés Robles)

— Proposition 52

And what about me—what do I get?

Classifying management capacities according to gender.

“God gives gifts to all” (1 Corinthians 12:7)


Equal capacities. Leadership and management abilities are not determined by gender but by gifts, experience, and opportunity.

Input: Leadership training programs.

Axis: Gender equality.

Neoliberal models reveal that “market freedom” is not truly free, and “free supply and demand” is increasingly constrained by concentration, monopolies, cartels, and speculative financial activity. This economic-financial model threatens democracy and global access to rights. Women are disproportionately affected by exclusion from production means and decision-making spaces. The neoliberal capitalist system is patriarchal, androcentric, white, and misogynist. It naturalises women’s association with care tasks. Women are neither owners nor free. Limited records and access difficulties obscure precise data. However, a 1980 UN data cross-check indicates that women make up half the global population, occupy one-third of official labour force records, perform two-thirds of all work, earn only one-tenth of global income, and own just one percent of world property.

Within this context, women in popular sectors have achieved better income, participation, and decision-making conditions in alternative economic models such as the Social and Solidarity Economy and the Popular and Solidarity Economy. The Popular and Solidarity Economy organises communally, managing resources, products, market relationships, and relations with other economic and social sectors based on collective agreements. Its defining



feature is organising work and resource distribution around reciprocity, social life, daily practices, and community.

Jesus came from rural communities and producers who shared goods and labour in associative models. Apostle Paul organised faith communities based on honour culture. Communities were sustained through mutual recognition: those honoured by the gospel share goods to honour the well-received word, and those called to tasks share knowledge to honour the community. Communities functioned on mutual recognition and material solidarity. This model created strong bonds through acceptance and inclusion dynamics. Paul, a leatherworker, connected to a network of merchants across Asia Minor who offered protection and hospitality, enabling work sharing. Community production mobilised these associations to demand justice against taxation and social injustices.

The Gospel of the Kingdom rejects violent practices in money-concentrated economies. The early community organised its socio-economic ethics based on the Greek concept of kenosis—*“making space for others,”* relinquishing privileges for shared well-being, prioritizing the common good over personal success. This reflects God the Creator, making room in the world for life for all creatures. God’s ownership is shared within Trinitarian theology. The circularity of Trinitarian properties and attributes enriches all. This concept strengthens internal solidarity in the early church and public commitment to the common good. Every person is an essential member or organ of Christ’s body, a key value for the Popular and Solidarity Economy.

FLD supports a fair and solidarity trade network.

The coordinator remarks: “The purpose of this meeting of different social movements in our Fair and Solidarity Trade Network is to share experiences from more than 18–20 years in solidarity economy. Solidarity economy is something we practice daily. We laugh sometimes, saying that in solidarity economy we are in constant transformation, always learning.

In every meeting, fair, or conversation with clients, we learn. We see we are not alone, sometimes like a family on a boat. It is a beautiful experience, and we intend to stay in our region, our periphery, our group. Solidarity economy prioritises the person. Humans exist to live, but we never forget that we are part of a network generating income. A dignified income is one that considers others first.

We must generate income, generate knowledge, but never forget our neighbor. This is solidarity economy. The network is mostly here, though people visit from other places, but in our state, we maintain this vision.”

(Rosángela Días)

Proposition 53

Don't worry, I'll take care of it

The male provider model restricts women's equal opportunities.

“In Christ you are all one” (Galatians 3:28)

Economic autonomy. Women's economic independence is essential for equality, dignity, and freedom from violence.

Input: Women's economic initiatives.

Axis: Economic autonomy.

The man has to provide for the household. There is a biblical quote that says, *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Tim 5:8). This confines the man to the role of provider and clearly reduces the woman's economic autonomy. This makes it difficult to break cycles of violence and also harder for women to access sexual and reproductive rights. The biblical justification of the male's privileged status and the religious legitimation of gender-based violence is a discussion present within the Bible itself.

A “hardened heart” is an obstinately egocentric and individualistic attitude. The Old Testament uses the term *“hard of neck”* to describe someone who deliberately looks the other way so as not to see the person in front of them or their surroundings. ‘Hardness of heart’ always refuses to see another person as an equal, as a neighbor, and denies their ethical and communal responsibility.

Jesus condemns the hardness of heart of men who expel women and children from their homes with total impunity, denying their humanity, and questions the complicity of the temple authorities for not properly enforcing the law so that men must appear before justice and guarantee their wife and children's means of life. Jesus reflects that it is unacceptable to ignore the original equality from creation and to attempt to divide into two species what God created as one (Mark 10:7–9). Jesus questions male privileges and their theological validation by the temple authorities, appealing to religious violence and citing Moses.

Jesus is categorical, saying it is not lawful for humans to separate the natural unity within a single species and the equal status, as creatures, with which God joined people from the beginning. There is no basis for men to appeal to these texts to justify their privileges at the expense of women's lives. Christian tradition owes itself a thorough revision of these texts as well as of its marriage liturgies and nuptial blessings, so as not to taint such significant moments with religious violence. These interpretations condemn women to endure, in silence, guilt, and pain, relationships of abuse, mistreatment, and submission in the name of family tradition, fidelity, and promises of "love," based on violent interpretations of biblical texts validated by all kinds of patriarchal theologies. This demand for privileges by men in the early Christian community, claiming racial, political, and sexual supremacy, is firmly rejected by the apostle Paul, who points out that in communion with Christ, through faith, all people have the same status, rights, and opportunities (Gal 3:27-28).

The SEDi and Hora de Obrar Nos Contamos project highlights the impact of the gender digital divide and online gender-based violence on the development of girls and women

Four out of ten women do not have access to the internet, devices, or basic skills to use them, and only one in three women has advanced digital skills, compared to nearly half of men. Online gender-based violence affects 34% of women. This reduces their opportunities for access to information, decent work, and economic independence. The gender digital divide remains a social and political problem that requires concrete and urgent solutions to guarantee equal opportunities and full development for women in the digital age. As faith-based organizations, Hora de Obrar and SEDi aim to provide women with the necessary tools to ensure their full development. A concrete testimony of this commitment is that of Idalia Sotelo from Raúl Peña, Paraguay, who, together with other women, received digital tools such as computers and printers, as well as internet access, with support from SEDi.



— **Proposition 54**

Don't you recognize me anymore?

The sin of social marginalization leads to premature death.

“I was sick and you visited me” (Matthew 25:36)

Social inclusion. Exclusion from health care, housing, and community accelerates vulnerability and death.

Input: Social justice ministries.

Axis: Social exclusion.

Cisgender women, even when they identify with the sex assigned at birth, are subject to all forms of patriarchal violence. LGBTIQ+ people, by not feeling, constructing, or perceiving themselves based on their assigned sex at birth, experience even greater violence due to stigmatization and exclusion than cis people. These forms of violence due to gender identity and sexual orientation are experienced by these individuals from childhood in their own homes. Trans people are even more vulnerable than the LGTBIQ+ community perceived as ‘women’ (trans men and trans women), due to the visibility of their identity. Sexual orientations are intimate and private; however, ‘trans identity’ is necessarily visible. This condition constantly exposes this population to risks affecting both quality and life expectancy.

