

FACTOR MASCULINO **entre el mercado y la espiritualidad**

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Cada persona puede indignarse cuando el cuerpo tanto el femenino como el masculino es objeto de marketing. Mayormente ha habido una cosificación de la imagen de la mujer; pero ahora el mercado también estereotipa y degrada rasgos masculinos. En el mundo de hoy la corporeidad y el mismo ser humano se vende y se compra; cualquier realidad es considerada mercancía. Esto ocurre al interior de centros laborales y educativos, en la publicidad y los medios de comunicación, en el deporte y en festivales, en actividades con carátulas religiosas. También es indignante que sean comercializadas las espiritualidades del pueblo. La mercancía androcéntrica abunda en los espacios públicos y privados en América Latina. También hay que lamentar la adicción a la violencia masculina con sus aspectos simbólicos.

Junto a la indignación también cabe la resistencia, la acción responsable, y el compartir la espiritualidad liberadora. Existen pequeñas y potentes voces e instituciones con una praxis masculina de carácter humanizador. Esto se hace presente en acontecimientos intercontinentales, como por ejemplo el Foro Mundial de Teología y Liberación (FMTL) y el Foro Social Mundial (FSM, World Social Forum). En cuanto al género, a muchos varones nos incomoda el androcentrismo y apostamos a formas alternativas. Además, en el terreno creyente se afianzan dinámicas interreligiosas y se desentrañan símbolos de “otras” vivencias de Dios. Su

Presencia no puede ser reducida a un tipo de cristianismo occidental, ni tampoco está encadenada a una religiosidad con sello patriarcal.

Nuestras espaldas cargan la vieja problemática cristiana de separar cuerpo y alma, como si fueran dos entidades; durante siglos se ha recalado que el cuerpo perece, y el alma es inmortal. Esta concepción dualista obstaculiza la comprensión del mensaje de la encarnación y de la resurrección de la carne. Mucha gente ha sufrido el trauma de sentir su cuerpo como “ocasión de pecado” y como obstáculo para la salvación. A pesar de ello, el pueblo -con su sabiduría espiritual- aprecia la relacionalidad encarnada y ve signos del encuentro humano-divino. En esta ponencia se consideran aspectos de la temática del género y en especial de la masculinidad (1).

Opino que en la actualidad la problemática mayor es la hegemonía de la mercancía, con la cual es medida la condición humana y el ser masculino y el ser femenino. Esa violencia simbólica afecta lo económico, lo cultural, y lo más íntimo de la condición humana. Esto tiene mayor impacto en el imaginario y en la existencia concreta de mayorías empobrecidas. Por otra parte es importantísima la sensibilidad y el debate sobre paradigmas. Aquí es fundamental la reconfiguración de la espiritualidad masculina.

1) Lectura de cuestiones de género.

Muchos lenguajes son unilaterales y esencialistas. Lo masculino y lo femenino suelen ser tratados de modo a-histórico y sin tomar en cuenta contextos y procesos. Por ejemplo, se dice que el cuerpo refleja al alma, se dice que lo individual equivale a lo personal, y que cada ser humano es independiente del entorno. En América Latina se suelen asimilar de modo acrítico los conocimientos que provienen del mundo desarrollado; y nos cuesta

sopesar quiénes y cómo somos y entender al diferente en nuestros procesos históricos. Conviene ser autocríticos en cualquier ensayo de interpretación (2).

En el terreno biológico, la corporeidad suele ser entendida con sus características físicas y en especial con la expresión genital. En el caso del cuerpo masculino, éste es evaluado por su mayor o menor fuerza e inteligencia y por el comportamiento genital que se apropia del prójimo. Para sobrepasar esas lecturas unilaterales hay que redescubrir el significado del poder relacional, de la sexualidad, de la reciprocidad masculina-femenina. También hay que reconectarse afectivamente con lo que es diferente sin dominarlo, y apreciar lo biológico a lo largo del ciclo vital con su potencialidad y sus limitaciones.

En nuestro continente pluricultural, las actuales lecturas simbólicas se nutren de ricas herencias mestizas, afro americanas, indígenas. En cada espacio es reconfigurado el sentido de vivir. Por ejemplo, la actual vivencia andina correlaciona a varón y mujer dentro del cuerpo de la madre-tierra; pero no sólo eso; también logra relativizar pautas del occidente mercantilizado.

La condición masculina no es una esencia uniforme y abstracta; ella se manifiesta de modos particulares en la modernidad y la posmodernidad. Una cuestión crucial es el capital simbólico. Pierre Bourdieu ha explicado que en “las relaciones de producción y reproducción del capital simbólico” la mujer es objeto cuya función es “el aumento del capital simbólico detentado por los hombres” (3). Esto hoy tiene sus matices diferentes a lo que ocurrió en épocas pasadas. ¿Cómo hoy es deshumanizada no sólo la mujer-objeto sino también el hombre como sujeto omnipotente? Al sopesar la temática del capital simbólico con su carácter androcéntrico, nos damos cuenta de facetas del neomachismo en América Latina.

En la identidad masculina no sólo hay rasgos de género; hay aspectos biológicos, políticos, económico-culturales, simbólicos. En este sentido se han ido desarrollando lecturas históricas. En nuestros contextos priorizamos la lectura de historias del pobre, de generaciones jóvenes y adultas con sus propios itinerarios, de mujeres y de varones discriminados (4). En Argentina, Gabriela Rotondi anota “la precaria situación laboral y la desprotección vivida por los hombres del sector urbano marginal”, que deriva hacia precarias relaciones sociales y el deterioro de la ciudadanía. En el contexto de varones de sectores medios, Norma Fuller subraya la identidad escindida entre la reciprocidad doméstica, por un lado, y el discurso de la prioridad pública masculina, por otro lado.

Con respecto a lecturas teológicas en América Latina y otras latitudes, ya se cuenta con una gama de escritos sobre género y masculinidad. A los pasos dados por la reflexión bíblica y la reflexión sistemática se están sumando las perspectivas feministas, étnico-culturales, ecológicas. Al respecto sobresalen Rubem Alves, Leonardo Boff, Marcio Fabri Dos Anjos, Ivone Gebara, Benedicto Ferraro, Wanda Deifelt, André Musskopf, Adilson Schultz, Victor Hugo Lapenta, Dolores Aleixandre, Carmen Bernabé, Isabel Gomez Acedo, Juan Jose Tamayo, Andres Torres Q., Francisco Reyes Archila (5). Cabe continuar releendo la riquísima tradición cristiana y con coraje afianzar la teología inculturada en nuestras corporeidades y espiritualidades. Resulta irrelevante y anacrónico un discurso mono-cultural sobre “el” ser masculino. Lamentablemente en nuestros ambientes cristianos abunda el pensamiento monocultural. En cuanto a la fe del pueblo, las identidades tanto masculinas como femeninas conllevan relatos de malestar y de bienestar que tienen sentido en el acontecimiento de Cristo Salvador.

Dada la primacía que tiene lo económico-cultural en el mundo contemporáneo, es necesario ver como el mercado afecta lo masculino y lo femenino. No cabe duda que el género es una cuestión no sólo cultural. Conviene pues conjugar las lecturas desde lo económico y político, lo biológico y cultural, lo teológico y lo psicológico. No hay que permitir que esta temática polifacética termine siendo adueñada por una o dos corrientes de pensamiento. Para quienes nos movemos en la reflexión teológica ya no es posible ignorarla ni anotarla de manera accidental. La cuestión del género, con sus dimensiones afectivas, económicas, políticas, espirituales, simbólicas, toca e interpela la labor teológica. Al asumir lo masculino cada persona puede desarrollar mejor la sensibilidad, la reflexión y la acción como creyente.

2) Dicotomías y reciprocidades.

El sentido común está carcomido por dicotomías que obstaculizan el deseo de humanización. La distinción entre elementos diferentes es siempre necesaria y válida. Lo problemático en el dualismo es negar al otro, y hacerlo con un esquema esencialista (bueno/malo, etc.). Todo es visto como sagrado o profano, racional o emocional, natural o cultural, material o espiritual, cuerpo o alma, objeto o sujeto.

