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## Practical Proposal to Work Possible research projects

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# Practical Proposal to Work

## Possible research projects

**EATWOT's  
International Theological Commission**

The Belo Horizonte Consultation concluded with an eye to the future. The result of the consultation had been very good, and indeed, it was deemed necessary to give it continuity. The idea now is to produce a guide, a list of research projects with which it would be possible to address all the issues and topics raised by the Consultation, while at the same time trying to bring out the differences, to verify and even to improve the proposed interpretation of what we are calling “the post-religional paradigm”.

With this list or index as guide, the International Theological Commission of EATWOT is opening a second phase of the consultation which consists in convoking both those who participated in the first phase, as well as all theologians and scientific students of religion who might still like to participate.

People or institutions that feel inspired and motivated to develop any of these suggestions or lines of thought, are invited to contact our Theological Commission. This would be either to report on their work or to search for colleagues and/or set up alliances. The ideas and proposals were worked up in thematic blocks, but this is purely a methodological measure and freely open to reformulation.

(“See”)

### **Thematic block of FACTS**

- The HISTORY of "agrarian religion": its origin, essential identity, basic features, epistemological mechanisms, control over society, and: “Just what did our ancestors do to latch on to this "reinvention of society"?...

- Comparative studies of "religiosity" in the agrarian Neolithic and Paleolithic eras. What can we learn today from these studies?

- Study and compare the contrasting religious relationship of the human person with the existing nature of the Paleolithic and the Neolithic periods. When were we separated from the Great Mother Goddess? How and why did this happen? What is the existing basis for our current reclaiming of: "a return to our natural home" – "our homecoming"? From just where did we turned off, and at what point in our evolutionary history did we abandon our telluric and cosmic placenta? What role did our agrarian Neolithic religion play in all this and how do we go about recovering from this self-imposed exile from which we are still suffering? Was this a pure contingency or a real necessity? Was it just this way even though it could have been otherwise, or did it have to be this way and could not have been otherwise?

- The society that is still to come: How to characterize it and what to call it? A society of knowledge, innovation, post-industrial ...? What will be the principle features of this emerging culture of the "new society"?

- The epistemology of the new society: its limits, convergence and incompatibility with the dominant epistemology of Neolithic times.

- Field studies to verify and assess specifically the presence of this new society in Latin America and/or other continents.

- Focus on the facts which are in dissonance with this "presumed" pos-religious paradigm: the spread of fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, spiritual revivals, the persistence of magical thinking ... Are they compatible? What is the overall direction of the flow, despite so many whirlpools in the river of religious history today?

("Judge")

### **Thematic block on (AGRARIAN) RELIGION**

-First off: What is the religious/spiritual drive of the human person? Elucidate over a more compelling, interdisciplinary and functional definition of the religiosity of human beings, including its essentially transcendent dimension.

-The "Neolithic Agrarian Religion" as a factor in programming and social cohesion. Submission and thought-control as a characteristic mechanism of religions. "Ontology of submission" (Corbí).

- With all agrarian religions? Is there a variation of positions between some religions and others in this feature of being "social programmers"?

- Ought we to consider the "programming characteristic" of religions, and the "submission" by members of society, the principle or nuclear feature of agrarian Neolithic time?

- Can it be held that liberation from this programmer control and the subsequent submission was the principle and central characteristic of the era that superseded the agrarian Neolithic period?

- Can it be said that overcoming this, paved the way for the Enlightenment and its *Sapere aude!* ("Dare to know!")?

- Can it be said that the main feature of the new post-agrarian era will be the freeing of epistemology, or "liberation epistemology"?

- Towards a religion that is post-religional: with control of neither thought, nor opinion nor its expression; without dogmas, doctrines, or "absolute truths"; without submission ... A religion centered upon - what?

- Towards a new "theology of religion" (re-defining religion). If the traditional role of religion in the Neolithic agrarian world became nonviable, what will religion be like in a post-religional society? Would it move towards a new "theology of religion", a new consideration of the deep religious significance of religion itself and what it means to be religious? Would it be a theology of religion that adopts today's perspective: that religions are human constructs (not purely divine); that religions are relative (not absolute), purely cultural-positioning (not supernatural and universal), and that they are limited (flawed) and not unique ...