Gender-based violence against trans people leads to extreme violations: family and state abandonment, incomplete schooling, denial of identity, denial of basic services, labor precariousness, inadequate housing, recruitment into illegal networks, early

deaths. Ways of acting, being, and feeling are not natural differences between men and women but result from gender socialization. Marginalization, persecution, and exclusion of the LGBTBIQ+ population are the outcomes of the heteropatriarchal order. Denial of opportunities and exposure to life-threatening risks for trans people are gendered consequences of the heteropatriarchal order, exacerbated by the neoliberal capitalist system.

The denial of humanity to LGBTBIQ+ people and consequent system exclusion originate in the binary, exclusionary conception that associates 'humanity' only with man or woman, and in the differentiated socialization of 'femininity' as subordinate to masculinity. The marginalization, demonization, and condemnation of the LGBTBIQ+ population is an ideological, cultural, and social expression that is completely arbitrary, outrageous, and unjust.

A diaconal experience from Hivos, Guatemala:

Dolores Vásquez, from the LGTBQI+ community, speaking about the meaning of her personal acceptance process, shares that it is the family you create, where you can find support to empower your identity and where you do not feel alone. The state has a significant debt to the community that is not being addressed. Inclusion is needed in educational spaces, the labor system, and psychological support for children and parents in these situations.

“One needs a psychologist because of the violence and lack of support experienced from childhood. I remember being called HUECO and discriminated against for my identity since first grade; it is the type of violence that leaves a mark,” says Dolores. She also shares the discrimination she faced when seeking new employment: *“I was unemployed for more than 12 months for being a transgender person, even with a university degree, experience, and required skills; no company wanted to hire me.”*

Social worker and president of Visibles, Ana Lanz, reflects on inclusion: *“Being empathetic and open to listening helps us better understand the violence people experience, not just for sexual diversity but also intersections like gender, ethnicity, disability, and more. Respecting the right to self-identify is another way to make community members feel safe in their environment.”*

(Carmen Hernández)

— Proposition 55

Mine, yours—what is ours?

Identifying child-rearing exclusively with motherhood harms women.

“Children are a heritage from the Lord” (Psalm 127:3)


Shared parenting. Childcare is a shared social responsibility that must not rest solely on women.

Input: Family support networks.

Axis: Co-responsibility.

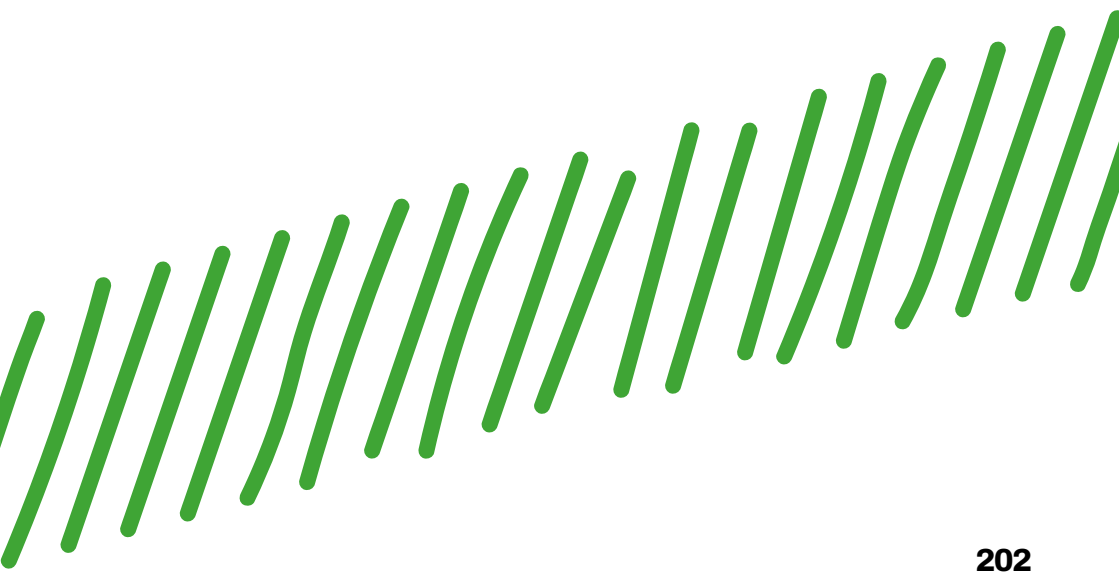
Poverty indices and survey data help gauge women’s participation in poverty. The feminization of poverty is closely linked to economic violence. The abandonment of the household by male heads of families, the absence of their primary income as household support, and their provider role structurally alter family subsistence conditions. Refusal to maintain an economic link with the family constitutes economic violence. When a woman decides to separate from her husband, economic violence by men increases because they often use economic deprivation as a form of moral and material punishment.

Solidarity is a legal principle applicable to various contractual frameworks and family relationships. Within the law, family members assume a common commitment, thus being ‘solidary’ with each other. This means that, prioritizing the best interest of children, household providers are individually responsible for all obligations. In legal terms, solidarity implies shared responsibility binding all parties jointly. This includes household tasks, debts, support for the home, housing, health, transport, etc.



The scope of solidarity depends on national legislation, but in some cases, it extends to relatives of household providers because subsistence takes precedence over the type of relationship. Barriers to accessing rights leave women and children in permanent precarity and vulnerability.

The word 'solidarity' is not often used in biblical translations; rather, terms like 'mutual aid' or 'doing good' are used. The word 'agape' carries all these connotations, referring to the moral obligation inherent to every person within a collective space, whether an institution, community, society, family, or household. Agape in Judeo-Christian culture is a practice of universal care without distinctions. Structurally, it organises all aspects of human existence, describing both God's relationship with creation and relationships among people: "Love God... and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27). Jesus affirms that this practice summarises all the law and the prophets, meaning, in a theocracy, the law and all its interpretations.



Community testimony

Theologian and musician Soraya Eberle, serving the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Honduras, observes that gender relations are organized around two basic social conceptions: *“One is the patriarchal role of men—they are the authority. On the other hand, there is the mother figure. Honduran women are highly recognized as strong women and, truthfully, always the center of the family. Fathers, holding power, are often absent due to migration, violence, or job-seeking, both in Honduras and more remote places. Many men also support more than one family, three or four families, under poor conditions. So, we see women fear leaving their small spaces, which makes it harder to change perspectives on life, travel, etc.”*

This prompted Soraya to propose challenges: programs inviting women to go out, music and food different from the usual. In partnership with organizations, they developed a literacy project in the La Ceiba neighborhood, enabling women to read the Bible themselves and see its content. Oral tradition predominates, and over 60% of women are illiterate. Teaching them to read gives them the power to empower themselves.

(Soraya Eberle)

— Proposition 56

My body, my life, my income

Male privilege confines women to non-remunerated tasks.

“The laborer deserves wages” (1 Timothy 5:18)

Economic justice. Equal pay and access to income are matters of justice, not charity.


Input: Economic justice coalitions.

Axis: Income equality.

Social statistics indicate that the heteropatriarchal order is most violent toward women during their reproductive years. During this period, it is much harder for women to achieve basic autonomy. Regardless of a woman’s right to earn income or the presence of a husband, young women face greater constraints. Access to fundamental rights such as work, education, and economic autonomy is much harder for young women. This aligns with the two age ranges of highest femicide in Abya Yala: women aged 15–30 and women aged 30–45.