Con respecto a lo masculino se lo suele ver como algo esencial y opuesto a lo femenino (y viceversa). También es muy problemático que el cuerpo sea reducido a mero instrumento del espíritu, a un objeto empleado por la mente. Cuando se toma conciencia que todo eso deshumaniza entonces es posible desarrollar una visión alternativa a dichas dicotomías. Es una visión holística de correlaciones (que obviamente no cae en el monismo). Se

reconocen diferencias y también se desentraña intersecciones e interacciones en toda la realidad.

Desde sus inicios la teología latinoamericana impugnó el dualismo entre el acontecer humano y la historia de salvación (6). Como ya se ha anotado, eso no implica amalgamar todo y negar diferencias. La fuente de Vida no ha sido producida por quienes somos receptores de la gracia de salvación; ni al Creador le confundimos con las criaturas. Dios esta presente en cada detalle de la creación y en la misteriosa interacción entre seres diferentes.

En términos humanos, el dualismo es superado cuando hay interacción equitativa, reciprocidad simétrica, que va orientada hacia la vida (7). En este sentido es reubicado lo masculino. Ya no es una postura de superioridad sobre el prójimo y sobre el medio ambiente. Tampoco lo masculino se autocancela en una fantasía uni-sex; ni es devaluado lo específico de ser varón.

En épocas pasadas era subrayada la superior capacidad masculina de pensar y de planificar la existencia; y esto se contraponía a la inferior condición de la mujer caracterizada por intuiciones y por emociones impredecibles. Hoy de manera encubierta y sutil se sigue privilegiando el comportamiento intelectual y ético del varón, en desmedro de la corporeidad y afectividad de la mujer. Me parece que tales esquemas afectan la labor eclesial; por ejemplo la actitud masculina de impartir contenidos doctrinales, y el calificar el éxito humano según parámetros androcéntricos.

Pues bien ¿en qué consiste el paradigma alternativo? Es una elaboración teórica -la perspectiva de la reciprocidad- y a la vez muy concreta. Existen muchas iniciativas humanas en que entidades diferentes colaboran; no compiten para eliminar al adversario. Esto ocurre en toda clase de actividades socio-culturales. Son iniciativas que pueden sintetizarse así: la reciprocidad al

cuidar la vida. Éste paradigma corresponde tanto a varones como a mujeres; y se manifiesta en una gama de culturas y de religiones.

Pues bien ¿qué sentido tiene eso en nuestra realidad de varones? En primer lugar, la irreversible convicción de que hay alternativas al dualismo deshumanizador. Esto conlleva cuestionar y trascender el parámetro androcéntrico. Bien sabemos que ese parámetro (presente en muchas culturas) ha sido sobredimensionado por la civilización nor-atlántica (que penetra en todas partes del mundo). ¿Con qué es reemplazado? A fin de cuentas se trata de afianzar modos de felicidad masculina en las comunidades humanas sin discriminar ni excluír. Esta calidad de vida masculina ha sido cultivada en las comunidades humanas a lo largo de la historia. La perspectiva de la reciprocidad permite al varón conectarse con otras personas sin dominar al diferente.

En otras palabras, la meta no es la auto-emancipación masculina, sino más bien fortalecer las identidades masculinas, a fin de responsablemente cuidar -junto a otras personas- el don de la vida. Esto conlleva apreciar las energías al interior de cada uno, los dinamismos del medio ambiente, y el estar en armonía con las fuerzas que humanizan. Hoy crece la convicción de cuidar la integridad de la creación y de cultivar sistemas simbólicos a favor de la vida. Por lo tanto, la interacción y la reciprocidad no permanecen en ámbitos antropocéntricos; más bien contribuyen a reconstituír la vida en todas sus dimensiones.

Según la doctrina paulina (vease Rom 8:22-23) la creación y la humanidad gimen con dolores de parto ya que esperan la salvación. Se lleva a cabo pues la reciprocidad cósmica. Somos comunidad en la casa común de la humanidad; vale decir, existe una eco-comunidad de diferentes pueblos en la Tierra. Por consiguiente, ser el Cuerpo de Dios incluye diversas culturas y

vivencias espirituales; es una corporeidad una y múltiple, donde hay una permanente interacción entre sus componentes.

Aquí deseo recalcar el cuidar un don. La responsabilidad masculina por la vida no es porque sea omnipotente; más bien se trata de compartir un don acogido y fecundado de modo recíproco. Vale decir existe un trasfondo trascendente. Dios es la fuente del vivir de modo recíproco y comunitario. Al respecto, tenemos presente el mensaje paulino sobre el Cuerpo de Cristo (1 Cor 12:12-30). La reciprocidad es radical: “Dios ha formado el cuerpo dando más honor a los miembros que carecían de él, para que no hubiera división alguna en el cuerpo, sino que todos los miembros se preocuparan lo mismo los unos de los otros. Si sufre un miembro, todos los demás sufren con él; si un miembro es honrado, todos los demás toman parte en su gozo” (12:25-26). La metáfora del cuerpo-miembros, como bien anota Irene Foulkes “trastoca las relaciones jerárquicas y las pretensiones de superioridad de parte de algunos miembros de la iglesia” (8). Se trata pues de una radical reciprocidad humana, en que lo débil es indispensable y lo más importante en el conjunto del cuerpo-comunidad de Dios.

André Musskopf anota que en Corinto eran exaltados los espirituales y que el cuerpo era devaluado; y en estas circunstancias Pablo desarrolla la metáfora del Cuerpo. El mensaje paulino puede hoy ser retomado ya que nuestra sociedad “hace del cuerpo un producto y un medio de producción, carente de sentido” (9). En nuestra sociedad lo corporal está terriblemente maltratado. Por eso, tanto el cuerpo biológico como su significado social merecen ser reivindicados. Esto implica impugnar el hedonismo en el mercado y los medios de comunicación. Ellos cosifican toda la realidad. La crítica al hedonismo proviene de una espiritualidad encarnada y a nuestro hastío ante la reducción de todo a ser objeto de consumo. Éste impugnar la mercantilización

de la existencia en el mundo de hoy va de la mano con afirmar la bella responsabilidad por la vida entre seres humanos diferentes.

3) Espiritualidad masculina.

Una constante apropiación masculina de cosas y personas no es algo accidental, ni debido a errores puntuales de tal o cual persona. La problemática de fondo es la civilización contemporánea: todo pasa a ser objeto de consumo individual y es tratado como mercancía. En estos contextos la actitud del varón suele ser una mistificación de objetos, incluyendo la propia corporeidad y la de los demás. Éstos y otros factores hacen que a los varones nos es bien difícil redescubrir una espiritualidad que humaniza.

En cuanto a la institucionalidad cristiana, se presupone que le corresponde al varón explicar a Dios y representarlo. En mi caso, por muchos años he elaborado temas teológicos desde un sujeto indiferenciado (sin explicitar que es un modo masculino de entender a Dios). Gracias a personas a quienes debo el inicio de un largo proceso de conversión he comenzado a ver lo sagrado anotando lo específicamente masculino, a interactuar con sabidurías femeninas sobre Dios, y también señalar la correlación entre las distintas lecturas.

La cuestión de la representación de Dios es aún más complicada. Al ser sacerdote uno (varón) es a menudo tratado como intermediario privilegiado y como signo de lo divino. Al respecto suelo hacer referencia al Evangelio. La vivencia del pobre -y más exactamente la interacción solidaria con cada persona postergada- constituye la mediación de la presencia de Jesucristo. “Tuve hambre y me has dado de comer...”, Mateo 25:35ss. Todo el Evangelio nos interpela. Lo hace a cada ser humano. En concreto al varón le plantea su

interacción con la fragilidad y carencia y capacidad del pobre; y puede precisarse: con la humanidad pobre que esta presente en uno mismo. Son desafíos fascinantes. La fragilidad y vulnerabilidad humana es mediación del encuentro con Dios.