### Specific thematic block CHRISTIANITY

- Christianity is also an agrarian Neolithic-religion. ... As for being founded by Jesus, or in spite of being "founded" Jesus? Study of the agrarian-Neolithic dimensions of Christianity: its being, quantity, origin, its taking shape in the history of Christianity ...

- "Is Christianity a religion?" Reconsidering this classic question. Did Jesus found a religion or is it that his message represents precisely the displacement of religions? Is it possible to reinterpret or reformulate Christianity in a non-religious way? It would be worth while replanting the ever timely question of a "non-religious Christianity" (secularizing movements of John AT Robinson, the "theology of the death of God", Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gustave Thils, John Shelby Spong ...)

- The Future of Christianity: What path will the tradition of Jesus follow in the new post-religional world? What can we foresee?

- Possibilities of Christianity: Can Christianity cease to be an agrarian-Neolithic religion? What particular elements of agrarian religions are found in Christianity? List them. Are they really essential to Christianity? Do they actually flow from the message of Jesus? Are there actually agrar-

ian religious elements in the message itself of the historical Jesus? Is it strange that they are found there?

- Obviously the thought patterns of Jesus were geocentric, just as those of any person of his time would be. ("The Father makes the sun to shine on both the just and sinners"). Nevertheless we, although with great difficulty on the part of the institution, have been able to move into a Christianity with a heliocentric cosmic view. In a parallel manner: just as Jesus was religious with the agrarian religiosity of the Judaism which he professed, wouldn't it be possible for us to move into a non-religious Christianity?

Special difficulties of Catholicism: Will Roman Catholicism be able to discard agrarian- Neolithic features after having been so profoundly inbred by Greek metaphysics and after Catholicism has radically bolstered itself up with the doctrines of infallibility, immutability and uninterpretability for both its dogmas and the deposit of faith, and now after its persecution of dissidents and heterodoxy ... or will Catholicism die as a martyr of fidelity to these principles? Faced with this tsunami of cultures just ahead: Just what can we expect of Christianity if it fails to transform itself?

- "Jesus invites us to surpass religions" (Thomas Sheehan). "Christianity without religion" (Gustoff Thils). "Jesus calls us to a "non-ordained", a "lay sanctity". (Bonhöffer) "Jesus for the non-religious" (book by John Shelby Spong). "A Jesus for atheists" (of Machovec) ... In a post-religious culture, just what would differentiate "faith in Jesus", the "following of Jesus", "the community of followers of Jesus"?

## Thematic bloc of EPISTEMOLOGY and RELIGION

- This would entail a thorough study of the epistemology of agrarian religions:

*their beliefs (in the technical sense), their myths,  
the "great mechanism" of divine attribution ... and its unfeasibility today ...*

- And equally:

*the end of mythical epistemology, the end of "naive realism" (Barbour)  
the recognition of the metaphorical character of all religious expression,  
and the "end of the dogmatic religious dream" ...*

- Traditionally theology has been an element of agrarian religion - it has been its theoretical expression and doctrinal base when necessary. Is a post-religious theology possible? Obviously there will always be

need for a "local theology" to respond for every religion, but shouldn't theology be remade with a focus that is beyond "the local", towards a pluralistic, inter-religious, multi-religious, trans-religious ...a planetary theology? Can we move towards a global theology?

- If a post-religional paradigm transforms the conceptualization of religion itself, forcing us to come up with a new, completely different face for religion, won't a "new theology of religion" also be necessary?

### **Thematic block on LIBERATION THEOLOGY**

- LIBERATION THEOLOGY is that that theology that re-read the modernizing Christianity of the last third of the twentieth century with its conscience focused upon the political dimension and the option for the poor. It acts completely like a paradigm, the liberating paradigm. We must ask: Do the liberating paradigm and the post-religional paradigm have something to do with each other? Do they have something in common? Are they compatible?

- The theological proposal of a pos-religional paradigm presented here would answer that: at first blush it appears neutral from the standpoint of a liberating paradigm. Is it actually possible to be politically neutral? (Does anything politically neutral actually exist?). With the advent of a post-religional paradigm and a society of knowledge: would it be in favor of the poor or of the powerful?

- Can we make a presentation of the post-religional paradigm from a "political neutrality" at least for methodological reasons?