This conditioning and displacement of women due to a sexual division of labour is present in biblical texts and theological history. Theology distinguishes between the traditions in biblical texts and the various ways they have been reinterpreted throughout church history. The Bible is the result of centuries of struggle among different theological currents. The vision of social relations centralised on men is ‘one’ current; however, other theologies challenge this with a more collective vision of community relations.

These theologies question the hegemonic centralised power paradigm, mostly produced in royal palaces and by theologians. Currents aligned with the faith of the people question inequality



between God and creation and highlight the misuse of God's name to justify inequalities and abuses of power by authorities.

However, due to the nationalist and monotheistic nature of the texts, many contain religious intolerance and racism against other peoples and religions, often polytheistic or matriarchal. The creation story reflects these theological tensions: the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the tree of eternal life in Eden, along with God, a wise serpent, and cultural references to frequent sexual-affective encounters outdoors. Considering the fragile architecture of ancient houses and extended family structures, references to going to the fields under trees suggest privacy and socially accepted practices.

In Semitic culture, trees (perennial, fruit-bearing) were common sites for goddess altars, and serpents symbolised eternal life. The Bible mentions a goddess incorporated into the Israelite temple pantheon and describes ongoing royal struggles over fertility cults. The Adam and Eve narrative discourages independent matriarchal religious practices among Israelite women, reformulating original theological elements prior to monotheism. In patriarchal monotheistic reinterpretation, men must labour for fruits, in conflict with nature, while women give birth in conflict with the serpent. Israelite women resisted this patriarchal theology for centuries, maintaining matriarchal religious practices parallel to centralised male monotheistic worship.

The patriarchal stigmatization of women's religious practices gains political relevance as they are blamed for division of the people and submission to neighbouring powers. Monotheistic theology justified this with strong sexual stigmatisation of women's religious "infidelity." These theological narratives progressively create a binary separation between male economic

management and female domestic management, providing theological justification for the sexual and social division of labour. Women lose autonomy as they are displaced from economic activity to prioritise men's central role in production and decision-making.

Christian theology proposes overcoming this gender conflict through universal 'reconciliation' [of religious diversity and theological plurality] through faith in Christ's love. However, this male-marked monotheism revives debates about women's place in social organization. The debate between Christ as the central 'ideal of faith' and Christ embodied in faith communities, with all cultural and everyday diversity, questions women's participation in decision-making and administration. The idealistic, rational, patriarchal view of Christ is in tension with the matriarchal community diaconal gospel current.





**Pastoral reflection by Mercedes Bachmann,
United Evangelical Lutheran Church, Argentina:**

The problem is that the Bible can think with considerable equality between ‘male and female’ from humanity’s creation in God’s image, having divine breath, or being in Christ a community without hierarchical binaries (as in Gal 3:28, Romans 16), yet it denies sexual autonomy to the vast majority of women. More generally, it denies freedom to thousands of enslaved people, so its inconsistency regarding sexual autonomy should not surprise us.

On the other hand, a free male’s sexual autonomy was never questioned, except when it conflicted with another free male’s autonomy—what the Bible calls adultery, coveting another’s wife. Regarding reproductive autonomy, one has to look far to gain a clear overview. Sons, and to a lesser extent daughters, contributed to the father’s lineage. Reproduction, however, belonged (and largely still belongs) to women. For example, there are no barren men in the Bible, except eunuchs and others excluded from Israel’s liturgical assembly (Deut 23:1ff). It is always the woman who is barren.

(Mercedes Bachmann)



— Proposition 57

Some less equal than others

Using “equality” to benefit men at women’s expense.

“Justice, and only justice” (Deuteronomy 16:20)

Substantive equality. True equality requires addressing structural disadvantages, not reinforcing privilege.

Input: Gender justice advocates.

Axis: Structural inequality

Taxes are state levies that do not require a direct return. Taxes must comply with several principles: be established by law (legality); apply to people with similar ability to pay (equality); cover all affected economic forms (generality); guarantee private property (non-confiscation); align with the taxpayer’s ability to pay (proportionality); and apply all these principles equally to all economic forms (equity).

Applying the same taxes to all people equally (on salaries, food, loans, etc.) is unjust because it does not consider the impact of gender inequality on “ability to pay.” This factor of tax inequity, combined with general fiscal inequity—exacerbated by economic instability—and high levels of tax evasion, doubly harms women, especially women from lower-income sectors. Due to gender inequality, women do not have equal access to property, productive activity, financial resources, income, task distribution, or social and cultural benefits. Costs inherent to menstruation, caregiving, and socialization in patriarchal culture require a greater financial investment for women and people of diverse gender identities than for cis men. Distributive justice establishes normative principles to ensure equitable allocation of benefits and burdens in economic activity.

Tax policies in countries—on goods, income, consumption, activities, or earnings—often lack a gender perspective and fail to contribute to distributive justice.

The causes of these injustices reveal the material basis of structural inequality in the dominant patriarchal system. The heteropatriarchal order operates progressively to maintain material control over the conditions of existence in nature. An equitable system of burden distribution progressively corrects benefit distribution by increasing access to capital goods, improving labor income, and granting greater opportunities regarding natural resources. These three factors form the basis of economic activity. Regressive tax schemes in countries reduce opportunities to expand economic activity and increase the participation of economically vulnerable actors in wealth creation. This system reflects an extractive economic model with a long history of conquest and colonization and a strong legal structure in many countries.

Many religious sectors justify both the domination of nature and gender inequality through the creation narrative. Both factors are key to capital accumulation and are integrated into a single theology. In this scenario of patriarchal appropriation of foundational myths from the Judeo-Christian collective faith tradition, it is necessary to recover the collective feminine imaginaries recorded over time in various biblical testimonies.

Women's vulnerability in biblical times is reflected in two legal figures: tithing and levirate marriage. The origin of the tithe in the Bible is linked to the exclusive dedication to religious duties of one of Israel's twelve tribes, who could not generate income, like those in need. The lack of income among these social groups was compensated by contributions from other tribes through tithes. These tithes, in turn, were required to deduct further tithes for the maintenance of specific temple duties.



A regressive tax collects a smaller percentage of income as the taxpayer's income increases. This means that people with lower incomes bear a heavier burden.

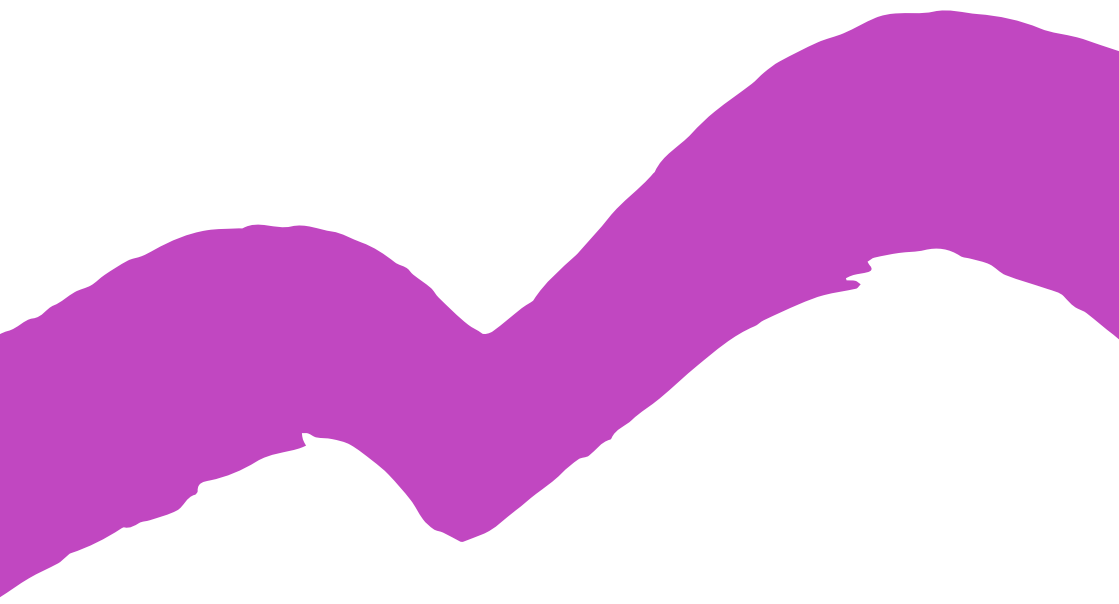
In this redistributive structure, every three years, tithes supported migrants, widows, and orphans. Similarly, unused tithes were fully applied every four years and could not accumulate. The tithe was a mechanism of solidarity and wealth redistribution.

