

PERSPECTIVAS

HISPANIC THEOLOGICAL INITIATIVE

NINETEENTH ISSUE – 2022

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*Perspectivas is a publication of the Hispanic Theological Initiative,
funded by Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey.*

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Perspectivas: Occasional Papers is a publication of the
Hispanic Theological Initiative and is made possible by
Princeton Theological Seminary.

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P E R S P E C T I V A S

NINETEENTH ISSUE | 2022

Editorial [ENGLISH VERSION]

For some time now, I have heard people talk about returning to “normalcy”, to the times before the Coronavirus. Indeed, among some Latina/os/xs and other ethnoracial and cultural communities, COVID changed some of the most basic aspects of human interactions like a handshake, greeting someone with a hug or a kiss, or how physical space is occupied by people. But that is changing as people gain new confidence and get back to some modicum of human interaction.

However, the aspirational return to the times before COVID as if those times were better than now is a matter of perspective. In the words of Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *La lucha continua*. Racialized social and cultural discrimination continue; racialized people continue to be criminalized and deemed foreigners; thousands of seasonal farm workers keep crossing borders to give themselves and their families a fighting chance; and countless migrants continue to make the dangerous journey across political borders. These concerns impact many people from many countries and ethnoracial backgrounds. From a Latina/o/x perspective, these realities were in place since before the pandemic and will continue well beyond the pandemic is under control. Latinas/os/xs continue to work hard at overcoming the social factors and structures that prevent them from contributing to society more fully.

In different ways, the three articles in this issue of *Perspectivas* illustrate how social struggles are part of the reality of Latinas/os/xs at the grassroots. They also show how questions of social justice remain part of the scholarly and theological production of Latinas/os/xs. In the first article, Breno Martins Campos and Fernando Nacimiento critically engage the work of Rubem Alves. They retrace some of the key original insights that made Alves a theologian of hope and liberation. Focusing specifically on the children’s book *The Girl and the Enchanted Bird*, Campos and Nacimiento retrace the development of Alves liberation theology and uncover other strands and thinkers that influenced his thought, including Paul Ricoeur.

In the second article, Antonio Frieze exposes some of the dangers of the rhetoric of pluralism for racialized and minoritized communities. He highlights the experiences of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan and their struggle for recognition of their burial grounds at The Alamo in San Antonio. Frieze exposes how the logic of pluralism flattens distinct sociopolitical identity claims thus not granting any especial recognition to any group even while deploying the rhetoric of inclusion. He proposes the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan might consider adopting the label “Latinx Indigenous” communities as a common bridge identity which can bring mutual benefits to both the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan and Latina/o/x communities.

[Continued on next page]

Finally, Theresa Yugar's third article recounts a wide range of environmental resistance groups both in the USA and in Latin America. Taking the Quechua-Aymara notion of buen vivir or sumak kawsay as inspiration metaphor and framework for environmental struggles, she documents a wide variety of environmental activist groups. She shows how some of these groups have long-standing histories. She also shows that there are newly emerging advocacy groups involved in social justice struggles in a wide range of social concerns.

Whether before, during or after COVID, for Latinas/os/xs struggle does not seem to change much. In other words, struggle is our normal. The editorial team of Perspectivas is pleased to offer these articles as tokens of the diversity of authors involved in the struggle through their writings.

Néstor Medina, Senior Editor
& the editorial team.

P E R S P E C T I V A S

NÚMERO DECIMO-NOVENO | 2022

Editorial [SPANISH VERSION]

Ya por un tiempo, he escuchado a personas hablar de querer regresar a la normalidad, a los tiempos antes del coronavirus. Ciertamente, entre las comunidades latinas y otros grupos etnoraciales y culturales, el COVID cambió algunos de los aspectos más básicos de la interacción humana como un apretón de manos, saludar a alguien con un abrazo o un beso, o la manera de la que las personas ocupan espacios físicos. Eso está cambiando en la medida que las personas se sienten con más confianza y regresan a interactuar mutuamente.

