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## DIS-RE-MEMBERED BODIES – MULTICULTURAL BODIES WORSHIPPING GOD<sup>1</sup>

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*Corpos Dis-Membrados/Esquecidos - Corpos Multiculturais Adorando a Deus*

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This article is a commented sermon I preached at my last worship service at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The sermon was based on Matthew 12:22-32. The parts in *italic* are the comments on the sermon.

22 Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute; and he cured him, so that the one who had been mute could speak and see.

23 All the crowds were amazed and said, 'Can this be the Son of David?'

24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, 'It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts out the demons.'

25 He knew what they were thinking and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.

26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?

27 If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.

28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered.

30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

31 Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

May the peace of Christ be with you. Our gospel text today talks about issues of power, authority, authenticity, who belongs where and the ways we try to portray one another. It is not an easy text, and I am still trying to grasp its possibilities. Let us see. At the beginning of this chapter we see Pharisees checking on Jesus about his disciple's behavior. They were doing unlawful things during the Sabbath and that was clearly against the law. Jesus replied to them remembering that David had also done unlawful things like going into the house of God with his friends and eating the bread they were not supposed to eat. The logic of Jesus was grounded in the fact that the temple, bread, and Sabbath were to serve people and not the other way around. Jesus told them that there

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were things greater than our traditions. Times and people change, so God's revelation to us, so traditions.

*\* Power, authority, authenticity. These issues are always pulsing in our worship services. Who gets the power decides who participate and how, and what the order(s) of worship are. Ritual authority comes a hierarchical structure that does not need to consider who is participating in it to either have its effect or alter its power. It is always there for those who show up. Ronald Grimes says that "what gives liturgical rites their authoritiveness is not, ultimately, the participant's approval or fidelity. What makes the liturgy socially and morally binding is not the participants' private, prayerful sentiments (however worthy these may be), but the visible, explicit, public act of acceptance itself."<sup>3</sup> Yes, the privatization of liturgy is something we must all fight against. However, most of the liturgies we have now engage mostly the prayerful sentiments of (white) men. Those who hold the liturgical power, what Grimes will call "liturgical erectitude," are the ones who hold authority to say what is right and wrong, to establish what in worship is historically authentic over what is fake, and to define how the body, its feelings and flesh and thinking, is composed of and properly understood. The definition of the body is worship in worship, both the body of Christ and the body of the believer, prevents any prosthetic understanding of the same bodies and makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to prevent any obtrusive interfering bodily act or feeling against the very worship forms God seems to expect from us. The real, orderly and proper presence of the body of Christ in our worship services is always established by strict orders over against loose un-seen, un-expected and unthought-of practices that are often deemed as improper, unreal, fake presence. The body of others, if not tamed and adequately controlled, can bring a wild Spirit that will disrupt the order of things and the life of the community. Power, ritual authority and authenticity are part of the same structure that is always guarding proper and authentic behavior, faith and worship.*

Later on in the chapter, our text for today, we see the Pharisees checking on Jesus again. This time, Jesus heals a person who is possessed by a demon. And they accused Jesus by saying he was doing it by the power of "Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." Here is the conundrum: one can only cure people by the power of God OR Beelzebul. So, what side would Jesus be on?

Jesus was not considered to be fully on the side of official religion so the move was clear to place him on the side of Beelzebul, the Devil. How would Jesus defend himself from this trap? Jesus had to take them using their own logic. If Jesus was casting out demons by a different source than God, than he was from Beelzebul. How could Jesus be from Beelzebul and cast out demons? That is why he uses the metaphor of a house that stands together because all the people inside work for and from the same source. Jesus has to undo the Pharisees discourse and his reasoning shifts power dynamics and where Jesus himself stands. Jesus authenticates his own source of power and his belonging, threatening them with blasphemy, the one unforgivable sin.