Otra cuestión complicada es que lo masculino es calificado como instancia de poder, seguridad, certeza, y que la dimensión femenina es interpretada como receptora, sacrificada, emocional, impredecible. En este sentido uno como varón tiene que hacer esfuerzos especiales para integrar poder y fragilidad, conocimiento y sensibilidad, a fin de disfrutar de una espiritualidad holística. Junto a esta actitud de conversión uno aprecia el testimonio viviente de quienes conjugan fuerza con intimidad, audacia con receptividad, responsabilidad con gratuidad. Se trata de volver a descubrir el ser frágil-fuerte ante las demás personas y ante Dios. También el redescubrir el ser responsables por uno mismo y por otras personas, ser sólido y flexible, compasivo y consecuente con los principios, solidario y pragmático. Estas facetas tanto masculinas como femeninas se conjugan en la espiritualidad del varón que opta por la vida compartida.

Permítanme seguir añadiendo rasgos personales. Los años de convivencia con la población andina han marcado mi percepción del ser masculino. Como es bien sabido, la principal actividad ritual es la ofrenda de agradecimiento, a través de la “dulce misa” que es un banquete ritual con la Pachamama, y también mediante el breve rito de *ch'allar* (aspersión hecha por varón y mujer con un líquido -vino, cerveza, bebida de fantasía- en ofrenda a un ser sagrado). El ser espiritual masculino, en reciprocidad con el femenino, tiene pues un sello terrenal y cósmico. También esta enmarcado por la celebración andina, ya que todo el año tiene hitos festivos donde se desenvuelve el diferenciado-correlacionado liderazgo masculino y femenino.

No sólo quienes ejecutan las danzas y músicas autóctonas consolidan sus roles de género; también ello afecta a quienes las admiramos y asumimos de corazón. Con respecto al contacto con el misterio de Dios, la comunidad andina me acostumbró a llamarle *Tatitu* (= Padre íntimo) lo que hago hasta el día de hoy.

En un Taller con el tema de la corporeidad espiritual, responsables laicos en una diócesis andina me han agradecido la oportunidad de ahondar la vivencia de Dios en el acontecer humano en sintonía con la naturaleza. Cada persona ha escogido un árbol y explicitado allí -desde las raíces hasta las simpáticas hojas que danzan con el viento- su espiritualidad cristiana. También, al dialogar sobre las energías corporales se han reconocido señales divinas. Lamentablemente eso fue y sigue siendo bloqueado y censurado. Al laicado se le inculca asimilar y difundir “la” religión sin rasgos originarios y mestizos. Tienen que participar en ceremonias católicas que pueden incluir algún aspecto indígena, pero que radicalmente descalifican lo autóctono; tienen que poner entre paréntesis las creencias y ritos andinos. Por eso a quienes durante generaciones han creído en el Dios de la Vida -pero les han inculcado parámetros androcéntricos y monoculturales- hay que darles la oportunidad de volver a autogestionar su espiritualidad. Esto conlleva explicitar su fe en Jesucristo, y desenvolver las mediaciones culturales y religiosas a favor de la Vida.

En este sentido vale retomar la temática de constituir un cuerpo en Cristo, y retomar la radical hermandad eclesial. Es una de las hermosas herencias que nos dejó el apóstol Pablo. En Romanos y en 1 Corintios el vivir en Cristo, y la superación del patriarcado mediante la hermandad, son como sólidas cuerdas que animan y conducen hacia adelante el ser creyente (10). Durante estos años he acompañado a muchas personas que -¡sin discursos

pero sí en la cotidiana fidelidad a la vida!- han estado engendrando una nueva humanidad en Cristo. Constituyen el Cuerpo de Dios. Colaboran, en reciprocidad fraternal y sororal, a favor de la vida plena de toda criatura. No son sutiles ni burdos propietarios del prójimo, ni jefes, ni manipuladores del porvenir de los demás.

Se trata pues de una radical humanización espiritual. La condición de hijos e hijas de un buen Dios Padre es fuente de honda alegría y de comportamientos muy concretos. Uno va dejando atrás la superioridad pseudo masculina que se alimenta de la devaluación de lo femenino, y que también agrede a hombres considerados inferiores a uno. Al reconocerse a uno mismo y a los demás en la condición de reciprocidad de hermano/hermana en Cristo e hijo/hija de Dios, va creciendo la espiritualidad del Evangelio de la Vida.

Por lo tanto, el desafío de redescubrir la condición masculina en la historia humana conlleva una opción espiritual. Es una opción que impugna absolutos económico-culturales. Uno va renunciando al parámetro de la mercancía androcéntrica, que a uno mismo y a los demás reduce a objetos de consumo. También uno opta por vivencias de reciprocidad y de reconocer el amable vivir en y con Dios. A los varones nos es posible desenvolver un poder relacional, enriquecernos con la apertura a los demás, y asumir la propia fragilidad (11). Es fascinante desenvolverse “desde” la identidad masculina que asume la fragilidad que caracteriza a la condición humana de las mayorías. La vulnerabilidad genera verdadero poder. De este modo es replanteado lo masculino en América Latina. Empobrecida y azotada por el machismo, ella también es cada día y en incontables formas solidaria y festiva. Replantear lo masculino forma parte de la aventura de la reciprocidad espiritual.

Notas:

* Ponencia que he presentado en el Foro de Teología y Liberación (realizado al interior del FORO SOCIAL MUNDIAL) el 24/1/2009, en Belem do Para, Brasil.

1. Véase Mara Viveros, José Olavarría Norma Fuller, *Hombres e identidades de genero. Investigaciones desde América Latina*, Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2001; Rafael Montesinos, *Las rutas de la masculinidad*, Ensayos sobre el cambio cultural y el mundo moderno. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2002; Juan Carlos Callirgos, *Sobre heroes y batallas, Los caminos de la identidad masculina*, Lima: Escuela para el Desarrollo, 1998; Sonia Montecino, M.E. Acuña (comp.), *Dialogo sobre el genero masculino en Chile*, Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1996; María José Moreno, “Masculinidades en la cultura de la globalización”, en J. Olavarría (ed.), *Hombres, identidad/es y violencia*, Santiago: FLACSO, 2001, 37-54; Norma Fuller, “Reflexiones sobre el machismo en América Latina”, T. Valdés y J. Olavarría (eds.), *Masculinidades y equidad de género en América Latina*, Santiago: FLACSO, 1998, 258-267; Robert Connell, “El imperialismo y el cuerpo de los hombres”, *obra citada*, 76-89; Richard Parker, “Hacia una economía política del cuerpo: construcción de la masculinidad y la homosexualidad masculina en Brasil”, en *obra citada*, 106-129; J. Olavarría (ed.), *Hombres: identidad/es y violencia* José Olavarría y Enrique Moletto, *Hombres: Identidad/es y Sexualidad/es*, Santiago: FLACSO, 2002; José Olavarría (ed.), *Hombres, identidad/es y violencia*, Santiago: FLACSO, 2001; Darío García, “Escenarios, imaginarios y construcciones de los cuerpos”, en VV.AA., *Reflexiones en torno al feminismo y al género*, Bogotá: Universidad Javeriana, 2004, 199-210; Humberto Maturana y Gerda Verden-Zoller, *Amor y Juego. Fundamentos olvidados de lo humano*, Santiago: Instituto de Terapia Cognitiva, 1997; Arturo Rico Bovio, *Las fronteras del cuerpo. Crítica a la corporeidad*, México: J. Mortiz, 1990. Véase también en el terreno de la reflexión cristiana: Walter Boechat (org.), *O masculino em questao*, Petrópolis: Voces, 1997; Nancy Cardoso, “Sagrados cuerpos”, *Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana*, 38 (2001), 5-9; Lucía Riba, “Cuerpos de mujeres y violencia, Una lectura desde la Biblia”, en C. Schickendantz (ed.), *Religión, Genero y Sexualidad, Análisis Interdisciplinarios*, Córdoba: EDUCC, 2005, 155-174; Rosaura Barahona, “El varón visto desde los ojos de la mujer”, *Cuadernos de espiritualidad*, 171 (2008), 36-40.