Sin embargo, la aspiración de regresar a los tiempos antes de COVID como si esos fueran mejores que ahora, es una cuestión de perspectiva. En las palabras de Ada María Isasi-Díaz, La lucha continua. La discriminación cultural y racializada continua; personas racializadas continúan siendo criminalizadas y consideradas extranjeras; miles de trabajadores agrícolas continúan cruzando fronteras para darse a sí mismos y a sus familias una oportunidad de luchar; y un sinnúmero de migrantes continúan haciendo el peligroso viaje a través de fronteras políticas. Estas realidades impactan a mucha gente de muchos países y trasfondos etnoraciales. Desde una perspectiva Latina/o/x, estas realidades ya estaban en su lugar desde antes de la pandemia y continuarán después de que la pandemia haya sido controlada. Latinas/os/xs continúan luchando por superar los factores y estructuras sociales que les previenen de contribuir a la sociedad de una mayor manera.

De manera diferente, los tres artículos en este tomo de Perspectivas ilustran como la lucha social es parte de la realidad latina/o/x en las bases. También demuestran que asuntos de justicia social permanecen parte de la producción teológica de Latinas/os/xs. En el primer ensayo, Breno Martins Campos and Fernando Nacimiento abordan críticamente el trabajo de Rubem Alves. Ellos recorren algunos de las ideas originales claves que caracterizaron a Alves como un teólogo de esperanza y liberación. Enfocándose especialmente en el libro para niños/as titulado La niña y el ave encantada, Campos y Nacimiento marcan el desarrollo de la teología de liberación de Alves y descubren otras corrientes y pensadores que influenciaron su pensamiento, incluyendo Paul Ricoeur.

En el segundo artículo, Antonio Fietze desenmascara algunos de los peligros de la retórica del pluralismo para comunidades racializadas y minorizadas. El resalta las experiencias de la comunidad Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan y sus luchas por el reconocimiento de sus cementerios en el Álamo, en San Antonio. Fietze descubre cómo la lógica del pluralismo aplana las diferencias políticas de identidad y así logra no otorgar ningún reconocimiento especial a ningún grupo, incluso a pesar de utilizar la retórica de la inclusión. El propone que a la comunidad Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan le conviene considerar la adopción de la etiqueta “Indígena Latinx” como puente de identidad común que puede traer beneficios mutuos a ambas comunidades Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan y Latina/o/x.

Finalmente, en el tercer artículo, Theresa Yugar recuenta una gran variedad de grupos de resistencia tanto en Los Estados Unidos de América como en Latinoamérica. Tomando la noción aymara/quechua del buen vivir o sumak kawsay como metáfora y marco de trabajo para esfuerzos ambientales, ella documenta una amplia gama de grupos de activismo ambiental. Ella demuestra cómo algunos de estos grupos tienen una historia larga, y como también hay grupos emergentes involucrados en la lucha por la justicia social en una amplia gama de preocupaciones sociales.

Ya sea antes, durante, o después de COVID, para latinas/os/xs la lucha no parece cambiar mucho. En otras palabras, la lucha es nuestra normalidad. El equipo editorial de Perspectivas se complace en ofrecer estos artículos como muestras de la diversidad de autoras/es involucradas/os en la lucha a través de sus escritos.

Néstor Medina, editor principal
& el equipo editorial.

The Church and the Enchanted Theologian

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Abstract

Through the epistemological paths of sociology and philosophy – and based on bibliographic, documentary, and exploratory research – this reflection article contributes to Christian theology studies in Latin America. The research object is the thought of the theologian of hope and liberation, Rubem Alves. This article explores some metaphors from Alves's *The Girl and the Enchanted Bird* as interpretative keys of religious fundamentalism – in the sense of supporting doctrinal statements that leave no room for doubt in the lives of the faithful. It takes as a theoretical background other works by Alves and the concept of tolerance developed by Paul Ricoeur.

• VEA LA PÁGINA 24 PARA LEER ESTE ARTÍCULO EN ESPAÑOL •

Introduction

On the Rubem Alves Institute website, in the section dedicated to the author's biography, we find the following information: "2014 – Enchanted¹ on the 19th of July."² By coincidence or not, five years after his death, two academic events referring to Rubem Alves took place in Brazil—with important repercussions (mainly due to the related academic production). We mention these as a sign of the relevance of the author's life and work, even as an object of study in itself. While these may not be the only two events dedicated to the Brazilian theologian and his intellectual production in 2019, they offer a

¹ The word "enchanted" is used in this article as a reference to Alves's famous book *The Girl and the Enchanted Bird*.