*\* "Possessed by a demon." We have secularized this belief in our culture and turned strangers as those who are, in a figural speech, possessed by demons, i.e., those who do not live like we do or respect the tradition as we know it. "Possessed by a demon" means the incapacity of being properly recognized, tamed, somebody out of sorts, who scare us, those whom we cannot trust, whose movements and gestures are uncontrollable and whose practices and faith beliefs are foreign to our understandings.*

In and around these theological engagements lies a problem of power. It has to do again with belonging, authenticity and naming the other. Jesus seems to be very close to the official

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<sup>3</sup> Grimes, Ronald L., "Liturgical Supinity, Liturgical Erectitude. The Embodiment of Ritual Authority." In *Reading, Writing and Ritualizing. Ritual in Fictive, Liturgical and Public Places*. (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1993.), 44.

religion but because he confuses the powers that be, twisting its clean-cut admonitions, historically bounded perspective, culturally pure practices, anthropologically structured rites and self-determined truths. Jesus is playing with parables, metaphors, unruly theological interpretations and social behavior where he is defined as an-other. And he scares them all. Jesus is tried time and time again. Even in his death he is asked: “Are you the king of Jews?”

Throughout Jesus life, Jesus power, belonging and authenticity are always questioned. The theological move of the official religion seems to be the unsettling of Jesus belonging, the questioning of his abilities and marking him with the stamp of irresponsibility and inauthenticity.

The unsettling, questioning and marking off of an-other has been part of our human moves against those we don't understand or fear. And this strategy of demonizing a strangely other who does not belong to the proper religion is everywhere in the history of Christianity. Blind, mute, disabled, leper, poor, women and widows join Jews, blacks, gay people, immigrants and foreigners... all of them more often than not, demonized so there will be a reason to either separate, ostracize, kill or at least send them away, keeping them outside of the proper gates of the city/church/rites.

The history of the Christian faith has so many instances like this one where those who scare/offend/shock/shake/move/unsettle/anger the official discourse are regarded as agents of Beelzebul. Sometimes in the Christian history the naming of the other as Beelzebul is very clear and sometimes the checking of the belonging and authenticity of the other are sophisticated ways that regard the other not as the Devil but agents of Beelzebul.

There is still today a very nice theological “Beelzebulization” going on in our churches and seminaries and denominations. One way of making this theological “Beelzebulization” happen is when those who hold power understand the Christian faith as the one, only and **proper historical-cultural** faith without considering *other historical-cultural* faith as acceptable theological accounts to live **within** this proper discourse.

*\* The Beelzebulization of some-bodies is grounded in the Cartesian understanding of life that also guides our liturgical-theological experiences: “I think therefore I am.” Our way of thinking defines our way of being. We are what we think and the way we think. Thus, thinking vis-à-vis its practices gives recognition to our worship services. It is the right engagement with the cognito that will ground to our faith. The understanding of God, the posture of the body and the assertion of reality follow a certain prescriptive construction of the mind. Thus, to be human is to reason the way we do. Anything besides this way of reasoning/living is consequently off of the human mark, hovering around the very monstrosity that denies value to human life. The secular demon that makes us reject the other is the lack of recognition. I reject/demonize that which I cannot recognize/understand/control. One way of doing away with this beelzebulization of the other is to expand our understanding of life and God from our self-enclosed intellectual cognito to emotions, bodily sentiments, movements and feelings. If we shift the main aspect of what makes us human, we might gain other possibilities to understand/feel life and embrace those who fee/reason life differently. Fundamentally, this shift is the stepping away from the need to be recognized only from our proper ratio-nale. That is, to move from Descartes' notion of the cognito “I think therefore I am” to Antonio Damásio feeling definition, namely “I feel therefore I am.”<sup>4</sup> Touch, smell, pleasure, which are all different way of knowing and recognizing life, must be part of our ways of considering what is human. Jesus heals the possessed and he enters back into the life of the community. His body is brought back to the fore; his feelings embraced, his rationality restored, and he can be somewhat*

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<sup>4</sup> Damasio, Antonio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, (New York: Penguin, 2005).