Using “the widow’s offering” as a “good example” of “dignity” to justify taxing the poor is a sacrificial reading that revictimises and reverses the biblical text’s intent. Jesus condemns religious authorities for exploiting widows instead of contributing financially to meet their needs, as law prescribes. The Bible calls “widows” women without male support, who thus lack means for survival, opening a broad social sector of vulnerable women (rejected, single, migrant, widowed, etc., with or without family, though biblical texts often say “widows and orphans”).

Levirate marriage is masterfully explained in the Book of Ruth. The story highlights women displaced by climate change, effectively environmental refugees. Naomi and her family’s lack of land access abroad, and then the loss of her husband and children, placed her in extreme vulnerability. Torah solidarity principles, even within a patriarchal framework, establish levirate laws guaranteeing subsistence for widows and their families through marriage to a relative of the deceased husband, restoring honor and property. Ruth and Naomi invoke this right, along with their sexual and reproductive rights, to restore their social and economic status. Harsh living conditions and wars demanded both male labor force and female reproduction.

Widows, orphans, and migrants are prominent in biblical texts. Historically, single women and widows were disadvantaged by inheritance practices limiting wealth, as well as discrimination in markets, labor, and education, limiting income.

In such contexts of marginalization and legal barriers, women who stand out do so through creativity, activism, and organization. The Gospels preserve memories of women challenging the religious system, legal system, empire, companions, and even Jesus himself. These memories are signs of agape and sisterly strength, even amid communities in conflict with their theological and spiritual roots.



The Fair and Solidarity Trade Network, supported by the Lutheran Diaconal Foundation in Brazil, confronts capitalist system inequality as a challenge for training and network organization.

The network's spokesperson comments: "At first, it's not easy. You grow up in capitalism, in this collective experience. You hear that you always have to compete, always prove yourself better than others, all this mutual competition. We have to be better at everything, earn more to consume more, and sometimes we joke, 'it's not easy.' It's a process, and growing within capitalism while trying to forget the capitalist world is hard. You can't tell someone entering the solidarity economy today: from now on, capitalism doesn't exist. They live in the capitalist world; they must compete in it. Small enterprises compete with large ones because the more electricity they use, the more discounts, but small enterprises face the same tax burden as a large cooperative. Example: 14 women collect oil, for 20 years, making products like soap and candles. They pay the same taxes as a 700-hectare rural cooperative or a cooperative linked to banks. They pay the same type of tax. The amount of taxes remains a capital burden. How do we fight this? By strengthening ourselves, speaking out, getting training—in a language we understand."

(Rosangela Dias)

— Proposition 58

The opportunities of privilege

Justifying inequality as an opportunity for well-being.

“Woe to those who add house to house” (Isaiah 5:8)

Challenging privilege. Faith communities must question narratives that legitimize inequality and exclusion.

Input: Prophetic advocacy groups.

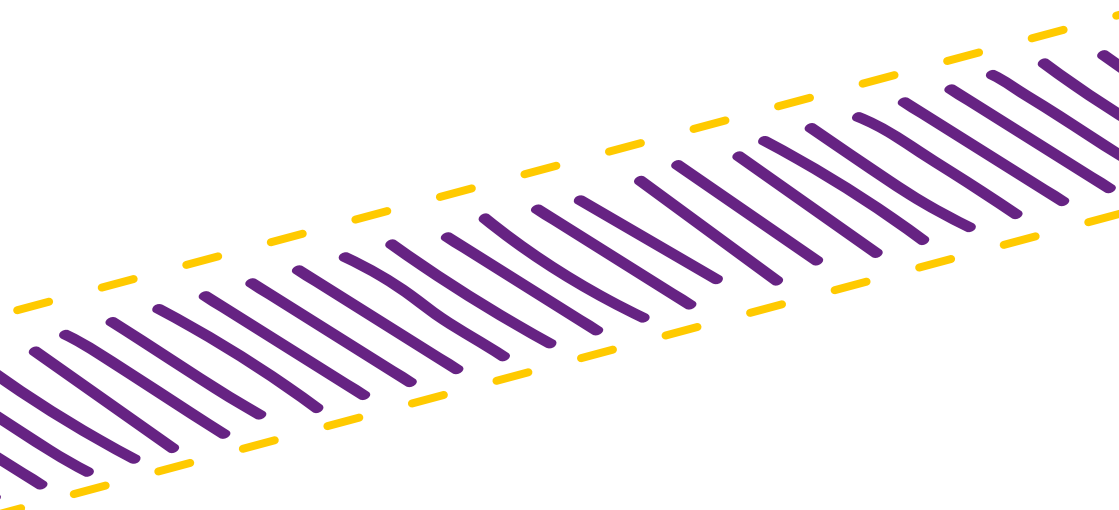
Axis: Privilege and power.

Child, early, and forced marriages, usually between adult men and girls, are a social problem addressed by global children’s rights organizations. This practice affects girls most severely and one-fifth of boys. Childhood forced marriages do not recognise children as rights-holders, violating fundamental rights such as the best interests of the child and free, informed consent. These violations are often concealed under legal marriage. Common consequences include sexual abuse, social and family isolation, limited education, denied professional training, unintended pregnancies, obstetric violence, premature births, and domestic violence.

In Abya Yala, for 25 years, one in four women aged 20–24 married or entered a union before age 18. Rural, Afro-descendant, and Indigenous communities are most affected, with girls and adolescents often exchanged for money, goods, or services. Child marriage impacts children, families, healthcare, and state development.

Religious justification of child marriages reflects the rawest violence of the heteropatriarchal order. Debates, mainly among men, focus on biological aspects and literal readings of sacred texts.

In these theological debates, girls are not recognised as persons. References in the Old Testament indicate women were married post-puberty. Patriarchal tradition, however, conceives marriage as between two mature persons. These interpretations clash with the traditional Christian stance on perversions and child sexual abuse—texts historically used to condemn sexual diversity. Texts in 1 Co 6:9, 1 Tm 1:10; cf. Lv 18:22; 20:13 were interpreted as adult-to-child abuse for centuries. Yet the central Christian message is mutual care and respect for freedom, which led the early church to reject many violent practices. Jesus elevates children as models for entering God’s kingdom. Apostle Paul speaks of parents and children in mutual respect and care.