² "Biografia," accessed August 10, 2020, <https://institutorubemalves.org.br/biografia/>.

good sample of Alves's ongoing academic impact and are directly related to this article's scope and objective.

The seminar *Enigmas of Religion: Hope and Liberation in the Work of Rubem Alves* took place on March 11 and 12, 2019, at the Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas, organized by the Research Group: Language, Religion and Culture of the Graduate Program *Stricto Sensu* in Religious Studies. In the online invitation published by the university, Ceci Maria Costa Baptista Mariani, one of the organizers of the event, describes Alves as an author who teaches how to live “a religious experience (the relationship with the Transcendent) in a liberating way.” She continues, “Religion for him is a great enigma. Of God, he says, what can be known is the good it does to our body.”³ As a material legacy of that seminar, *Rubem Alves e as contas de vidro: Variações sobre teologia, mística, literatura e ciência* was published in 2020.⁴

The second event, *Rethinking the Sacred: Rubem Alves and Liberation Theology*, took place⁵ at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) on the 50th anniversary of the publication of Alves's doctoral thesis (“A Theology of Human Hope”).⁶ Within the scope of the general program of the symposium was the founding assembly of the Sociedade Internacional Rubem Alves. The magazine *NUMEN*, a periodical for studies and research on religion in the UFJF Graduate Program in Religious Studies, published the *Dossiê repensando o sagrado: Rubem Alves*⁷ with texts from the event and articles related to the honored theologian.

With this contextual background, we intend to demonstrate using a small empirical sample that Alves's work remains alive in the production of many of his heirs, and his works will likely continue to have a significant impact on several academic fields. Our excerpts from events and publications – arbitrary, to be sure – illustrate that, within the limits of religion and theology, the author is remembered almost entirely by the discourse (and ethos) of liberation. We intend to contribute to the study of Alves's work through the lenses of sociology and philosophy, which support – and simultaneously problematize – contours of repression within religions and religious practices analyzed by the Brazilian theologian. We also hope to flesh out his strands of thought on the opposite spectrum – that of tolerance.

We continue a critical reading of *Protestantism and Repression*, originally published in Portuguese in 1979⁸ and considered by us to be one of the most sociological works in

³ *Enigmas da religião: Esperança e libertação na obra de Rubem Alves*.

⁴ Campos, Mariani, and Ribeiro, *Rubem Alves e as contas de vidro*.

⁵ The event was organized by the Nucleus of Studies in Protestantism and Theologies of the PPG in Science of Religion at UFJF in partnership with the Correlative Research Group: Studies in Culture and Religion of the PPG in Science of Religion at the Federal University of Sergipe.

⁶ The original title of Alves' 1968 doctoral dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary was: “Toward a Theology of Liberation: An Exploration of the Encounter between the Languages of Humanistic Messianism and Messianic Humanism”.

⁷ “Dossier Rethinking the Sacred: Rubem Alves,” accessed August 10, 2020, <https://periodicos.ufjf.br/index.php/numen/issue/view/1391>.

⁸ The edition we use here is from 1985: Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*.

the Alvesian corpus.⁹ We further assess how Peter Berger (and Thomas Luckmann) and Paul Ricoeur contributed to Alves's thinking in critical interaction with Alves's own intellectual and personal trajectory, although it is not our intention to offer an accurate biography. Even so, we note the impossibility of ignoring aspects and facts of Alves's life narrative in our discussion. As the last meaning intentionally attributed to this article, we intend to use the cited references – the sociology of knowledge and hermeneutic philosophy – for a discussion regarding tolerance and the intolerable in Alves's work.

Winds, Hurricane, and Flights of the Enchanted Theologian

According to the Rubem Alves Institute, Alves published 45 books aimed at children from 1983 to 2009.¹⁰ We venture to say that one of the best known and most read of all is *The Girl and the Enchanted Bird* (originally from 1984).¹¹ “This story, I didn't invent it,” reveals Alves; “I was sad seeing the sadness of a child who was crying a farewell... And the story just appeared inside me, almost ready.”¹² Nothing can replace the full reading of the story, but, according to our intentions, we offer a summary of the narrative.