*resurrected, mind, body, soul, feelings and society. Does this healing not attest to what will come later in the life of the church when we learned to confess together “We believe in the resurrection of the body?” This belief is not only the re-cognition of the mind but also of the body, of feelings and emotions. Emotions is what makes us human, more than our thinking. Thus, how can we fully believe in God and worship with our bodies, feelings and emotions without being demonized? What would happen to our understanding of faith if we looked at it from the perspective of our bodies? What does it mean if we say that the Holy Spirit acts in and through us by way of our bodies? Jaci Maraschin, a Brazilian theologian, artist and liturgical theologian said this once: “It is in the body that we are spirits. When we speak about bodies we have to be aware that not only man is a body, but also woman and children. When I say that it is in the body that we are spirit I am thinking also in the body of the community.”<sup>5</sup> When Jesus heals people, touching them, speaking a word, he is filled with the Spirit and gives life to people who are now gaining back the presence of the Spirit of Life. The healing of our bodies is the constant unfolding of God’s Spirit in our body, our emotions, our feelings. Our becoming spirit in our bodies is the becoming of our humanity, fully integrated, undivided body/spirit sons and daughters of God, the multiple body of God in all its diversity and strangeness, even when we see others as prosthetic inclusions into this body of Christ. Word incarnate, Jesus speech-feeling-emotion becoming flesh, life, Spirit, body! A broken society is now being mended, put together, re-membered. Bodies/minds/hearts acknowledged, remembered, cared for, healed, becoming Spirits filled with life for one another. Theology as loving God with our minds and liturgy as loving God with our bodies and emotions without dichotomy. “It is in the body that we are spirit especially when our bodies are ready to recreate life. Let us, then, make of our bodies our main instrument of worship.”<sup>6</sup>*

Let me explain that with a case: let us take the movement of the Presbyterian tradition. In very large paintbrushes, we can say that the Reformed faith went from Geneva to Scotland and from Scotland to United States. People, culture and their theological and liturgical resources came from Geneva, Scotland and ended up structuring the proper historically-culturally informed reformed faith in US. That means that, the theological and liturgical resources of the Presbyterian church were deeply marked and influenced by this missiological route. In liturgical terms, the book of common worship is a beautiful Geneva-Scotland-US document. Hymns, prayers, sermon, worship space, sacraments, order of worship, movements of the body, everything had and still has a Geneva-Scotland-US stamp on it. These resources composed the very center of the proper theological-liturgical practices of the Presbyterian church.



When US Presbyterian missionaries went to Brazil in 1859, they also brought songs and liturgies that were lived and performed in United States and Scotland.

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<sup>5</sup> Jaci Maraschin, *The Transient Body: Sensibility and Spirituality*, paper presented at the event “Liturgy and Body;” Union Theological Seminary, New York, October 20, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

So much so that the hymn that most influenced my early teenager years was a Scottish hymn we sang in church even though I had never heard of Scotland. I used to sing this Scottish hymn when I was afraid and couldn't sleep at night. I am a fruit of Scottish people through the work of North Americans!

What I have also learned is that, perhaps by mimicking what I have received and posing as a tamed savage, a well behaved colonized male latin-lover, and by staying within the proper bounds and not touching people, I could gain bonus points with the ones who own this tradition and they may let me stay inside.

*\*Mimicry. This is an important issue to take to task since it has to do with hybridity, ambivalence and multiplicity. Mimicry is at its best, an authentic imitation of the original, of the proper. I, as a colonized other, am supposed to repeat properly the original discourse of the church, the proper words and gestures and do my best to be "like" the original and be considered as authentic as possible. However, as a colonized body, when my body-soul-mind-feelings-liquids mimics that discourse, it already shows that this discourse is not original anymore, and that the fakeness of its attempt to be original is precisely what makes it unregulated, improper, unoriginal. Through a thick foreign accented English, faulty liturgical gestures and racialized, sexualized, ethnicized feeling body, I ended up manifesting this pretended univocal-universal discourse as multiple, ambivalent, hybrid, not one with itself. The colonial project thus cannot hold is univocity since there are always gaps that will break its structures. Hommi Bhabba understandings these gaps are "the signs of a discontinuous history... They mark the disturbance of its authoritative representations by the uncanny forces of race, sexuality, violence, cultural and even climatic differences which emerge in the colonial discourse as the mixed and split texts of hybridity."<sup>7</sup> This imminent possibility of lost univocity, makes those who control the power to be anxious. This anxiety can be seen in seminaries when we are often taught to be precise, right and proper about our actions in worship. We professors must teach students how to use the body properly, how to move pages of sermon seamlessly, how to raise our hands, to measure the distance from the Eucharistic table, how not to be overbearing in our bodily movements and so on. In some sense, practical theology sometimes has become a teaching on mimicry or to become, as in by V.S.Naipaul words: "mimic men" and women. However, mimicry is often better than re-presentation for obvious reasons: mimicry is the attempt to repeat verbatim (word by word, exactly) the discourse, and to re-present is to present again, which is the enactment/presentation of the discourse again but in unforeseen, thus probably wrong ways. Mimicry must mirror what the powers that be can understand, accept and agree. If students mimic well what seminary professors, presidents and ordained people do, they are accepted into the upper crust of center power. Liturgical bodies who lead, move, feel and recognize God with and also beyond the accepted cognito are to be suspected. On the other hand, if orders of worship are properly retained, those who mimic do it right, without any faulty liturgical action, never forgetting the sequence of the worship parts, and never stepping outside of the proper limits of worship, they are to be given voice and space. Others are to be silenced under the name of God's proper liturgical theology. For God will not understand our worship if we don't use the same liturgical resources, if we don't repeat the same discourses and if our bodies are not carefully constrained. Mimicry is a way of doing our best to assure that God will understand our proper and good worship. The body of Christ must be protected against any-body else, "else" here meaning that which is beyond the category of the re-cognized cognito.*