2. Hace un tiempo he confrontado el significado del deber y las dificultades con el placer (Felicidad Masculina, una propuesta ética, Chucuito, 2002, 17-18, 26-27). En estos últimos años estoy subrayando lo humano hecho mercancía que conlleva negar al otro ser humano como alteridad que interpela, y también conlleva distanciarse del Otro trascendente. Asimismo subrayo la energía espiritual presente en la humanidad, en el cuidado del medio ambiente, y en mediaciones del encuentro con Dios.

3. Pierre Bourdieu y otros, *La masculinidad, aspectos sociales y culturales*, Quito: Abya Yala, 1998, 78. Bourdieu también hablaba de la “disimetría fundamental” del intercambio simbólico entre sujeto y objeto; una disimetría ratificada y ampliada por “el sistema mítico-ritual” (pg. 78).

4. Gabriela Rotondi, *Pobreza y masculinidad*, Buenos Aires: Espacio Editorial, 2000, 119; esta problemática es examinada más ampliamente por Norma Fuller, *Identidades masculinas, varones de clase media en el Perú*, Lima: PUC, 1997.

5. Lo masculino ha comenzado a explicitarse en la labor teológica; ver SOTER (org.), Genero e Teología, Paulinas/Loyola, 2003; VV.AA., *Teología y Genero*, Revista *Alternativas*, 10/26 (2004); VV.AA., *En la encrucijada del genero, Conversaciones entre Teología y Disciplinas*, Revista *Proyecto*, XVI/45 (2004); Leonardo Boff, “O masculino no horizonte do novo paradigma

civilizacional” (Pgs. 97-116) en su *A voz do Arco-iris*, Brasilia: Letra Viva, 2000; Rose Marie Muraro, Leonardo Boff, *Femenino e masculino*, Rio de Janeiro: Sextante, 2002; Ivone Gebara, *Teología Eco-feminista*, Sao Paulo: Olho d’Água, 1997; Antonieta Potente, *Un tejido de mil colores. Diferencias de genero, de cultura, de religión*, Montevideo: Doble Clic, 2001; Marcio Fabri dos Anjos, “Relacoes do poder entre homens e mulheres na vida religiosa”, en VV.AA., *Genero e poder na vida religiosa*, Sao Paulo: Loyola, 1999, 22-26; Victor H. Silvera Lamenta, *Masculino e femenino na vida religiosa*, Sao Paulo: Loyola, 2000; Dolores Aleixandre, “Mujeres y hombres en la Iglesia: en busca de una nueva relación”, *Boletín CLAR*, 34/1 (1996), 82-94; Andrés Torres Q., “Teología y genero en el cambio de paradigma”, en C. Bernabé (dir.), *Cambio de paradigma, género y eclesiología*, Estella: Verbo Divino, 1998, 73-86; Juan José Tamayo, *Teología, Pobreza y marginación*, Madrid: PPC, 1999, 81-114, y “Horizonte feminista” en su *Nuevo Paradigma teológico*, Madrid: Trotta, 2003, 85-110; A. Musskopf y A. Schultz en VV.AA., *A flor da pele*, Sao Leopoldo: EST, 2004, 139-168, 169-193; Francisco Reyes, *Otra masculinidad posible. Un acercamiento bíblico-teológico*, Bogotá: Dimensión Educativa, 2003; Varios Autores, *Reimaginando las masculinidades*, *Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana*, Quito: RECU, 2007.

6. Véase Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teología de la Liberación*, Lima: CEP, 1984, 90, 96: “las distinciones temporal-espiritual, sagrado-profano, tienen como fundamento la distinción natural-sobrenatural... (Por otra parte) la evolución teológica acentúa la unidad tendiente a eliminar todo dualismo... la vocación única a la salvación valoriza cristianamente -aunque de modo diferente al del pasado- toda la historia humana”.

7. Con respecto a la reciprocidad: Marshall Sahlins, *Cultura y razón práctica*, Barcelona: Gedisa, 1987; Jorge Alberti y Enrique Mayer (comp.), *Reciprocidad e intercambio en los Andes Peruanos*, Lima: IEP, 1974; Emilia Ferraro, *Reciprocidad, don y deuda*, Quito: Abya Yala, 2004; José Estermann, “Relacionalidad del todo” en su *Filosofía Andina*, La Paz: ISEAT, 2006, 123-150.

8. Irene Foulkes, *Problemas pastorales en Corinto*, San José: DEI, 1999, 348. Para el significado doctrinal véase Jurgen Becker, *Pablo el apóstol de los paganos*, Salamanca: Sigueme, 1996: “la Iglesia es cuerpo de Cristo porque el Espíritu, cuyo ser polifacético es visible en la comunidad, es el Espíritu de Cristo que mueve y transforma la comunidad” (pag. 508); y vease el innovador análisis de Aníbal Cañaverl “Engendrar una nueva masculinidad: aproximación desde Pablo”, *Revista de Interpretación bíblica latinoamericana*, 56 (2007), 137-152, que desentraña en las cartas del apóstol de los gentiles la combinación de masculinidad dominante con algunos rasgos alternativos.

9. A. Musskopf, *obra citada*, 143.

10. Véase Rm 1:13, 7:1,4, 8:12,29, 9:3, 11:25, 12:1, 14:10,13,15,21, 15:14,30, 16:1,14,15,17,23; y también 1 Cor 1:1,10-11,26, 2:1, 3:1, 4:6, 5:11, 6:5,6,8, 7:12,15,24,29, 8:11,13, 9:5, 10:1, 11:33, 12:1, 14:6,20,26,39, 15:1,6,31,50,58, 16:11,12,15,20.

11. Adilson Schultz (*obra citada*, 189) honestamente acota “el hombre (el varón) aprende a no hablar; es necesario no hablar a fin de ser hombre... hablar de uno mismo equivale a perder poder”. Cuesta decir lo que uno siente y aún cuesta más asumir la fragilidad fecunda.

MASCULINITY: market forces, and spiritual potentials.

Diego Irarrazaval

Each one of us may feel angry when bodies of women and of men become objects of marketing. Mostly the female image has been used in advertisement and in lustful commercials. The market also cleverly stereotypes masculinity. Contemporary society obtains material benefits from bodies of persons; it even sells spiritual devices and dreams. Anything and anyone is involved in marketing strategies. This happens in work, in education, in the media, in sports and festivals, and even in religious activities. *Machismo* and androcentric structures are widely established in Latin America's public and private spaces. Most regrettably spirituality is seen as a commodity. Even though most of us explicitly disagree with such manipulation, the fact is that our routine is full of violence and of symbols that cover it up.

That is part of our daily routine. Fortunately there also is malaise, groaning, and a search for alternatives. Androcentric evils are becoming like tiny stones within our shoes; patriarchal traps are being avoided. Men experience frustration with the roles of being omnipotent and of enforcing discrimination. Not only that. We also resist; and discover ways of being happy. This happens not in competitions where one wins, but rather in interactions with others. Tolerance with those who are different from oneself has become a key learning process. Today there are also more opportunities to share spirituality that leads to freedom. "When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free" (Gal 5:1). This biblical truth has become part of one's longing for wholeness.

Fragile and strong voices of persons and institutions are in favor of males and females being fully human. This is experienced in intercontinental networks; for example dialogue, celebration, and strategizing that is taking place during this III Theology and Liberation World Forum, and in this World Social Forum (*). Throughout our continent there is a growing critique to hegemonic forms of maleness. The paradigm of being a *macho*, an autonomous and authoritarian image, harms most men. Fortunately, alternative ways of understanding masculinity are being discussed. Alternatives do exist: reason and

emotions go hand in hand; there are more desires to connect with one's inner being and with others. Furthermore, in the religious arena there are interreligious activities and symbolic resources about "other" experiences of God. A loving and unconditional Presence may not be reduced to types of western Christendom and its imbedded patriarchy.

One of the major burdens that Christian education has placed on people's shoulders has been to segregate body from soul, as if they were two entities. During centuries it has been repeatedly said that bodies perish and souls are immortal. This dualism hinders an understanding of Christian incarnation and also hinders faith in the resurrection of the flesh. Some people have been traumatized by feeling their body as a "sinful instrument" and even as an obstacle to salvation. However, lay people's wisdom allows many of them to see their bodies as sacraments and to admire the divine Mystery becoming human. The *sensus fidelium* acknowledges signs of human-divine relationships.