Pastoral testimony

Soraya Eberle, theologian and musician, serving the Evangelical Lutheran Church in La Ceiba, Honduras, reflects on pastoral work with Garifuna women. She describes how migration, single-parent families, gender violence, child sexual abuse, family abandonment, and lack of income intersect. “We say, ‘they are invisible even in death,’ because some cannot even be identified; they are found in rivers.

In Honduras, domestic violence is pervasive. Women cannot escape this easily. When a woman escapes violence, she often feels the need to find a new partner, sometimes becoming pregnant again despite previous children, with serious difficulties supporting herself and her children.

Women feel worthy only with a partner, leading them from one abusive relationship to another. Men, even after migrating, maintain control through threats. Women live in fear and cannot work, facing extremely difficult lives.

This is where theology faces its greatest challenge: sowing hope. We have worked on economic autonomy through projects with the Lutheran World Federation to reduce migration. Those who migrate are men. Some women also migrate; some men migrate with families. Women are often left alone with children, or alone if children leave, leaving mothers behind.

(Soraya Eberle)

— Proposition 59

I do what I can with what I have

Women's economic situation is proportional to their autonomy.

“You shall know the truth” (John 8:32)


Autonomy and resources. Access to education, income, and resources directly affects women's freedom and life choices.

Input: Development organizations.

Axis: Women's autonomy

Women's economic independence offers greater opportunity to break cycles of violence. Economically dependent women face greater difficulty making these decisions. Investing in women's economic autonomy improves conditions to break violent cycles. Gender-based violence often forces women into unsafe, poorly paid work, limits access to leadership roles, land, loans, participation in social and economic policymaking, and free time for opportunities. Empowering women economically directly supports gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth (UN Women).

The Bible emphasises autonomy, warning about debt, condemning exploitation, usury (Dt 23:19–20), speculation, and abuse (Ps 15:14). The Gospel teaches responsible living under God's grace and mutual care so no one lacks anything (2 Co 9:6–16). Jesus even teaches forgiving debts (Mt 6:12).



Theology, with its limited language, conveys human-divine relationships and faith experiences as a living process. Theology that upholds patriarchal structures, regardless of community faith experiences, denies both biblical religious diversity and contemporary plural experiences. Denying God's word produces violence against other religious practices and women's lives, silencing them, limiting them to reproductive and undervalued work, barring ecclesiastical advancement, hindering social development, training access, and economic independence, reducing them to second-class citizens. (Carolina Bezerra de Souza; Luiz José Dietrich; Clóvis Torquato Jr)

Pastoral reflection from the Biblical-Theological Training Program, Cedepca, Guatemala

Economic relations structuring the heteropatriarchal order leave persistent marks from biblical times to today:

- **1. Viewing women as objects:** Women counted among husband's possessions (Ex 20:17);
- **2. Denying women as rights-holders:** Women face barriers to family property ownership (Dt 21:15–17);
- **3. Obstructing access to rights:** Women must be ingenious to access rights (Rut 4:1–17)
- **4. Abusing privilege:** Women rely on collective support to address vulnerabilities (Acts 6:1–8);
- **5. Dominating public sphere:** Limited full-employment pushes women into home-based self-employment (Pr 31:15–17)
- **6. Controlling wealth administration:** Women often display greater political-economic commitment to social justice than men responsible for inequality (Lk 8:1–3; 10:38–42);
- **7. Making unilateral economic decisions:** Women bear men's losses without equal benefit from gains (2 Kgs 4:1–7).
- **8. Normalizing abuse:** Women share male economic obligations without equal personal development opportunities (Lk 21:1–4)

(Carol González)

— Proposition 60

This is mine—this I'll leave you

Equal rights in ownership of common goods.

***“All who believed were together and had all things in common”
(Acts 2:44)***

Common goods. Justice requires equal access to land, housing, and shared resources.

Input: Land justice movements.

Axis: Commons

When a couple separates and the house goes to one and the TV to the other, this is not just a division of property; it can involve patrimonial violence. Patrimonial violence also includes withholding a woman's identity documents, which are part of her personal assets. Sometimes we do not realize that this patrimonial violence begins very early, when they are young and dating.

The theological justification of gender inequality has a long tradition of translators and currents. Using the creation narrative to justify gender inequality has prompted various theological currents to review this text. There is growing consensus that *ezer kenegdo* (Gn 2:18) is a Hebrew adverbial expression meaning “corresponding to,” “face-to-face,” or “counterpart,” reflecting a commitment of mutual solidarity and responsibility. In other words, man and woman are peers and equal. This allows us to deduce from the original story the existence of a covenant: a commitment as persons for the mutual care of their dignity and integrity, respecting their rights and responsibilities before God and the law, and a commitment as creatures to the mutual care of all creation, in the image and likeness of God.

The Bible describes different power relationships in different circumstances, but it never says that Adam had more authority or responsibility than Eve. The creation narrative refers to a covenant establishing mutual responsibility for the care of all creation. Its purpose is not to differentiate by sex or gender among humans, but to assign mutual distribution of care responsibilities in the common home created by God. The inequitable distribution of property and care duties, justified for centuries by patriarchal theologies, has obscured the struggle for gender equality present in the biblical texts themselves, whether in the originals or in their various translations, and has ignored decades of feminist struggles for liberating and transformative gender justice, for both people and creation, in streets and churches alike.

A pastoral reflection

Theologian Carol González reviews different biblical texts, showing continuity between economic violence under the heteropatriarchal order in biblical times and today. She reflects: *“The Bible shows us that God’s will is not for women to suffer. What should the pastoral response of faith communities be on this issue? In Luke 4:18, Jesus clearly states his mission: to bring good news to the poor. We are Christian communities, and therefore that is also our mission. In our communities, there are women victims of economic violence in their workplaces, homes, and faith communities—women forced to give all their money to their husbands, women deprived of the right to work, manage their assets, or inherit. We must pray, but also act. Women in our congregations must know their rights, fight for them, exercise them, and live full lives—the life Jesus wants for them. This campaign shares content and teachings that can be shared in your congregations, content that can help and guide the women in your church. James 1:27 describes true religion: to care for widows and vulnerable women in their afflictions. Let us embody Jesus’ mission and live true religion.”*

(Carol González, Cedepca)

Proposition 61

Feeling at home

Community activities as unpaid “women’s work.”

“Welcome one another” (Romans 15:7)

Valuing community labor. Community-building work must be recognized and shared, not feminized and devalued.

Input: Community organizations.



Axis: Community labor.

Care work is primarily performed by women. These tasks include household duties as well as care work within the community. Household care tasks include children, elderly people, in-laws, people with disabilities, pets, etc. Community spaces are sustained by the activist work of women in charge of care duties. In churches, diaconal work is usually carried out by women. The demands placed on the pastor’s wife often include community tasks justified as inherent to “her condition as a woman.” In most cases, these tasks are performed without recognition or compensation.