The story starts, “Once upon a time, there was a girl who had a bird as her best friend.” It happens that the bird was enchanted; it flew free, left when it wanted, and returned when it missed home. From the places it visited, the bird brought memories for the girl, printed in colors on the feathers themselves. “The girl loved that bird and could hear it over and over, day after day. And the bird loved the girl, and that's why it always came back.” Still, it always left again because it needed the nostalgia to remain enchanted. One night, when the bird was absent, the girl had “a bad idea.” She decided to imprison her companion when it returned from his trip so that she would not miss it anymore and, therefore, would live happily ever after (as is often the case in fairytales). The cage the girl bought was beautiful, made of silver, and “suitable for a bird that one loves deeply.” As before, the bird arrived, told its stories, revealed its colors, and, tired, fell asleep. The girl trapped it in the cage, careful not to wake it. At dawn, the bird woke up and groaned, “Ah! Girl... what have you done? The spell is broken. My feathers will be ugly, and I will forget the stories... Without longing, love will go away.” The girl did not believe the bird; “she thought it would get used to it.” As time passed, the bird became different; it lost some of its feathers while others turned gray. It stopped singing. The girl, in turn, was bitter. How could she do that to her friend? “She couldn't take it anymore. She opened the cage door.” The bird thanked the girl and acknowledged that it had to leave for the longing to arrive

⁹ Cervantes-Ortiz organized Alves's works in six periods. Protestantism and Repression is located by him in the fifth period from 1975 to 1982 that he characterizes as “those books that show an effort to reach new perspectives of understanding, through the systematic abandonment of the dogmatism typical of traditional Protestant theology, replaced by an attitude of permanent admiration and free expression of ideas, however unorthodox they may seem.” (2005, p. 43-47)

¹⁰ “Obras,” Instituto Rubem Alves, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://institutorubemalves.org.br/acervo/>.

¹¹ The edition we use here is from 1986, without page numbers: Alves, *A menina e o pássaro encantado*, accessed August 16, 2022, <https://qdoc.tips/rubem-alves-a-menina-e-o-passaro-encantado-estoria-infantilpdf-pdf-free.html>.

¹² Alves, *A menina e o pássaro encantado*.

and for it to feel like returning. Now, the girl is neat and beautiful, longing and waiting for her enchanted bird's return with wonderful stories from other places.¹³

Before we speculate about the author's intention, it is appropriate to share some explanations by Alves himself:

This [The Girl and the Enchanted Bird] is a story about separation: when two people who love each other have to say goodbye... After goodbye, there is that immense void: longing. Everything is filled with the presence of an absence. Ah! How good it would be if there were no goodbyes... Some even think of locking those they love in cages so that they can be theirs forever...¹⁴

The Girl and the Enchanted Bird is a story of the separation of two individuals who love each other. Without a doubt, the symbolism Alves describes is plausible – after all, he is the author of the story. However, we do not think it is unreasonable to propose that the story would allow us, by free association, to direct our reflections in another direction: that of the separation between a person and a church that love each other (or have loved each other for a while). In the particular case of this article, we imagine the connection between Alves and the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB, in Portuguese).¹⁵ It is useful for our discussion to know that Alves converted to Protestantism in 1945 (the same year he moved with his family from the state of Minas Gerais to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil) and that, in 1953, moved from the city of Rio de Janeiro to Campinas (state of São Paulo) to begin his Bachelor of Theology at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil). In November 30, 1957, he completed his studies, and received a Bachelor of Theology.¹⁶

In the chapter “From Paradise to the Desert – Autobiographical Reflections” in *O Enigma da religião*, Alves narrates these events in a very interesting way. During his residence and life in the state of Minas Gerais, “I had no awareness of myself, because my world and I merged into one whole”¹⁷ – a world in which everything made sense. When the world offers meaning to life, there is no reason to question or doubt it. But, he continued,

without knowing it – and suddenly – I was expelled from paradise. They moved me to a big city. My “relevant others” dissolved amid the incomprehensible complexity of urban life. They remained

¹³ Alves, *A menina e o pássaro encantado*.