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<sup>7</sup> Homi Bhabba, *The Location of Culture*, page 161.

The main problem here is that, while the Christian faith was in the hands of people from Geneva, Scotland and the United States, it was as if the Reformed faith was considered pure, legitimate, dignified, proper. But then, when the gospel went to the South of the world and left the “axis of the proper,” the new indigenous people could not live up to its task. They screwed it all up. As much as they tried, wearing suits in a 100-degree weather, abandoning their games and dances and their sexualized bodies, they still couldn’t get tradition all together. They were always off of the mark. In a word: unauthentic.

*\* The proper. In the Roman Catholic church and in historical protestant churches, the “axis-of-proper” is duly marked by the common worship books. These books are a wonderful resource for the church of Christ and help us identify the ways in which a generation is accustomed to worship God. Many churches within Protestant denominations do not pay attention to these books and often lose the channels of connection with the larger church and the wisdom these books carry. We must engage deeply with the books of common worship for they teach us a great deal about our faith. On the other hand, those who do not follow the books are often marked as unfaithful to the tradition, a-liturgical, and illiterate of the historical models that marked the church of Christ. These books carry two marks: 1) one is methodological: it seems that there often is an attempt to draw a single liturgical line of recognition from our practices today with the liturgical practices of the early Christian churches as an attempt to show the church today how what we do today is the most faithful way of doing what the early church did in the beginning and most of its history. This movement dismisses all of the diversity, and complications of so many practices entailed by so many early Christian churches. 2) the second mark is epistemological: behind these books lies a given, a belief that if we follow the order of worship as proposed, meaning will (automatically) appear and the church of Christ will worship God and receive God. The result is easy to figure: whoever adds, subtracts or twists what is considered as the axis-of-the-proper, is deemed to be unfaithful, dangerous, demonized/unrecognized, and destructive to the wellbeing of the worship/church established by God. Foreign bodies, or bodies who cannot grasp the wisdom of this proper and this order are counted as agents of destruction. Improper.*

Still, it was ok while they remained in their own countries. The problem happened when they started to come to the United States. These *im-proper* people arrived in US and started doing backward missionary work, reverse anthropology, anticolonized theologies and improper liturgical moves, messing up the proper reformed faith of the proper reformed churches. What then were the receiving churches supposed to do with these UGA-UGA colored people that along with black people, women and gay people, were pushing the boundaries of the religious proper?

One way to respond to it was to embrace them under the banner of the white male Liberal Protestantism which was a perfect background to appropriate the powerful cultural movements that were going on in the 80’s and they created the slogan “A Multicultural Church.” Then we learned and institutionalized “Kumbaya My Lord” and we knew we were a multicultural church.