Taking into account these circumstances, may I share with you insights and research on masculinity (1). In my opinion, the deeper contemporary issue is how economic-cultural forces (that tend to transform everything into commodity) distort expectations and experiences of men and women. Secular forms of Idolatry (and its violent dimension) tarnish the human heart. These forces shape the imagination and existence of the majority of people. It is important to register these explicit and subtle realities, and to discuss alternatives. In the midst of contemporary male idols, it is crucial to strengthen a masculine spirituality that allows us to be led by the Spirit of Life.

2) Ways of understanding gender.

Often language becomes one dimensional and attempts to describe an essence. Male and female identity is often dealt with as if each one were an essence, apart from history, and forgetting contexts and processes. For example, it is said that one's body reflects what happens in the soul; that the individual is a synonym for person; that human beings are segregated from the environment. Latinamericans, in an uncritical way, tend to swallow information and knowledge that comes from the so-called developed societies. It has become difficult to look at our own types of knowledge about gender, understand who we

are and what has happened in the course of history. It is important to be self-critical in any exercise of interpretation (2).

As regards biological dimensions, the body usually is seen in terms of physical characteristics and of genital expertise. In the case of maleness, many understand it according to strength, external physical qualities, rationality. A common male genital behaviour is to presuppose ownership over other persons. In order to avoid these unhealthy interpretations of the human condition, it is necessary to reclaim latinamerican traditions about power within relationships, about sexuality as celebration of shared lives, about reciprocity and non violence towards other persons, and about masculine-feminine interaction in a common project. It has also been important to have emotional links with what is different from oneself (without suppressing the other), and also to appreciate biological cycles with their potentials and limitations.

Our continent has many cultural colours and rhythms, and it has several kinds of *mestizajes* and of intercultural encounters. Interpretations about male and female factors are nourished by our traditional resources: persons with a European heritage, *mestizos*, Afro-americans, autochthonous population, and other ways of seeing the world. Each group of persons reconstructs the meaning of life. For example, Andean people's perceptions of the world acknowledge relationships of men and women with the body of mother-earth, and also reinterpret economic and cultural Western patterns (when these are subordinated to the Andean holistic world view).

Therefore, masculinity is not a uniform and abstract essence. It has particular and plural expressions, within modern and post-modern scenarios. A common denominator is to give priority to material and technological progress and its symbolism. Pierre Bourdieu has written that in "the relationship of production and reproduction of symbols of capitalism", women are objects who have the role of increasing "symbolic capital held by men" (3). This happened not only in past ages; it continues to take place in new forms. Together with the vision that woman are objects, men see ourselves as powerful and now also tolerant subjects. Constraint is placed on unacceptable forms of *machismo*. Some experts speak of latinamerican *neo-machismo*; since we develop clever strategies of manipulation over women and violence against other men (those seen as having less status).

As it is well known, masculinity has rich dimensions that influence each other: biological, sexual, political, economic, cultural, symbolic, spiritual dimensions. A growing concern is that we need interdisciplinary interpretations, and thus a more historical understanding of gender together with other dimensions of being human. One of our priorities is to read history from the point of view of the poor, of the young and of adults, as well as of discriminated women and men (4). In Argentina, Gabriela Rotondi notes “unstable employment and working conditions, and lack of protection experienced by men belonging to marginal urban areas”, and all of this implies poor social relationships and a lack of citizenship. In the case of middle class men, Norma Fuller emphasizes the identity split between domestic reciprocity, on one side, and language about masculine public roles, on the other side.

Throughout Latin America there are plenty of social scientific resources, and now also some creative events, pastoral workshops, and theological writings on gender and masculinity. The starting point has been women and a few men (in our continent and also in Spain) who developed insights in biblical studies and in systematics. Later significant work has been done by persons who dialogue with history, feminism, ecology, anthropology. The more outstanding inputs are those of Ivone Gebara, Elsa Tamez, Maria Clara Bingemer, Rubem Alves, Leonardo Boff, Marcio Fabri dos Anjos, Benedicto Ferraro, Wanda Deifelt, André Musskopf, Adilson Schultz, Victor Hugo Lapenta, Dolores Aleixandre, Carmen Bernabé, Isabel Gomez Acedo, Juan Jose Tamayo, Andres Torres Q., Francisco Reyes Archila, Aníbal Cañaverl (5). A mono-cultural and mono-theological discourse about “the” masculine essence becomes irrelevant and without foundations. Nevertheless, one has to confess that essentialist and a-historical discourse predominates among many Christians. Hopefully our evangelical tradition will continue to be re-examined, with a gender perspective, so that bodies and spiritualities may be understood with the eyes of the spirit of Christ.

This has been happening in people’s forms of religion and spirituality. Without falling into populism, one has to underline what happens throughout common person’s mystique and wisdom. Male and female discourse does not have to fall into an essentialist trap. Rather, we are challenged by fellowship and communion with the crucified and risen Lord. Instead of fatalistic tolerance of injustice and evil, common people demand a

transformation of their crucified existence and celebrate life in their rituals and their ethical responsibilities. Evil is resisted. Well being is affirmed. Each one of these realities is seen with the eyes of God whose grace saves humanity. Suffering on one part, and happiness on another part, do make sense in terms of Christ. His Incarnation (in Christmas and Epiphany rituals) and his Death and Resurrection (in Holy Week services) are where most people experience and understand the mystery of salvation. In these experiences God is acknowledged as vulnerable and compassionate, and not in terms of an omnipotent, sacred masculinity.

However, let us not forget that any religion (and also our Christian tradition) is deeply defiled by economic and cultural idols. Market forces have great impact on masculinity and also on feminine factors. A gender perspective deals not only with cultural values and behaviour; we also have in mind the biological, political, theological, psychological, economic aspects. It is thus necessary to have an interdisciplinary understanding of gender, since social and religious dimensions may not be explained using only one kind of knowledge. Persons doing theological research and teaching have to be engaged in dialogue with scientists and with interdisciplinary work.

In a few words, theological insights into the human condition include a gender perspective. This implies a study of ordinary people's wisdom, economic and political analysis, spiritual and symbolic discernment. By a critical examination of masculinity, and by a shared enjoyment of life as men and as women, humanity may better develop its sensibility, rationality, and spiritual potentials.

3) Dicotomies and reciprocity.

Common sense is often corroded by dicotomies that make it very difficult to live faith in its wholeness. Here I am not speaking of differences nor of conflicts, where one needs to discern what is positive and what is negative. The key problem is rather a dualistic metaphysics, and its implications in daily behaviour. It implies non-acceptance of the other as other, and a naïve and essentialist concept of good or bad, sacred or profane, material or spiritual, body or soul, object or subject, virtue or vice, rational or emotional, and so on.

Concerning maleness, it has been stereotyped as essentially opposed to anything labelled as feminine (and the latter is imagined in contradiction with the former). The masculine is carried out as one's duty to control lives of other persons, and to think and plan for the sake of others (since they do it inadequately). The male body is restricted to physical and rational superiority, and is seen as instrument of the spirit, and as object used by the mind. If these concepts are seen as obstacles to being human, then it is possible to develop a vision that differs from such dichotomies. If we have a holistic vision, events and persons are understood in terms of correlations. This does not lead to monism. Rather we are able to recognize necessary differences and to engage in interactions with other parts of reality.

Since its early phase, Latin American theology confronted dualism between human events and the history of salvation (6). This does imply that we confuse different dimensions in reality. In terms of faith, the Source of being alive is not due to ourselves since we are recipients of grace. The Creator is not in the same level as his creatures. Rather, the Divine Spirit is present in every aspect of creation and in the mysterious interaction between different beings.

In human terms, dualism may be overcome when interactions are equitable, when reciprocity is symmetrical; thus they lead towards life (7). This perspective includes a good understanding of masculinity (that is not in opposition to, nor superior to, the feminine). Thus we avoid the vicious superiority over other individuals or over the environment. Identity and behaviour are not a "unisexual" phantasy; nor do we erase the specific meaning of being sexually male and being masculine in gender.