¹⁴ Alves, *A menina e o pássaro encantado*.

¹⁵ For a comprehensive discussion on the relationship between Rubem Alves and the religious institution represented by the IPB, see Leopoldo Cervantes-Ortiz, *A teologia de Rubem Alves: poesia, brincadeira e erotismo*. (Campinas, SAO: Papyrus, 2005).

¹⁶ “Biografia,” Instituto Rubem Alves, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://institutorubemalves.org.br/biografia/>.

¹⁷ Rubem Alves, *O enigma da religião: Esperança e libertação na obra de Rubem Alves* (Campinas, SAO: Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas, 2019), 9–10.

“others” but no longer “relevant.” ... For the first time, I knew the embarrassment of being different. I became aware of myself.¹⁸

Becoming religious – in other words, converting from one world to another – was the way Alves found to overcome this anomie: “If our ‘relevant others’ are reduced to insignificance and impotence, there is a Relevant Other who loves us and knows us, whose power is infinite.”¹⁹ More than merely a religious man, Alves confessed to having become a fundamentalist, in the sense of attributing “ultimate character to his own beliefs.”²⁰ Consequently, he was condemned to attitudes of inquisitorial intolerance against those who differed from him. There is nothing better than a discourse capable of structuring life with ultimate certainties (which free the subject from dealing with the always unfinished reality of existence). “And for anyone who has found this kind of religious experience, the natural path to follow is to become an apostle of its truth. So, I went to the seminary.”²¹

The impact of new winds on Alves’s life, blown during the times of the theological seminary in Campinas, is directly linked to the person and theology of Richard Shaull, a Protestant missionary in Colombia, beginning 1941, and, later, in Brazil,²²:

We arrived together at the same seminar, Campinas, in the year 1953. I [Alves] was a freshman and was full of certainties. Shaull was a teacher and was full of questions. Of course, I didn’t suspect that soon my certainties would fall to the ground; otherwise, I would have run away. One of the illusions of those who are certain is precisely this: that their ideas will never change, as they are true and destined for eternity.²³

Once again, Alves makes a point of presenting himself as a fundamentalist – “a knight-errant, convincing others of his truths and persecuting others who think differently”²⁴ – and, at the same time, a Pietist (a trace of religious identity alien to typical fundamentalism) with a deep desire to live a holy life, more through the expression of emotions and regrets than through the statement of orthodox doctrines. “And perhaps it

¹⁸ Alves, *O enigma da religião*, 10.

¹⁹ Alves, *O enigma da religião*, 11.

²⁰ Alves, *O enigma da religião*, 11.

²¹ Alves, *O enigma da religião*, 12.

²² “For six decades, his relationship with Latin America took many forms. Inspired by John Mackay, Dick Shaull went to Colombia in 1941, where he served a mission. In that first moment, he sought to develop a missiological pastoral theology to interpret a reality deeply affected by poverty, violence, and suffering. The second moment occurred in Brazil, starting in 1953, when he fulfilled the role of an organic theologian in an emerging ecumenical movement that sought to mature a new way of thinking” (our translation) Raimundo César Barreto Jr., “Um convite a sonhar: [An Invitation to Dreaming], 113). A influência de Richard Shaull na formação do pensamento de Rubem Alves, e sua relevância política,” *Numen: Revista de estudos e pesquisa da religião* 22, n. 2 (2019): 113. <https://periodicos.ufjf.br/index.php/numen/article/view/28914>.

²³ Rubem Alves, “O Deus do furacão.” In *De dentro do furacão: Richard Shaull e os primórdios da Teologia da Libertação*, 20 (São Paulo: Sagarana; CEDI; CLAI; Programa Ecumênico de Pós-Graduação em Ciências da Religião, 1985).