*\* Our bodies are always present in our liturgies, explicitly practicing the faith and as ideologically structured in an organized system. What I am calling while male liberal Protestantism is the continuous process in which most of the historical Protestant churches today, heir of the powerful historical movement called theological liberalism, are massively governed by one segment of society: white males. If we look around our churches and seminaries we can easily see that we have mostly white males controlling the life of the church, as well as Black and Hispanics males in their own traditions. The presence of this strong maleness engages both their bodies and faith as well as the bodies and faith of others through liturgical theological understandings that shape the ways in which we consider our bodies and its capacities, purpose and meaning. As said before, the*

spectrum of experience of white males is liturgically imposed over every-body else. This control includes liturgical texts and practices used in “common” worship. “Their commonality” becomes every-body commons. This control of the worship experience carries what Ronald Grimes call “Liturgical Supinity, Liturgical Erectitude.”<sup>8</sup> He says: “Many who assume the posture of liturgical erectitude are busy appropriating a host of allied theological and anthropological notions, for instance, tradition.” Tradition, vis-a-vis as the liturgical proper, does not depend on anything or anybody. It is a thing in itself, as much as the ontological understanding of maleness is a thing in itself, neutral. All other human “experience” is marked by sex, gender, color and ethnicity. A more feminist approach to ritual authority would consider “authority (if they would even use such a term) of ritual dependent on – in fact, ought to grow organically out of-those who participate in it.”(46). The male liberal Protestantism, or what Grimes calls “Liturgical erectitude,” also shares another liturgical aspect along with the Roman Catholic male attitude, namely, “liturgiocentrism.” Grimes defines it as the “theological ideologies that treat ‘the’ liturgy as both the single center of the ritual tradition in which it is embedded and as the norm for judging its ambient culture... (assuming) 1) “public orders,” such as the liturgy are by their very nature superior to personal or private ones; 2) that Christian liturgy is somehow above its ambient culture; 3) that Christian liturgy is “invariable;” that ritual invariance (if there were such a thing) guarantees the authority of the liturgy.”<sup>9</sup> This sense of invariability is instead, deeply marked by variable historical cultural agents but is often understood either as a-historical or historically authoritative so to be imposed over any other culture. Thus, what is not in the holy route, in this case, Geneva-Scotland-USA, is out of the primary authoritative revelation of God to humankind. The South of the globe then, must learn to mimic this divine revelation and not add anything else to the purity of God’s revelation. The fringes of this revelation become the proper place of those who came later in the historical picture. Just look at the worship celebrations of 500 years of Calvin’s birth. Liturgies and hymns in most celebrations around the world were essentially marked by this revelatory axis. How can we undo this liturgical erectitude, this liturgical supinity, this male control? How should we continue to critique those who use liturgy to underwrite racism, sexism and ethnic cleansing while it perpetuates what it hopes to undo? The redemption of maleness, including my own, is the serious engagement of the historical powers carried by men, the abuse of our position of power and the destructive use of this privilege by keeping difference at bay. I am not trying to “Beelzubilizy” males (even though it clearly looks like it), or say that we only need women or other ethnic people to occupy positions of power, even though there is always a possible change in the horizon when it happens due to the fact that women/ethnic people have lived under the control of white males. Gender/ethnicity does not automatically oute the liturgical supinity. On the contrary, this power is such that many women and racial/ethnic people mimic this discourse/power with such entitlement that it feels like they are indeed part of this male episteme. Rather, I am calling any men, white, black, Hispanic, Asian and so on to undergo a critical evaluation of themselves and the structures of power that made it possible for them to gain and sustain the positions they own now. Instead of getting rid of males, the work must be done together! I never forgot when my two advisers, Janet Walton and Delores Williams let me participate in their class “Worship and Women” at Union Theological Seminary. It was among these powerful women that I had the opportunity to see my own limits as male and reflect on the unchecked understandings and consequently use of power throughout my life. These women pointed out to me, most times without knowing it, and sometimes very blatantly, how much wrong I had done and how my posture

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<sup>8</sup> Grimes, Ronald L., “Liturgical Supinity, Liturgical Erectitude. The Embodiment of Ritual Authority.” In *Reading, Writing and Ritualizing. Ritual in Fictive, Liturgical and Public Places*. (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1993.), 39-60.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