Unfortunately in the past and also today men have been trained to feel superior in rational, economic, and physical activities, and have been trained to control emotions and even to suppress them. Men are evaluated according to their ideas, work, autonomy, leadership on behalf of others. This has been in opposition to women whose characteristics are: need to be protected, unpredictable behaviour, chaotic emotions. Moreover, an arbitrary division of tasks has been established: men are in charge of political institutions, science, legal systems, while women take care of children and home, are less capable of dealing with public realities, and have less intelligence. These patterns and prejudices have an impact on church responsibilities and symbols. For example, Christian doctrine is

handed over through masculine guidelines (image of a law enforcing, omnipotent God, absolute truth, etc.) and spirituality is seen in terms accomplishing goals, and of success in this world that implicitly has an androcentric content.

Are there alternatives? Yes. In many ways people throughout latinamerican history have built relationships of partnership (and not of unjust subordination). There are theoretical constructions -in terms of reciprocity and of genuine masculine inputs into human well being-. On another part there are day to day forms of gender collaboration, and of masculine identity that is life-giving. In moments of work and of family interactions there often is cooperation rather than an effort to win so that others loose. This occurs in many social and cultural activities. These experiences may be summarized in terms of reciprocity, of taking care of life, and not discriminating women nor men. Thus, we have a positive gender paradigm, meaningful for both males and females, which is a model within different cultural and religious contexts.

This discourse about alternatives is attractive. Nevertheless, one has to be faithful to facts and to processes. Is such an alternative paradigm present in day to day masculine identity and praxis? Moreover, does it really touch and transform faith experiences and theology? It is important to be honest about these issues. It is true that in some Christian communities and in theological discourse there are life-giving forms of masculinity. But the common denominator is not so positive.

So, any discourse about reciprocity has to have accountability. In the first place one feels deep inside, and also rationally, a conviction that dualism is dehumanizing, and that alternatives do exist. This implies a confrontation with androcentric and patriarchal patterns. These problems are due to internal and external forces, and here one has in mind North Atlantic civilizations that influence many southern regions of our planet. Can such patterns be gradually replaced? It has so happened, and in many ways it continues to take place! Latinamerican communities often do not discriminate nor exclude those who are different; migrant people are welcomed; masculine happiness is manifested. These positive characteristics have been developing along history. The paradigm of reciprocity allows men to relate well with other individuals and with the natural environment. One does not bow down before success nor before superiority at all costs.

It is convenient here to explain that the goal is not male self-emancipation; rather the goal is to strengthen masculine identities in order to take care of life as a gift, for the sake of ourselves and for happiness of other human beings who also respect the environment. This means that each person may be in harmony with energies inside the human condition, in the dynamics of the environment, and with humanizing forces in economics and in cultures. It is becoming more and more urgent, for the sake of human and cosmic survival, to take care of creation. We contribute to symbolic systems that are life-giving, and are not male-centered. Therefore, interaction and reciprocity are neither anthropocentric nor androcentric; rather they lead towards a recreation of existence in all its dimensions.

According to Paul's doctrine, creation and humanity "has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; not only creation but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free" (Rom 8:22-23). This may be translated into a language of cosmic rebirth and reciprocity, of communities that exist within the common house of mankind. In other words, different peoples and cultures may be seen as eco-communities walking on the Earth. Another key teaching of Paul, the apostle of gentiles, is that the body of Christ, God's body, includes Jews and gentiles, men and women, different cultures and spiritualities. The body of Christ is one, and it has a plurality of services and of gifts, for the well being of all its members (1 Corinthians, chapter 12).

Here it may be underlined that a faith-filled humanity is one that acknowledges gifts (charisms) and that gives priority to giving service to others. What about masculinity? Its responsibility is not control over nature, nor making other persons one's subordinates, nor omnipotence. Rather, genuine masculinity consists in sharing life as gift, and sharing reproductive responsibilities. These attitudes have a transcendental background. God is the source for being alive in reciprocity and in community.

If our starting point is Paul's message on the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-30), then the paradigm of reciprocity is absolutely radical. "God has arranged the body so that more dignity is given to the parts which are without it, and so that there may not be disagreements inside the body, but that each part may be equally concerned for all the others. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honour, all

parts enjoy it” (12:25-26). According to Irene Foulkes the metaphor of one body and interconnected parts “transforms hierarchal relationships and claims to superiority by some members of the church”. (8) In general terms, what is crucial is that God has established a radical human reciprocity, in which the weak are indispensable. What is most important is being body-community-of-God.

André Musskopf remarks that Corinthians praised the spiritual while scorning the body; under these circumstances, Paul develops the metaphor of body of the Lord. This biblical message has to be understood within the latinamerican context, since our societies “make of the body a product and a means of production, lacking any deeper meaning” (9). Economic-cultural structures treat badly bodies of people and even more badly bodies of the poor and of women. For this reason, the biological value of bodies and their social and spiritual meanings have to be reaffirmed. This moves us to a radical critique of hedonistic market relationships and also a confrontation with the media (that destroy human dignity). Persons and other entities are reduced to being objects and their dignity is trampled on. A critique of hedonism emerges from Christian moral standards, and is due to being faithful to God’s incarnation in the human condition.

It is most disgusting how things and persons are consumed and thrown away. A critique of commodification of existence does not mean a pessimistic attitude towards modernity. A good critique leads towards alternatives: we admire the beauty of each creature. The greatest challenge is to take care of the beauty of life, shared among people who are different and who discover the Creator’s call to joyful reciprocity.

3) Masculine spirituality.

Being faithful to the Spirit of Christ that sets us free is the foundation of our pilgrimage towards happiness. As I write this essay I plead the Spirit to lead all of us, listeners and speakers. “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you...” (Jn 16:13). May she lead us to a spiritual vision and praxis of genuine masculinity.

What happens in our context? There are more and more accents on spirituality. That is certainly good; but, does it confront the systematic masculine appropriation of things and persons? This is not happening by chance, nor is it due to mistakes by few people. The

basic problem lies within contemporary civilization; everything is seen as an object for individual consumption, and treated as merchandise. Moreover there is a masculine tendency to mystify objects, including one's body and others' as well. These and other factors make it most difficult for men to be authentically spiritual. As we all know spirituality is life-giving here and now, in an incarnated journey together with others.

When Christian institutions are examined, one common denominator is that males are the ones who give normative explanations about God, and who represent Him in a sacramental way. In my particular experience, for many years I wrote and taught theology speaking as if I were a universal believer (without allowing my listeners and readers to discuss a masculine point of view handed over to them, nor did I acknowledge social and gender understandings of God). I now feel ashamed about that.

That is not the whole picture, thank God! I thank persons and communities who led me into the option for the poor (in the 1960's), and later into cultural and gender perspectives (from the 80's onwards) during a lengthy process of conversion (¡that continues onwards as I head towards being 67 years old!). It is a gift to be able to understand sacred realities and God's revelation without claiming ownership over it. It is also a gift to acknowledge positive masculine patterns, to interact with feminine wisdom and knowledge about God, and to see correlations between different interpretations of the human journey in history. That has happened in the midst of common people's ways of being Christian; many persons have been leading me in those directions.

Let us now go into the heart of the matter. That God be represented by particular images and persons are theological/sacramental claims that merit discernment. Any specific gender image of the transcendent may become an idol; or it may be a means of having faith. It may also lead to misunderstandings. Why? The mystery of God is neither a he nor a she. However, the divine Presence is not up in the sky, it is rather present in human history and in creation. In terms of relationships, love of neighbour and solidarity with the poor are the main criteria for our encounter with Christ.

In terms of ministry, being a male catholic priest leads some to see me as privileged intermediary and symbol of the divine. When this happens I ask people to pay attention to the Gospel message about God and the poor. Conditions of marginalized people -and in a special way solidarity with whoever is hungry, unfree, sad, etc., is where the Son of God is

encountered. “I was hungry and you fed me...”, Mathew 25:35ss. The Gospel summons each of us to solidarity with the sick and hungry, with those who lack freedom, etc. This includes an evangelical demand that males interact with fragile realities, and that we affirm potentials of being alive. It is a matter of affirming our own vulnerability and mainly that of others; affirming also our own potentials and mostly that of others. Within each male there is vulnerability, and certainly there is also strength. Being vulnerable is a mediation to encounter God; acknowledging gifts of strength and potentials is also a major mediation.