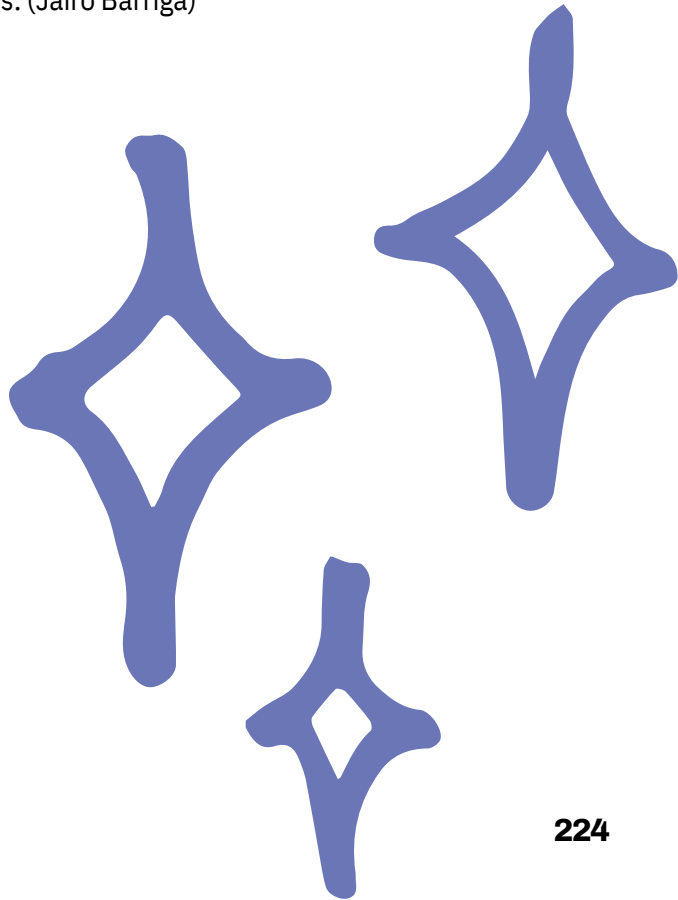
Traditional patriarchal theologies, through sacrificial Christology, teach self-denial for the sake of the community. In the case of Jesus’ female disciples, this is reflected in the erasure of many women who participated in his movement. Traditional interpretations of the Gospels remain silent on women’s marginalization. Text comprehension is left to personal will without much reference to context. Women themselves internalise these interpretations due to the hegemonic nature of these readings. Questioning and privileging a gender perspective is viewed with suspicion. Women’s disadvantages, whether relative to other disciples,

Jesus, or male followers, are assumed to be part of the biblical message. Women accompany, finance, collaborate, preach, and work, yet remain invisible. Women's lives unfold in the shadow of men.

These patriarchal theologies, mostly European and North American and authored by white men, idealise Jesus in their own image within a heteropatriarchal, white-centric imaginary. Jesus is portrayed as an ideal man ministering with a group of heterosexual male friends. This group is described as having difficulty socializing with women and children, enjoying "power," and having inclinations toward "violence." The group exhibits "understandable" resistance to pagan cultures and repeated "difficulty" in understanding the expert's actions and teachings. This depiction of Jesus and the twelve apostles severely limit the possibility of including a woman as a protagonist. Women remain secondary actors, plural, unnamed, and marginalised. This understanding results in a binary, dualistic interpretation and organization of tasks and community structure. The sexual division of faith experience and access to salvation resources morally characterises masculinity as positive and femininity as negative. Men are authorities mediating with God; women lead diaconal work. Men embody pure sacrifice for divine purposes, while women are deemed impure despite devotion. The taboo of women's blood and the myth of redemptive male blood shape entirely diverse ways of perceiving God and living faith. (Marcia Moya R. & Helmut Renard)



There are diverse faith experiences and biblical reinterpretations, even in socially polarised contexts, allowing new theological constructions that value ideological plurality and cultural diversity. Community development experiences in rural areas deeply recognise women's role and potential in social development projects. Women stand out for their organizational capacity in effectively managing productive initiatives. The inequality and vulnerability in which they operate reveal discipline and practical problem-solving. Organizational capacity, community solidarity, and administrative discipline allow them to meet needs, plan funds, and reinvest in new project areas. These experiences differ significantly from how men implement projects. (Jairo Barriga)



**A Reflection from Diaconal Experience,
Fundación Pazos, Colombia**

“In our experience, in peacebuilding and participation with civil society organizations and women, and within the Colombian state and government, considering that female participation has been increasing by law and regulation, I see with great joy that this participation brings far more social proposals, in pursuit of peace and its construction in territories... women from civil society making significant contributions... When women are present in the state, there is greater social investment rather than investment in weapons or state control mechanisms... Women’s participation is crucial... Women contribute greatly to food security, social investment, reduction of military armament, and overall social spending, in contexts where patriarchy and machismo have historically contributed most to conflict. We see this worldwide today: the war in Ukraine and Russia, wars in Africa, some ongoing, others beginning. Another key aspect is education: women now have greater access to education, improvements in childcare, child protection, and education for children..”

(Jairo Barriga)

— Proposition 62

He's not good at that

The negative stereotype of men as caregivers.

“Bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2)

Shared caregiving. Care is a human responsibility, not a gendered limitation.

Input: Masculinities programs.

Axis: Care and masculinities.

There is an idea of an apparent incapacity of men to perform care work, which is reinforced by stereotypes. For example, if a man is hired in a kindergarten to care for children, some families may perceive him as a potential risk for abuse. Such social alarms, however, do not arise in the case of women.

The ethical horizon for building full masculinities is the image and likeness of God, the masculinity of the kingdom of God, egalitarian and healthy masculinities, open to dialogue and discovery within the early church community. These masculinities are an ongoing collective construction, a committed effort toward a more just society, beyond personal pursuit, always in dialogue with others. This path grows and strengthens as more people participate, enhancing the transformative capacity of the community.

At the same time, alongside these spaces for reflection, concrete practices are necessary to generate transformation from care experiences themselves:

1. Promote collaboration in household tasks, distributing roles and functions among all family members.
2. Foster communication between parents and children to learn mutually about self-care strategies, self-regulation, and decision-making support.
3. Integrate consent into child-rearing as a model of relationships based on freedom and respect, challenging adult-centrism and recognizing children's rights.
4. Openly discuss sexual desire and its fulfilment from an early age, respecting gender identities, orientations, and freedoms, promoting healthy family communication.
5. Encourage diversity in recreation, sports, and physical activities, supporting children in transforming fears and prejudices to guarantee rights and fuller lives.
6. Address and challenge hate speech, discriminatory expressions, and inappropriate jokes that cause discomfort, seeking more respectful practices and appropriate expressions.
7. Foster self-love and body education, especially during puberty and adolescence, countering cultural mandates that affect self-esteem.
8. Develop affectivity and expressions of affection between parents and children, celebrating the freedom to express emotions and feelings.
9. Recognise diversity as enriching, promoting continuous learning, and respecting diverse cultural and gender identities in social life.
10. Decide as a family on needs and priorities to organise an economy based on dialogue, agreements, and family resources.