*had to do with this liturgical-theological erectitude. From that I learned that we, males in all its sexual possibilities, need a constant conversion and attentiveness not to fall back into the fold of power and continue checking control dynamics. Commenting on what I am calling a process of conversion, the Indian professor Gayatri Spivak says that one needs to “make it your task not only to learn what is going on there through language, through specific programs of study, but also, at the same time through a historical critique of your position as the investigating person, then you will learn the right to criticize and you will be heard. When you take the position of not doing your homework... that is much more pernicious position. In one way, you take a risk to criticize, of criticizing something which is Other – something which you used to dominate.”<sup>10</sup> Unless the liturgical supinity is deeply and continuously checked, the historical, cultural, social processes will continue to be seen as natural, and naturally-theologically-liturgically given by the one-sided revelation of God, through the male experience.*

Multiculturalism was the ideal umbrella under which the church would open up space for difference and accommodate strangers into the midst of the white church, making the church Brownish. However, as we have it today, multiculturalism has not lived up to its ideals and instead, became a movement of tokenism. Here the system allows the fringes to dance just a little bit around the center. It is a display, giving outsiders the impression that they can handle these people and that they are truly part of the real center.

It went this way: mainline protestant churches gave brown people an office, couple jobs, some money, a little ink, and made this diverse people feel that the church is getting there. In very few and slow ways, it is getting there. So much so that I am here! Well... not for too long. I have also become a token in some ways and the work of difference is still an illusion brothers and sisters, an illusion to make us all happy. At the end of the day, while we all sing Kumbaya, the structures of power and sameness are all still in place and we continue to fight for diversity without much success. While Multiculturalism might have begun with good intentions, at the end of the day, a suspicion arises: did the structures of power engaged difference as a way for ensuring that it would remain the same? Was diversity welcomed so as to preserve a dominant uniformity? As professor Christopher Elwood said once: “we Calvinists are very suspicious of power!”

*\* Multiculturalism, power and bodies are at the fringes of the main discourse. The posture one assumes when developing a liturgical theology has to do with the understandings of power. When Leonardo Boff in his book *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, calls the Roman Catholic church to undo its hierarchy and turn its power structure upside down, he believes that the people of God is able to make liturgical, theological, ecclesiological decisions and does not need to depend on experts.<sup>11</sup> This is a radical call in shifting power dynamics. Multiculturalism has never trusted the power of the church to be taken by outside guests or even by its people. Non-clergy, outsiders and children, are often seeing as unqualified, unprepared, and sometimes a threat and not a blessing. That is why it is so hard for the church to move towards other cultures. In regards to nations, multiculturalism tries to create geo-political cohesiveness in the midst of cultural differences, while in churches, it tries to find liturgical-theological-ecclesiastical cohesiveness around cultural diversity. However, this cohesiveness means, the permanence of the central power and its central things the way the host church advocates. The essentials are not for discussion. Some liturgical dance on the side, some kumbaya here and there, some musical presentation, some dressing in native cloths, all of these inclusions are fine. However,*

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<sup>10</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic. Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, edited by Sarah Harasym, (New York: Routledge, 1990), 62.

<sup>11</sup> Boff, Leonardo, *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation theology and the institutional church*.



*the main aspects of the liturgy will never be “given” to some people, at least not to many of them. The non-recognition of foreign liturgical practices by the powers that be still modulates the worship life of the church today. Diversity and its diverse bodies are only embraced if properly inculturated into the cohesiveness of the host church, the proper “body of Christ.”*

Let me tell you an old joke about communist times that I heard in Latin America and was recently remembered by Slavoj Žižek in Occupy Wall Street movement. This joke can help us understand our present time in regards to religion as well:

*“A guy was sent to East Germany to work in Siberia. He knew censors read his letters so he told his friends. Let us establish a code. If the letter you get from me is in blue ink is true. If it is written in red it is false. After a month, his friends get his first letter. Everything is in blue. It says in the letter: Everything is wonderful here. Stores are full of good food, movie theaters show good films from the west. Apartments are large and luxurious. The only thing you cannot buy is red ink.”*

Žižek says: *“We have all the freedom we want. But what we are missing is red ink, the language to articulate our own freedom. The way we are taught to speak about freedom, war, terror and so on, falsifies freedom, and this is what we are doing here. The occupying movement everywhere is giving all of us red ink! What matters is what we will do later on... We don’t live in the best times and there is a long walk ahead of us and terrible questions...”* What world do we want brothers and sisters? What kind of church and color do we want? What kind of power dynamics do we hope for?