A complex set of issue is that masculinity (including its spiritual characteristics) is interpreted as mainly a place of power, reason, autonomy, self-esteem, courage, certainty; while the feminine dimensions (including its spirituality) are interpreted as receptive, sacrificial, emotional, caring for others and not for oneself, fragile. As men we have to make special efforts to combine power and frailty, knowledge and sensibility, in order to develop a holistic spirituality. Women have their own difficulties and challenges.

One is thankful to other men who witness a combination of power and intimacy, courage and receptiveness, responsibility and gratuity. It seems to me that most of us need to rediscover -in relationships with other persons and with God-a better blending of compassion and power. Thus there is a flexible responsibility for oneself and for others, compassion and strong principles, pragmatism, solidarity, detachment. As we know such characteristics are found in men and in women, but we men are more challenged to blend them in order to develop an integrated spirituality.

Let me add some personal experiences. Years of sharing with Andean people (in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and elsewhere) had a deep impact on my perceptions of masculinity. In these places, together with modern ceremonies, an important ritual of thanksgiving is addressed to Mother Earth. There are several kinds of signs of gratitude for the everyday gift of being alive. Outstanding symbolic moments are to share food, to welcome a stranger, and the *ayta*, *wajt'a*, *dulce Misa/Mesa* (sweet celebrations) that are like a banquet offered to *Pachamama*. Often I participate in a brief ritual called *ch'alla* (aspersion and offering to a sacred entity, made by a man and a woman using a beverage that can be wine, beer or soft drink) that has a meaning similar to a Christian blessing.

The indigenous and *mestizo* masculine experience is deeply spiritual, and it can not be separated from the feminine experience. Both of them -together and each one having its

specificity- are earthly, cosmic, transcendental. Moreover they are characterized by the pleasure of celebration. As it is well known, magnificent Andean religious festivals that take place during the whole year have masculine and feminine leadership and symbols. These are different, but always related one to the other. Those who perform autochthonous dances and music carry out gender roles and qualities, as it also happens with people attending these ceremonies. As regards connections with the Other, thirty years ago native communities taught me to address God as *Taytacha* and *Tatitu* (= dear Father), which I do up till now.

During a workshop dealing with our spiritual-bodily condition, forty lay leaders of one Andean diocese have been most grateful to me for the chance to strengthen their encounter with God through human events and through interaction with nature. Each person chose a small plant or a tree, and there had a new spiritual insight. Being part of the body Christ was reimagined by touching roots, trunks, and leaves (which on that autumn day were dancing with the breeze). Another spiritual exercise was a dialogue on body energies; these have become signs of God's power (that comes not from up high but from down below). Unfortunately, this type of mystique (during centuries of colonial control, and now due to Christian rationalism) has been censured or devalued. Churchgoers are induced to adhere to "true" masculine religion, and to abandon one's feminine roots in creation (labelled natural religion) and intercultural/interreligious spirituality (labelled as syncretism).

At times Catholic ceremonies include some native aspects; but usually autochthonous rituals are disqualified. The result is that many persons do not feel free to publicly practice rituals that are dear to them. For this reason, native Latin Americans who during centuries have believed in the God of Life, during recent decades of church renewal have often suffered marginalization and misunderstanding. Some of them lower their heads and keep silent; others struggle for the acceptance of their own spiritual journey (so as not to be driven into androcentric and monocultural patterns). When the spirit of the Gospel becomes the norm, then common people, with all their wisdom and fabulous celebrations, are free to live out their faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is manifested through cultures and religions which benefit humankind.

The imagery of an earthly/spiritual body of Christ implies a radical renewal of human and of church structures, so that they allow and foster fraternity/sorority. This is one of the doctrinal heritage that Paul handed over to his listeners and through them to all of us. In communities in Rome and Corinth (10), and later throughout the world, Paul moves men and women to a new life in Christ. What does this imply for us today, here? It mainly calls us to conversion to the crucified and risen Lord present today in humanity. It summons us to ways of human interaction, and faithfulness to the Spirit who makes all new. It also means leaving behind patriarchal bondage (a major challenge to both men and women), a critique to a minor strand of feminism that opposes reciprocity, and a reconstruction of masculine and feminine spiritualities that encourage the journey of faith.

Throughout these years I am walking with urban and rural common people who -in spite of violence in all its forms, including androcentrism- do carry out lives in terms of reciprocity. No one may own another person, nor control other's future. I join their journey of giving birth to new forms of interaction where Jesus is experienced as the Lord of Life. We all have the feeling and conviction that humanity and creation are like the body of God. Reciprocity and of solidarity with the downtrodden (without superiority of one over the other) are signs of what is fundamental: participation in God's history of salvation.

Allow me to underline this basic experience. Masculine and feminine spirituality grows because of day to day reciprocity and being rooted in the Spirit of Life. Since we are sons and daughters of a merciful Father, there is joyful responsibility among us. As a man one abandons pseudo-masculine superiority, that looks down on anything seen as female. Such arrogance also damages men of a lower social status. We do strive to acknowledge oneself and others in terms of reciprocity, of spiritual brotherhood/sisterhood, being sons and daughters of a God who graciously transforms the human condition.

This conversation comes to an end. Masculinity is reconstructed in a Christian spiritual journey. This is not easy. Economic and cultural idols dehumanize us men, and turn us against other persons and against nature. So, one has to turn one's back to androcentric marketing (which makes us obsessive consumers of power gadgets and of what is different from oneself). The radical option is for reciprocity and for enjoyable existence within God. As men we are empowered by relationships, by being not self-

centered but rather vulnerable together with others, and by becoming stronger as we assume frailty and loose control over inequity (11).

Masculinity achieves genuine strength when it embraces human frailty (and specially when it embraces the marginalized). Being vulnerable allows men -in our Latin American contexts- to nurture power. *Machismo* and androcentric patterns can be replaced by institutionalized reciprocity. This happens in everyday forms of solidarity when persons are in need, in latinamerican festivals, in communities that share scarce goods but in a joyful manner, in social justice and peace initiatives, in silent contemplation of the body of God. Reconstruction of masculinity is one of several radical goals of a fascinating spiritual adventure.

Footnotes

* Input during a workshop on gender, III World Forum of Theology and Liberation, January 24, 2009, Belém do Pará, Brasil (within de WORLD SOCIAL FORUM). I apologize to English speaking persons for my limited use of their language.

1. These concerns require scientific resources. See: Mara Viveros, José Olavarría Norma Fuller, *Hombres e identidades de genero. Investigaciones desde América Latina*, Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2001; Marina Castañeda, *El machismo invisible*, Mejico: Grijalbo, 2002; Rafael Montesinos, *Las rutas de la masculinidad*, Ensayos sobre el cambio cultural y el mundo moderno. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2002; Juan Carlos Callirgos, *Sobre heroes y batallas, Los caminos de la identidad masculina*, Lima: Escuela para el Desarrollo, 1998; Sonia Montecino, M.E. Acuña (comp.), *Dialogo sobre el genero masculino en Chile*, Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1996; María José Moreno, “Masculinidades en la cultura de la globalización”, in J. Olavarria (ed.), *Hombres, identidad/es y violencia*, Santiago: FLACSO, 2001, 37-54; Norma Fuller, “Reflexiones sobre el machismo en América Latina”, en T. Valdés y J. Olavaria (eds.), *Masculinidades y equidad de género en América Latina*, Santiago: FLACSO, 1998, 258-267; José Olavaria y Enrique Moletto, *Hombres: Identidad/es y Sexualidad/es*, Santiago: FLACSO, 2002; José Olavarria (ed.), *Hombres, identidad/es y violencia*, Santiago: FLACSO, 2001; José Olavaria, *Hombres a la deriva? Poder, trabajo, sexo*, Santiago: FLACSO, 2001. On gender see: Marlene Strey (org.), *Genero e cultura, quesotes contemporaneas*, Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 2004; Darío García, “Escenarios,