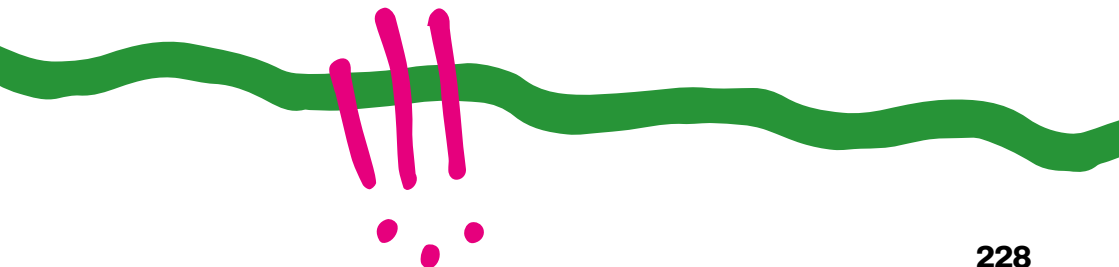
Theologies about families and communities in the Bible reflect daily personal and social experiences connected to vertical and



subordinate relationship models. Family experiences are deeply formative because they affirm habits and strategies reproduced in daily social interactions and validate models and approaches to thinking. Modifying these foundational experiences enables new contexts for expanded biblical reinterpretation, integrating new elements into the hermeneutical circle of reality–Bible–reality. Contextual reading reinterprets aspects present in biblical texts because men’s daily experiences generate new questions and interests, allowing them to identify previously invisible elements in the texts suppressed by ideological reproduction logic that does not encourage reflexivity.

Changing men’s everyday reality alters the contextual conditions for reading the Bible: changes in tasks, focus, situations, demands, scenarios, skills, etc., resetting their subjectivity and ways of living faith. Vertical and binary family experiences clearly determine patriarchal theologies, grounded in ideals and family models that become normative social mandates. These changes create new social skills to face conflicts generated by normative, functional, vertical, apologetic logic exploited by colonial and capitalist structures.

These changes in the field of masculinities have a particular impact in war conflict scenarios, where patriarchal theologies are trapped in their own cycle of violence. In building a culture of peace, it is necessary to break stigmas.



Detailed theological differentiation of words in disputes over meanings establishes positions of distinction. In some sectors, discussing fundamentalism is challenging due to its stigmatizing nature. Critical thinking is applied collectively, engaging stories, emotions, and meaningful experiences. These biblical analytical approaches appeal to emotional intelligence, creating more significant and valid arguments. This is Jesus' method, both for his pastoral work and for teaching the gospel through parables directly involving the gathered people. The argument of love as used by Jesus is irrefutable. Jesus loves and protects, embracing women, men, marginalised people, soldiers, enemies, everyone. Everything done must be with love. This is Augustine's motto: "Love and do what you will," because one who truly loves cannot harm another, even a perpetrator of violence. (Jaime Barriga)

FEEL.
at
HOME

A Diaconal Testimony from the Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia, Brazil

It is much easier for communities to try to turn the State into an extension of the church than to maintain a concrete public testimony of the church in defending rights. When we say John 10:10, “that they may have life in abundance,” my God, abundant life means living with dignity, and a dignified life includes having food, health, access to healthcare, and education. However, this reading I am giving now, at this very moment, will be dismissed by religious conservatives, who will say this is not the church’s role. “That is the State’s role, not the church’s.”

Yet the church is occupying deliberative spaces within the State—what for? If this vision persists, that the church has no role, what are conservatives doing in the National Congress occupying these spaces if not to guarantee a dignified life for all, not just theirs? This is my perspective, from someone in diakonia, with hope that diakonia will be the path for dialogue between faith communities and civil society, and that Christian diakonia should be interdisciplinary. It must be interdisciplinary. That is why, in theology, it is the most interdisciplinary field I know. Diakonia cannot be done without psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, good pedagogy, gender discussions, especially masculinities.

Diakonia plays a fundamental role in this reflection. Diakonia is diverse because it is also precisely what patriarchy rejects: care. Care is not for men. The very origin of diakonia—frankly, in Greek society, serving the table was not done by free men. Free men did not serve; enslaved men and women served. Therefore, diakonia is directly connected to reflection on healthy masculinities.

(Rogerio Aguiar)



— Proposition 63

By the power of the Ruach

The collective construction of women's empowerment.

“I will pour out my Spirit” (Joel 2:28)



Collective empowerment. The Spirit animates collective processes of empowerment, justice, and transformation led by women.

Input: Women's faith networks.

Axis: Empowerment.

Empowerment is relational and transversal, interdisciplinary and structural. It is built among people and within context, considering traditions, worldviews, needs, possibilities, life trajectories, and projects. Empowerment is a collective, affirmative, and particular social intervention that enables a consensual, dialectical process through a device—ideological, symbolic, theological, spiritual, economic, material, cultural, artistic, etc.—affecting a person, family, neighbourhood or faith community, or a collective artistic or union project, with liberating, transformative, and social-change intentions. Empowerment as social intervention supports and strengthens conditions necessary to address tensions, group belonging, and collective processes.

As an intervention device, empowerment works on people's bodies, subjectivities, emotions, and most significant motivations. Empowering a woman to strengthen her struggle for a life free of violence involves her body and desires, history, networks, projects, material and spiritual needs, relationships, and opportunities. Empowerment is grounded in a basic ethical-political principle of human solidarity among peers.




In the Old Testament, the Deuteronomist tradition often uses a plural word referring to men and women equally, implying a deep anthropological and spiritual understanding. The word used (anesh) means “weak,” assuming both are equally vulnerable (Dt 31:12; Neh 8:23; Jc 16:27, anashim). This theological tradition may refer to shared slavery in exile, where men and women experience the same oppression under foreign domination. God recreates these people through liberation, giving both full autonomy to live within the covenant as God’s counterparts. This anthropological understanding of men and women forms a new gender expression where both are recognised as vulnerable and share humanity (Adam). In creation theology, both are equal, created as one species, one human being, by the same God, at the same time.

Theological empowerment aims to strengthen trust in God’s connection with all relational fields of a person—family, community, collective collaborators. Protestant theology operates from an understanding of God freely and equally relating to all. Empowerment affirms human dignity and legitimises struggles within ongoing social transformation. It gives gender equality struggles a socially transcendent value in history. Christian faith draws on various spiritual memories—conversion, incarnation, resurrection, Reformation, justification by faith, among others—to stage this intervention.





An Anthropological Reflection from the Cultural Diversity Perspective of the University of Antioquia, Colombia



In the indigenous culture, Jagiyyi in the ‘maniki’ tradition means “breath of life.” This life breath is universal—the vital force common to all species. Living beings recognise their dependence on others for survival. In some Afro cultures, a person is defined as person–territory, unable to be understood independently of the environment.

In Southern Africa, Ubuntu reflects collective self understanding, recognizing that existence cannot be understood apart from others. Existence cannot be reasoned or scientifically deduced. Mutual co-responsibility for life together is a spiritual practice.

(Selnich Vivas Hurtado)



— **Proposition 64**

What belongs to everyone benefits everyone

*The inclusive and solidarity-based paradigm of
an egalitarian economy.*

“So that there may be equality” (2 Corinthians 8:14)

Economy of life. An economy rooted in solidarity, inclusion, and justice reflects God’s vision of abundant life for all.

Input: Solidarity economy networks.

Axis: Economic justice

Economic empowerment must be understood within new paradigms. The emergence of women on corporate executive boards sparks debates about the nature of this social change. The progressive participation of women in decision-making spaces in the productive sector represents a significant achievement. International indicators show progress. The debate also revolves around the development model in which these productive gains are embedded, and, in this case, the real degrees of autonomy in decision-making. Some feminist perspectives understand this struggle as a political, economic, and cultural project that radically transforms life management on the planet.

A woman holding an executive position in a company with historical paradigms is socially validated, affirming the struggle against inequality. However, if these leaders continue to operate within extractive, polluting, destabilizing, and unequal management models without questioning exploitation, distribution, or similar issues, this conflicts with feminist currents committed to an inclusive environmental paradigm, which requires a model change to see such positions of power as a feminist claim.