*\* Contrary to what Žižek is saying, we do not have all the freedom we want to articulate our freedom. Our voices are still controlled, our bodies watched closely, our prayers carefully scrutinized, our presiding over the table still under the radar of the proper, our scholarship put into question in spite of all the language of acceptance. Official discourses, preached sermons, blog posts and informal conversations from the powers that be all attest to the need to be open: “if we are ready to listen to people from other cultures, if we are ready, relinquishing the righteousness to determine the other” and so on. And yet in private they continue to shut down those who are different from them, making it very uncomfortable for those who are different to stay. Easy said, but practically never done. The controlling of our language of freedom continues to be the kidnapping of our bodies. The philosopher Wittgenstein once said that the “the limits of our language are the limits of our world.” The world, as the powers that be know it, must be the limit of the entire church of Christ. The global/common sources of worship must become the collection of prayers and songs and liturgical practices of those who control the faith, and the press, and the money. Every-body is invited but must act, react, speak, move, feel, think and be framed around the given sources of somebody’s cultural experience of faith.*

Brothers and sisters, our lives with God have been privatized into somebody else’s faith. The one proper historical-cultural faith of white male protestant liberalism has become our only resource. And our own theological and liturgical ways of living the Christian faith are often *beelzebubized*, and we are often checked to see if we belong, if we are authentic, if we are responsible.

*\* The Beelzebubization of the body has a history: Nancy Cardoso Pereira says: “What was constituted as common sense in the social imaginary from biblical traditions is a mix of a non-corporeal god, pure spirit, and men and women filled with dammed ordinations in their mortal bodies. This simplified vision, violently monolithic and restrict to the Biblical text is what prevailed in the catechesis and Sunday Schools, in the liturgical and artistic representations.” The understanding of revelation of God in texts rather than in bodies also marks our lack of understanding that the body*

is also a foci of God's manifestation as much as the Biblical text. Instead, the body has become a stumbling block to God's revelation, an instrument of turning us irresponsible. Against the continue Beelzubilization of the body and following the work of the Brazilian theologian and poet Rubem Alves Nancy Cardoso Pereira proclaims: "Creation. The Spirit give us creation, sacrament, garden. God gives is our humanity as body, naked body, male body, female body, bodies that have nothing to hide, for everything was good, even the eyes were good, made in the image of God. Body, gift of God, destined to eternity."<sup>12</sup>No process of Beelzubilization to the bodies God made into God's image.

The white liberal Protestantism, which we are all part of, is increasing its control of power, keeping us away from power decisions, kidnapping our global liturgies, freezing our bodily movements and denying our indigenous gestures, while making us into *adiaphora*, a theological term for **"things not essential."** Mimicking is what we were left with...

*\* Adiaphora. Guests are not essential to the living of faith. Their ways of living are not essential to proper ways of living. We have enough, and life shared does not need to take into consideration the faith, gestures, prayers and singing and dancing of others. We only need the essentials and we got it...*

By diluting our own faith into their own proper resources, we lose our abilities and competencies.

By reprimanding us not to use liturgical practices that are not in the books of common worship, we continue to be unabashedly colonized. I am not against the books of common worship they are precious and very important. But we cannot live off of that one single resource only!

We continue to be taught how to behave properly, our bodies continue to be controlled, our minds continue to be washed. We continue to learn what and how to teach. We continue to be accused of crossing lines, and we hear we love what you do, but please tame our unauthentic worshipful experiences!

Brothers and sisters, we need to hear Jesus who said "No city or house divided against itself will stand." Our house is deeply divided right now. The result is that we are all dying. I read somewhere that if all of the Presbyterian seminaries were to close their doors today, we would have enough candidates for ministry for the next 10 years. Because we don't have enough churches...

And yet, we still cannot be courageous enough to open up our *oikos*, our house, our theologies, our liturgies, and our hearts to the encounter of others. It is indeed easier to work with D2D,<sup>13</sup> different religions than within our own Christian differences. The difficult thing is to stay and work together with Christians who stay here for one, two, three even 5 years! It seems that we cannot work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is free... Besides, this house, this *oikos*, *this oikoumene*, is first and foremost God's own *oikos*, and God is the one who issues the invitation and welcomes those who gather and those who seem to scatter!

