



World Forum on Theology and Liberation
Forum Mundial de Teologia e Libertação
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WFTL: The Road to Tunis **A few issues to think about**

The World Forum on Theology and Liberation (WFTL) renews its objective and initial purpose: to think and do theology in the context of the social movements whose expression is the World Social Forum (WSF). In the current context of the WSF 2013 to be held in Tunis, the Permanent Council of the WFTL has elaborated a few questions for theological reflection on the road to Tunis:

1. Liberation as hermeneutical and practical principle. The “Principle of Liberation” continues to be a privileged reference in terms of formal principles of theological mediation. Obviously there are other principles that also interpret the founding religious experience, whether it be Christian, or from other religious sources: the principle of *hope*, the principle of *mercy*, the principle of *justice*, the principle of *praxis*. They must be considered in a plural hermeneutical spiral. Here we underscore the principle that is most characteristic of the WFTL, which is in its own name and renders this theology an original viewpoint and approach: *liberation*. It is of primary importance for the path of theology to take up the *principle of liberation* again in new contexts and clarify its operationality and hermeneutical mediation.

2. Liberation and democracy. In the context of the “Arab Spring” the principle of liberation, in turn, acquires a specific mediation: *the search for and construction of democracy* in a new context. Thinking about an authentic liberation through the exercise of democracy, broad freedom of participation, open debate with accessible means in a plural way, plural sharing of social spaces, of government and power oriented towards the collective good--this is a concrete element for the reflection on the relationship between theology and liberation.

3. Human rights, Rights of the poor and victims. Religions have more often insisted on human duties. They also acknowledged that there are rights together with duties, beginning by the limit of the duties and by respect to people. However, with the advent of modernity and facing abuses and violations of different kinds, Human Rights were underscored. In the current globalization the discourse on Human Rights reached everywhere, but not everyone understands Human Rights with the same practical meaning. That is why it is necessary to develop, with the principle of liberation, the rights of the more *vulnerable*, of the dispossessed, of the poor, of women, of children, of people with disabilities, giving great attention to the future generations.

4. Environmental justice and food security. The global environmental crisis and climate change remain on the agenda after Rio+20. The WFTL has entered this agenda, especially with the Belém Forum in 2009. Inspired by the path taken by the World Council of Churches, connecting climate issues with social issues, the WFTL adopts the mediation of “justice” as a way of rendering the principle of liberation operational, considering the environmental issues, forms of life and peoples very carefully and in an integrated manner.

Environmental justice takes into account, first of all, the threat of hunger which hovers over the most vulnerable when faced with climate changes. That is why food sovereignty and safety are so relevant for liberation and for the theology that has in the body and in the bread a decisive spiritual centrality.

5. Climate displaced people. The new globalization has generated a new wave of economic migrations, but currently migrations are caused also by climate changes and their consequences. Human migrations are now one of the most important global phenomena in the world. The first *victims of the climate* are the economically more vulnerable populations, and a vicious circle closes tragically for these populations. The climate migrants are new subjects who give food for thought to a theology that is founded on the *principle of liberation*. With the migration, the issue of the right to territoriality and the struggles for it also emerges. Modernity has launched itself into temporality and into history, seeking to dominate the past and future by going beyond limits and making progress. But the time has come to recover spatiality and geography, the roots, heritages and fruitages as an integration of the past and an opening to the future. Territorialities begin with corporeity and extend to the primary ties, ethnic ties, gender-related ties, etc. But they must be considered in the context of openness to universality and suggest in our case the possibility of a geology and an ecotheology which will encompass the human family and the different forms of life.

6. New, that is, more archaic communication forms. How can one recognize hunger, a cry for justice and for a meaning of life in a world with a right to the most radical differences? Recognizing the other requires new categories that overcome communication barriers and prejudices and that are, for this very reason, rooted in etymologically more primary, “archaic” and archeo-logical human experiences and manifestations. The *principle of liberation* needs to create categories that will function as mediations where current language does not reach, i.e., based on others and their languages, besides the learning of a common language and a new literacy.

7. Pact of religions with “leftist” policies. Since the 18th century the “left” has been characterized as the politics that struggles for more radical transformations. The *principle of liberation* does not become operative without the mediation of policies for a more radical transformation. At most it will operate in an individual sphere, becoming a compensation to substitute subjectivity and its potential for creative action and real transformation of society. The *principle of liberation* is prophetic and has a deconstructive and a creative face, one that denounces and the other that announces. Therefore, in view of the urgency for radical transformations, it is “anti-”: anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal (anti-male chauvinist, anti-sexist, anti-kyriarchal...), anti-racist, anti-speciest. This means being against forms of dictatorial, discretionary, autarchic exercise of power. This theology will strengthen and create alliances with forms of democratic participation, equality of dignity and opportunities, acknowledgment of differences; especially when leftist policies violate human values, it places itself to the left of the left, rather than to the right, without incurring empty sectarianisms.

8. Peace and Interfaith. The culture of peace through processes for overcoming conflicts, recreating ties of solidarity, overcoming religious intolerance, reconciliation including overcoming historical hatred, is the path of the *principle of liberation*. Peace among peoples also depends on peace among religions and their capacity to fertilize and bear fruits of

peace with an attitude of respect and collaboration. Thence results the sign of the times that appeals to all people who profess different religious traditions: interreligious dialogue.

9. Gender, Feminisms and Democracy. Meeting the demands of women's rights and gender justice, advancements have taken place in the last fifty years around the world. In spite of facing intractable resistance from radical conservative social groups, the World's Women's March and many other feminist actors continue actively to spread work and to gain the adhesion of women in the worldwide struggles for citizenship, reproductive rights and health, poverty reduction, and eradication of violence against women. In the religious arena, a deficient discussion of sexuality is a major obstacle as kyriarchal theology and institutions continue patterns to both, control women's body and sexuality and maintain conservative models of family and communities. This feminist theological axis proposes a careful and rigorous discussion of sexuality in the interest of supporting the constructive transformation of religion, theology, and civil society.

10. YOUTHS. The presence of young people in the world requires careful and deepen thought by the Religions and consequently by Christianity and the Christian Churches, families and societies. In general young people are the first victims of unemployment, migration and violence. This reality forces us to think about the young people who risk their lives in search of employment (from Africa to Europe, from Latin America and Caribbean to United States), especially considering the ethnic discrimination that affects mainly young Blacks, Indigenous people and from other ethnicities. The WFTL - along with the WSF – can first of all achieve knowledge about young people around the World. How to think an integral formation in various dimensions of life: personal, sexual, psychological, economic, political, mystical? This becomes even more challenging when there are young people who *neither work nor study* (in the case of Brazil they are about 9,600,000! What is the number for the whole World?). How to help these young people to reconcile personal fulfillment with a utopian horizon that can re-enchant life and helps to collaborate in the transformation of society? Internet attracts young people, native cyber people. How to reconcile virtual meetings and net groups, which seems to be much easier with the real world? How to face the danger of a second identity (escaping from the real world)? Moreover, Internet enables exposures of intimacy of people and groups with the possibility to generate "virtual crimes." How to face such a situation? In a plural World with many ideological and religious differences, how to seek common points of convergence? How to open spaces for contemporary young people in different religions, in Christian Churches, trade unions, parties, so that youth leadership can emerge?