- Liberation Theology is still clearly a "religional" theology. Even though it polished up many of the conservative aspects of traditional Christianity, in fact it assumed the central structure of its epistemology, together with its great story, and of course the main "beliefs" of Christianity. Just as in past years it has been tried, and to a good degree achieved, to "cross" Liberation Theology with the pluralist paradigm, coming up with a "Pluralist Liberation Theology". Would it be possible to cross Liberation Theology with the post-religional paradigm and come up with a "Post-religional Liberation Theology"? Since many elements of the agrarian religions would disappear: just what agrarian elements of Liberation Theology would have to be transformed?

### **Thematic block of SPIRITUALITY**

- The new relevance given to spirituality in the reflection on religion. The decline of religions in the world, and the emergence of a sense of priority and absoluteness of the spiritual ...

- Movements towards a pluralistic concept of spirituality. Is spirituality one, or are there many different spiritualities? Discussion about different approaches.

- Spirituality and religions: What about spirituality beyond religion...; spirituality without religion ...; a "lay spirituality" that is simply human ...

- The "non-dual spirituality": a growing Eastern ascendancy over the West.

- The so-called "neo-atheism" and the post-religional paradigm: do a comparative contrasting study.

("Act")

### **Thematic block of TRANSITION**

Theorizing over a pos-religional paradigm should be responsible and include in its consideration the felt need to accompany the "transition" that in reality has already been initiated by largely agrarian-Neolithic societies into pos-religional societies in the style of "knowledge societies". Regarding this transition, different levels must be distinguished: that of individuals, that of communities, the "People of God", institutions, and those "self-exiled" people who have left by the millions...

To foresee and accompany this transition we must ...:

- Be able to foresee a new historical figure of Spirituality, that is far beyond that of agrarian religions, their basic principles and functioning mechanisms ... This requires heading towards a pos-religional religiosity: heading towards a "being spiritual" or "religious" beyond "religional religion", a "profound humanization" without religious forms...

- Concretely attempting to reinterpret Christianity in a non-religional key. What would be the spiritual significance of Jesus if we should hold that he never intended to found a religion? How would Christianity have to transform itself if, -- even though it has been a religion, -- it will have to stop being a religion in order to move on into the pos-religional future at the end of the agrarian-Neolithic era?

- Develop a proposal of "pastoral and social strategies" to accompany religions and societies in this transition. (To "maintain the child after bathing, instead of throwing it out with the bath water"). This would be to avoid having a society being left without a dimension of profundity and spirituality at the time religions are entering a decline, since these, -- even with their shortcomings, -- have been the principal means for their cultivation.

- Research and work up a new vision of "secular spirituality" as being simply something of a profound and deeply-human dimension ...

- Since in some way this "transition" will involve a certain "regression" -- a "return to our eco-mother-home" of eco-centric spirituality ("homecoming") -- it is important to develop an adequate analytic reflection on it, in order to avoid dualistic "transcendence-immanence" and while overcoming patriarchal agrarian religions finally re-encountering our eco-spirituality in "REALITY".

- Since the perception of this paradigm will probably shock if not even scandalize quite a few people who are religious in the traditional agrarian sense, the question comes up: "Is it correct and valid for us to propose this post-religious paradigm when we actually still have no perfectly clear idea of just where we are going to arrive at, and up to what point the human spiritual dimension will evolve in the coming post-agrarian period? Would it perhaps be better to wait? Or on the contrary is it urgent to act now in order to prevent and/or care for those who already have become victims of this transformation and whose numbers run into the tens of millions? Ought we to try to avoid scandalizing the simple, or should we strive to help those already suffering existential damage?"

- How to help believers -- submitted to mythical epistemology and "conditioned" in that line -- move forward with this changing society which every day makes their personal situation less feasible...

- How to help institutions, churches and religions confront this future. Help them "re-discover themselves", to change their goals, to accept a *metanoia* that produces "conversion", and with it a consequent change of attitude. It's worth while recalling a point made by Raymond Hostie: "Historically, 75% of religious institutions founded during the history of the Catholic Church disappear". They face the dilemma of radically renewing, or of "dying in peace". They must learn the *ars moriendi* ("the art of dying"), the art of accepting death and making of it the supreme act in favor of life; instead of dying in despair, dying to help bring to life different realities more in line with the times; dying to give life ("as dying in childbirth" ultimately converts "death" into "giving life").

• Help common people to gradually overcome the "beliefs" (in the technical sense), the "mythical thought", the epistemology of submission and control ... Make a list of "beliefs" common in Christianity (even in Liberation Theology), analyze them in detail, as a pedagogical aid to overcome them ...