*\* The closure of the book is the closure of our bodies, is the closure of our churches and it is the closure of the oikos. The liturgical space should be a transnational territory where all have equal entrance, privilege, rights and commitments. The oikos of God does not accept differences of salary, of life conditions, of health insurance, of access to resources, of hierarchical approached to God. Unless we change our fear-driven church we will end up estranging every-body from each other and*

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<sup>12</sup> Pereira, Nancy Cardoso, *Sagrados Corpos*. Not published.

<sup>13</sup> D2D is a new program at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary that will engage other religions in their curriculum.

*dying out in the cold. The openness to the Holy Spirit and to the radical welcoming of every-body is our bold way of tapping into the future. The Spirit is indeed free and that should not scare us.*

We cannot let others cast out demons in their own ways. Every time they do it, we call them Beelzebul... Like the text says, we have become each other judges instead of becoming each other's brothers and sisters. If we continue this way, we will die as righteous people saying: we are dead but we saved the gospel of Jesus Christ from other fake, dangerous, unauthentic Christian enemies.

So, how can we figure out what hospitality means here, in a world of multicultural tokenism? Usually, we offer that which we don't have and want to have. Hospitality in some places can mean: we welcome you here UNTIL you start to annoy us. If you start to annoy us too much we will make it very uncomfortable for you to stay...

For I now call upon the 99% of those in theological education. RESIST!

- Let us not let anyone privatize and take over our faith. NO! Instead, along with the books of common worship they give us, let us use other discourses, your own discourses, from your own resources! Embrace other people's traditions from other places, engage with a global and vast array of liturgical practices the same way that you learn to do in your Bible exegesis and theology classes. Make this worship space as complicated as the world is! And don't let anyone shut you down!

Jesus, who is all in all, is the head of this house, with many rooms. We must follow Jesus and say that those who scatter are NOT from Beelzebul but instead, they are full inhabitants of this house! A house that God owns, not us! We must resist under the power of the Holy Spirit brother and sisters!

*\* Our bodies: God's joy! Our joy! Our bodies movements: the gracing of the Spirit around the world! Our bodies feasting: God's celebration on earth! Singing in a foreign land, let us sing each other songs, dance in this foreign land, pray each other's prayers, preach in and from this foreign liturgical land, and expand the sources of the liturgical books without fear. Embracing alterity, diversity, multiplicity, remembering that we are always in a foreign country whose control belongs only to God. Let us make "imagination a form of political praxis,"<sup>14</sup> and also a form of liturgical and theological praxis. Let us engage into the transnationalization of our liturgies, embrace the cosmopolitanism of our condition, welcome our ethnic blessed bodies as a way of undoing the globalization gone wrong and creating a plurality of social imaginaries in the midst of a world of violence, hunger, economic injustice and fear. We all carry a plethora of cultures in our bodies and we should embrace that diversity within us and in the faith we proclaim. The opening up of our liturgical/life resources, the multiplication of our common books of worship, and oral cultures of worship, daily and liturgical practices, pedagogies, and different spirits within the Spirit of God, all of this expansion have nothing do not with experiences with liturgy<sup>15</sup> itself but rather, they have to do with experiences with God. The expansion of our resources are different channels to understand what life is all about through these encounters with God. How much and when do we actually make a conscious use of our bodies to relate with, live to and worship God? How much our liturgies have impinged theological/liturgical arthritis into our body joints? How much our desires are tied up more frequently towards personal fulfilling than the service to an-other? To co-exist beside each other's bodies, stepping towards each other, holding each other in our arms... of all this engagement and*

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<sup>14</sup> Gomez-Pena, *Conversations Across Borders*, ed. By Laura Levin. (London: Seagull Books, 2011), 111.

<sup>15</sup> Aloysius Pieris offers a new dimension about an Asian way of experience with the Eucharist and he says that "this is certainly not an experiment with the liturgy but an experience of the Trinity." Pieris, Aloysius, "An Asian Way to Celebrate the Eucharist," in *Worship* Volume 81, Number 4, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press,), July 2007. 319

*deep involvement do not need to take away the power of the Holy Spirit from what we have received. We are adding, expanding the circles of tradition, and not destroying any-body. The Body of Christ is always bigger than we imagine...*

Otherwise, our common house under Jesus Christ will continue to collapse, until we all die.

Let us sing!