imaginarios y construcciones de los cuerpos”, en VV.AA., *Reflexiones en torno al feminismo y al género*, Bogotá: Universidad Javeriana, 2004, 199-210; Humberto Maturana y Gerda Verden-Zoller, *Amor y Juego. Fundamentos olvidados de lo humano*, Santiago: Instituto de Terapia Cognitiva, 1997; John Moore, *Sexualidad y Espiritualidad*, Santiago: Cuatro Vientos, 1994; Arturo Rico Bovio, *Las fronteras del cuerpo. Crítica a la corporeidad*, México: J. Mortiz, 1990; Enrique Gomariz, Angela Meentzen (comp.), *Democracia de Genero*, San José: GESO, 2000; Nelly Richard, *Masculino/Femenino, practicas de la diferencia y cultura democrática*, Santiago: Zegers, 1993. See also: Ursula King (ed.), *Religion and Gender*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995; John Raines, *The Justice Men owe Women, Positive Resources from World Religions*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001; Max Oliva, *The Masculine Spirit*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1997; James Nelson, *The intimate connection, Male sexuality, masculine spirituality*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988; Martin Pable, *The Quest for the Male Soul*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1996; Theodore Cohen, *Men and Masculinity*, Toronto: Thompson, 2000; Daniel Welzer-Lang, *Des homes et du masculin*, Lyon: Presses Univ., 1992; Pierre Bourdieu, *La domination masculin*, Paris: Seuil, 2002; E. Badinter, *XY De l'identité masculin*, Paris: Jacob, 1992; Y. Dalloire, *Homme et fier de l'être*, Quebec: Option Santé, 2001.

2. In the past I focused on measuring one's existence as fulfilling duties, on one part, or as sharing genuine pleasure, on another part (see *Felicidad Masculina, una propuesta ética*, Chucuito, 2002, 17-18, 26-27). These anthropological dimensions are linked to economic dynamics; several authors (and in a special way Vincent Miller, *Consuming Religion*, New York: Continuum, 2005) helped me to see the commodification of modern cultures/religions. Lately I am underlining economic-cultural conditions that wrap up masculine stereotypes, and also what challenges us to look for alternatives. The latter implies healthy relationships with other persons, and also contact with the Other who lovingly embraces us. In other words: an emphasis on the spiritual realm present in human kind, concern about the environment, and encounter (in the midst of darkness) with the living God.

3. Pierre Bourdieu and others, *La masculinidad, aspectos sociales y culturales*, Quito: Abya Yala, 1998, 78. Bourdieu also mentions the lack of symmetry in the symbolic interchange between individuals and objects, a problem that is sustained by a “mythical-ritual system”.

4. Gabriela Rotondi, *Pobreza y masculinidad*, Buenos Aires: Espacio Editorial, 2000, 119. This issue is deeply examined by Norma Fuller, *Identidades masculinas, varones de clase media en el Perú*, Lima: PUC, 1997.

5. Masculinity is slowly becoming part of theological and pastoral reflections in Latin America. See SOTER (org.), *Genero e Teología*, Paulinas/Loyola, 2003; Luiza Tomita, “A teologia feminista no contexto de novos paradigmas”, *Teologia aberta ao futuro*, Sao Paulo: Loyola/SOTER, 1997, 143-154; Walter Boechat (org.), *O masculino em questao*, Petrópolis: Voces, 1997; Nancy Cardoso, “Sagrados cuerpos”, *Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana*, 38 (2001), 5-9; Journal *Alternativas*, 10/26 (2004); Leonardo Boff, “O masculino no horizonte do novo paradigma civilizacional”, *A voz do Arco-iris*, Brasilia: Letra Viva, 2000, 97-116; Rose Marie Muraro, Leonardo Boff, *Femenino e masculino*, Rio de Janeiro: Sextante, 2002; Ivone Gebara, *Teología Eco-feminista*, Sao Paulo: Olho d’Agua, 1997; Antonieta Potente, *Un tejido de mil colores. Diferencias de genero, de cultura, de religión*, Montevideo: Doble Clic, 2001; Marcio Fabri dos Anjos, “Relacoes do poder entre homens e mulheres na vida religiosa”, in *Genero e poder na vida religiosa*, Sao Paulo: Loyola, 1999, 22-26; Victor H. Silvera Lamenta, *Masculino e femenino na vida religiosa*, Sao Paulo: Loyola, 2000; Dolores Aleixandre, “Mujeres y hombres en la Iglesia: en busca de una nueva relación”, *Journal CLAR*, 34/1 (1996), 82-94; Andrés Torres Q., “Teología y genero en el cambio de paradigma”, in C. Bernabé (dir.), *Cambio de paradigma, género y eclesiología*, Estella: Verbo Divino, 1998, 73-86; Juan José Tamayo, *Teología, Pobreza y marginación*, Madrid: PPC, 1999, 81-114, y “Horizonte feminista” in his *Nuevo Paradigma teológico*, Madrid: Trotta, 2003, 85-110; A. Musskopf y A. Schultz en VV.AA., *A flor da pele*, Sao Leopoldo: EST, 2004, 139-168, 169-193; Francisco Reyes, *Otra masculinidad posible. Un acercamiento bíblico-teológico*, Bogotá: Dimensión Educativa, 2003; Several Authors, *Reimaginando las masculinidades*, *Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana*, Quito: RECU, 2007; Lucía Riba, “Cuerpos de mujeres y violencia, Una lectura desde la Biblia”, in C. Schickendantz (ed.), *Religión, Genero y Sexualidad, Análisis Interdisciplinarios*, Córdoba: EDUCC, 2005, 155-174; Rosaura Barahona, “El varón visto desde los ojos de la mujer”, *Cuadernos de espiritualidad*, 171 (2008), 36-40.

6. See Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teología de la Liberación*, Lima: CEP, 1984, 90, 96: “acentuación de la unidad tendiente a eliminar todo dualismo” because of “la vocación única a la salvación que valoriza cristianamente -aunque de modo diferente al del pasado- toda la historia humana” (that is:

theology today emphasizes unity that tends to eliminate all kinds of dualism, due to a common vocation to salvation that values human history).

7. Concerning the paradigm of reciprocity, see Marshall Sahlins, *Cultura y razón práctica*, Barcelona: Gedisa, 1987; Jorge Alberti y Enrique Mayer (comp.), *Reciprocidad e intercambio en los Andes Peruanos*, Lima: IEP, 1974; Emilia Ferraro, *Reciprocidad, don y deuda*, Quito: Abya Yala, 2004; José Estermann, “Relacionalidad del todo”, *Filosofía Andina*, La Paz: ISEAT, 2006, 123-150.

8. Irene Foulkes, *Problemas pastorales en Corinto*, San José: DEI, 1999, 348. Jurgen Becker, *Pablo el apóstol de los paganos*, Salamanca: Sigueme, 1996, 508: “la Iglesia es cuerpo de Cristo porque el Espíritu, cuyo ser polifacético es visible en la comunidad, es el Espíritu de Cristo que mueve y transforma la comunidad”. A latinamerican hermeneutics by Aníbal Cañaveral “Engendrar una nueva masculinidad: aproximación desde Pablo”, *Revista de Interpretación bíblica latinoamericana*, 56 (2007), 137-152; (he examines dominant male forms, and also an alternative masculinity, prompted by Pauline doctrine).

9. A. Musskopf, *op.cit.*, 143.

10. See Rm 1:13, 7:1,4, 8:12,29, 9:3, 11:25, 12:1, 14:10,13,15,21, 15:14,30, 16:1,14,15,17,23; also 1 Cor 1:1,10-11,26, 2:1, 3:1, 4:6, 5:11, 6:5,6,8, 7:12,15,24,29, 8:11,13, 9:5, 10:1, 11:33, 12:1, 14:6,20,26,39, 15:1,6,31,50,58, 16:11,12,15,20.

11. Adilson Schultz (*op. cit.*, 189) acknowledges that men learn not to speak about what is most important... because to speak about oneself implies losing power.