A model based on community solidarity economy values and prioritises life sustainability, food and education, care, and protection. This economy is not measured by capitalist logic. (Luzmila Quezada)

Women's empowerment aims to transform power relations between women and men, cisgender and diverse gender identity individuals, altering the subordinate relationship of women and gender-diverse people through collective action that recalls historical struggles and denounces ongoing discrimination in defence of sexual diversity. This struggle is ethical and religious, but also social and political. Transformations framed as demands require the enactment of laws implemented within a rule-of-law state, necessitating political participation. Clear and reliable information, inter-block agreements, legislative representation, and public visibility support the advancement of rights. Interdisciplinary teams for public policy formulation ensure more precise laws aligned with needs and greater plurality in consensus-building.

Coordinated work among social movements empowers the fight for gender justice. Integrating this struggle into theology, liturgy, celebrations, language, and faith symbols facilitates understanding, prayer, and celebration of collective struggles and achievements. Faith communities are agents of transformation, rebuilding women's self-esteem and reducing the impact of patriarchal theologies resistant to progress in rights.

God desired to share human life fully in the flesh of a human being. God encounters humans in Jesus Christ, who reveals God as one who seeks to free people from slavery, release them from the bonds of a fallen world, empower the poor and oppressed, and invite everyone to live in freedom as God's children. This is the experience of a God who listens and descends to liberate the people who cry out for help (Ex 2:24; 3:7). (Elaine Neuenfeldt)





A Diaconal Testimony from Work with Women in the Fair Trade and Solidarity Network, supported by the Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia:

“I’ll tell you like this: they are demanding and argumentative. The moment you manage to empower yourself, you empower others. You see it in their eyes. Sometimes, at a fair, nothing sells, but it’s at that fair that she will tell everyone that she suffers violence. From a corner, she might say, ‘I don’t know how to do anything, I am completely dependent,’ for example. We’re talking about women in particular. ‘I am completely dependent on my husband; I don’t know how to do anything, but I can’t live like this anymore.’ ‘No, let’s take a course on solidarity economy; we’ll teach you.’ ‘What do you like to do?’ ‘I like to talk.’ ‘Then we’ll help you with marketing, sales, and we’ll make a Fuxico this afternoon.’ And somehow, you can too, because sometimes you suffer violence and don’t realise it, and the space gives you this opening. I speak a lot at the fair or any solidarity economy event; it’s much more than marketing.

Sometimes you hear that a person was alone, and there they feel good, and that’s when they might have thought about ending their life, but they say: ‘No, it was in the solidarity economy where I found a reason to live because I talked with others and saw that what I feel is not worthless.’ Or we say, look, we need universities, for example. We’ve even asked universities to have a conversation with a psychologist, you know? Look, during this pandemic, the network has helped us express our feelings outward because we couldn’t continue our normal activities and just observe. One of them, from Rio Grande do Sul, talks to someone from Paraná; they met here at the fair, haven’t seen each other yet, but they talk as if they were neighbours. That’s the beauty of the solidarity economy. We meet, look into each other’s eyes, and start talking as if we’ve known each other all our lives, opening many things for reflection. It’s about generating income. Yes, but it’s much more than that. That’s what I mean by strengthening as well, because you try to be capable of telling it to the person herself.”

(Rosángela Díaz)



EPILOGUE


A review of these various topics proposed by ACT's Gender Community of Practice in Abya Yala, aimed at examining the ongoing debates about gender, reveals theological practices that are in tension with the message of the gospel, with new discoveries, and with new pastoral practices. These elements, despite the challenges they pose, are also a source of great hope because they are under discussion, being addressed, and continue to open possibilities for change.

The problems and tensions arising from experiences with faith communities highlight elements of a patriarchal (androcentric and anthropocentric), binary (absolute and normative), and colonial (civilizing and dominant) theology. This theology, inherited by churches in Latin America and the Caribbean, has renamed Abya Yala and made indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities invisible, along with the diversity of their cultures and spiritualities.

Transformative experiences and dissident theologies have begun to open new paths. We need to ask ourselves seriously: why, in capitalist societies so attuned to freedom, do collective, solidarity-based, and committed theologies fail to flourish? Why are these theologies so often resisted within the very faith communities that are part of these modern societies? Each person, as both a citizen and a person of faith, navigates different spaces and shares different logics, clearly without their worldviews and cosmologies necessarily being correlational or coherent. What aspects lead us to accept some inequalities more naturally than others?


Perhaps the situations that challenge us most deeply are those in which we coexist with experiences of extreme inequality. Why do religiously verticality, disciplinarian, and exclusionary proposals gain so much acceptance in capitalist societies that are supposedly aligned with respect for personal choice? This



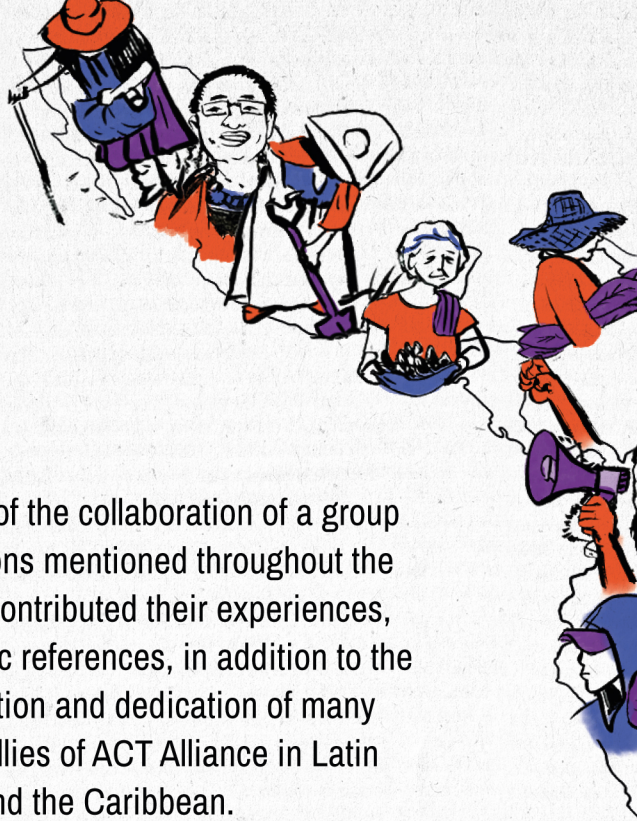


function of religion as a guide in personal life is often associated with a patriarchal paradigm that prevents us from imagining plural spiritual scenarios and community growth in diversity.

The development of communication and the organization of so many cultural spaces have made our Abya Yala a vast artistic composition full of colours, flavours, and sensations. This diversity often seems perceived as dissonant, disruptive, and even threatening. Why, in capitalist societies that claim to value plurality, are ancestral, ecological, and intercultural theologies so resisted? Faith communities themselves—Christian, in Abya Yala, and integrated into different American civilizational projects—feel called by this pluri-versity to examine and seek, within their own worldviews and traditions, the foundations of a shared life based on equality and communion among people and the environment.



May the Spirit of God be our guide in these reflections and in these much-needed dialogues across our continent.



This work is the result of the collaboration of a group of people and institutions mentioned throughout the document, who have contributed their experiences, knowledge, bibliographic references, in addition to the management, facilitation and dedication of many others, members or allies of ACT Alliance in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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