²⁴ Alves, “O Deus do furacão,” 20–21.

is due to this – because they are opposite attitudes – the fact that the precarious synthesis in which I lived has finally broken,” he acknowledged.²⁵

Shaull (and the entire theological community he represented) was decisive in yet another paradigmatic shift by Alves. The simple world of Alves and his seminar colleagues – God in heaven (and everywhere), earth as a temporary place to live, heaven or hell as an eternal destination for souls, and the conviction that “the Church had nothing to do with the petty quarrels of men [*sic*]”²⁶ – was swept away by the idea that the same word (God) can name the domesticable sacred as well as the wild and indomitable sacred. Shaull spoke of revolution, and the church, in Alves’s conception, became responsible for the here and now because his God was “the wind that comes out through the deserts, raising the dead, and through the cities, whistling in the markets, schools, barracks, in palaces, in banks.”²⁷ Secularization, for Alves, was no longer synonymous with the death of God – or the end of the sacred – but, rather, that “God escaped from the religious greenhouses [the metaphor being that of an internal and protected garden] that we built and invaded the world.”²⁸

In Brazil, instead of the revolution that Shaull saw in various signs of the time, the result was the 1964 civil-military coup. The wind had changed direction – or, better, according to Alves’s theology, were no longer indications of God revealed in the hurricane (according to the image proposed by Shaull) but of other blows. The relationship of the Brazilian evangelical churches in general and the IPB in particular with the military dictatorship is already well documented. According to Shaull himself, in the preface he wrote for *Protestantism and Repression*, “When the military regime consolidated its power, members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy took a courageous stand against repression. The Protestant churches remained silent; and in some instances, gave the regime their support.”²⁹ And they began to persecute the internal voices that denounced the regime of exception established in the country.

With the civil-military coup and the establishment of the dictatorship in Brazil, the church’s commitment to social responsibilities changed. The environment of pluralism of ideas was replaced by the “establishment of the hegemony of the fundamentalist model implanted in the Supreme Council [general national assembly of the denomination] of Fortaleza, in 1966”³⁰ – to reveal that tension and conflict were already established in the struggle for power, domination and hegemony within the denomination.

A Cage for the Enchanted Theologian

²⁵ Alves, “O Deus do furacão,” 23.

²⁶ Alves, “O Deus do furacão,” 21.

²⁷ Alves, “O Deus do furacão,” 22.

²⁸ Alves, “O Deus do furacão,” 22.

²⁹ Richard Shaull, “Foreword,” *Protestantism and Repression: A Brazilian Case Study*, by Rubem Alves (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), xv.

³⁰ Héléson Da Silva, “A era do furacão: História contemporânea da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (1959–1966).” Master’s thesis (São Paulo: Universidade Metodista, 1996), 214.

As a microcosm of historical Protestantism in Brazil, we cannot fail to consider the complexity of the IPB – as of any other institution, religious or not – and the fact that it has always had to deal, internally and externally, with contradictions. At first, IPB was a church (ecclesial community) capable of offering to the young Alves – a complex individual marked himself by contradictions, like all others – the overcoming of anguish in the face of anomie caused by the loss of his relevant others. Simultaneously, the same and only conversion from the world to the church was both liberation (from the world) and imprisonment (to the church). In a second moment (within the so-called “era of the hurricane,” during the period of influence of Shaul), the IPB represented for Alves an opening to the future as it contributed to freeing him from the protection of fundamentalism. And finally, in a third moment, the same IPB made it clear to Alves that it would not allow the comings and goings (literal or symbolic) he desired and practiced. The coloring of the liberation theologian’s history and stories became scandalous for that ecclesiastical denomination.

“Ah! Girl... What have you done?”³¹ the enchanted bird said to his companion, who wanted him only for herself with no freedom to come and go. Alves, in turn, wrote a document for his church, in the tone of a final farewell, dated September 15, 1970. “Ah! IPB... What did you do?” the theologian asked. Here is an excerpt from his request for exoneration (waiver of jurisdiction) from IPB³²: “I am convinced, theologically, that the community of faith has already emigrated [from IPB]. No legal and power structure can contain it or domesticate it. ... Love and truth often compel us to emigrate. ... The vocation for freedom is the vocation to emigrate.”³³

A few years later, already out of IPB, in *Protestantism and Repression* (the formal object of investigation in this article), following the molds of the Weberian methodology, Alves proposed that Protestantism in Brazil should be divided into at least three ideal types:

1. *Right-Doctrine* Protestantism (abbreviated as RDP throughout this [Alves’s] book). What is its characteristic feature? The fact that it stresses *agreement with a series of doctrinal affirmations, which are regarded as expressions of the truth* and which must be affirmed *without any shadow of doubt*, as the precondition for participation in the ecclesial community.³⁴

The other two are Sacramental Protestantism, whose emphasis is on emotion and mysticism in the liturgy and sacraments, not on the correctness of doctrines, and Protestantism of the Spirit focused on a subjective experience of ecstasy typical of

³¹ Alves, *A menina e o pássaro encantado*.

³² We used as a reference the full transcript of the letter by Rubem Alves to the Western Presbytery of Minas recorded by João Dias de Araújo in *Inquisição sem fogueiras: Vinte anos de história da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (1954–1974)*, 3rd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: ISER, 1985), through which we can also resolve an apparent contradiction: Alves was never stripped of his ministry at IPB; rather, he asked to be dismissed. However, as Araújo indicates, many pastors went through the mandatory dismissal of the denomination, and many were related to Alves or, rather, the “spirit” he represented.

³³ De Araújo, *Inquisição sem fogueiras*, 99.

³⁴ Rubem Alves, *Protestantism and Repression: A Brazilian Case Study* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 8.

Pentecostal denominations. Obviously, it is the first type of Protestantism that Alves's book deals with—which, in fact, can be considered the fundamentalist way of being Protestant. As for the RDP, Alves does not propose a discussion that is solely conceptual—which would already be instigating—but, rather, its elaboration proposes a concrete and historically located foundation.

I have drawn my empirical materials from the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. This does not mean that all the members of that Church fit into the type I am describing: i.e., RDP. Nor does it mean that the validity of my conclusions are confined to that denomination. Wherever we find the type, there we will find its characteristics behavior.³⁵

Why the IPB, then? In *Protestantism and Repression* Alves does not explain his personal relationship with the Protestant denomination in question; rather, he explains his choice as follows: “The fact is that in recent years violent intramural conflicts broke out within that organization.”³⁶ It is therefore from the end of the 1950s until the time of Alves' research in the 1970s that, according to him, the RDP won the IPB – that is, it gained visibility and abandoned the scruples of becoming totalitarian. As he wrote, “I am interested in that victorious type, in its spirit. It lay hidden in the denomination. When it was challenged by a different spirit, it revealed itself in a series of concrete political acts that ended up squelching dissident voices”³⁷ – Alves's statement reveals a power play and a certain tension within the IPB. In the foreword to *Protestantism and Repression*, Shaull opens his arguments with the following opinion:

Over the last twenty years, incredible changes have taken place in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. In 1959, on the occasion of its centennial celebrations, this Church was acclaimed as the outstanding success story of Protestantism in Latin America; it was hailed for its vitality, its prospects for continued growth, and for the role it seemed destined to play in the life of that nation. Today, after fifteen years of domination by a small group of reactionary leaders, it has been decimated. Many who once spoke of its great promise now wonder how long it can survive. The word “Presbyterian” now calls to mind the destructiveness of religious fanaticism and repression.³⁸

Shaull's preface reveals two aspects of his personal and political engagement that, even if they do not compromise the text, should also not be silenced. (1) He poses himself as the subject of the history lived by IPB along with a new generation (of young pastors and laypeople) committed to Brazil's social challenges in the late 1950s and early 1960s. (2) The argument of his text is to warn Protestantism in the USA not to follow the paths blazed by the institution that established itself as the heir of American Protestantism in Brazil, because, for him, American Presbyterianism seemed to flirt dangerously with repression. As we anticipated, the militant character of the text does not diminish its academic strength and relevance, but it does make room for us to present three

³⁵ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 8.

³⁶ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 8.

³⁷ Rubem Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 8.

³⁸ Shaull, “Foreword,” xi.

relativizations. First, IPB has passed its 160 years in Brazil – that is, its existence (or survival) occurred independently of Shaull’s (and Alves’s) projects for it; the question of its social relevance and its attachment to constituted power is another discussion. Second, the fact that the so-called small group of reactionary leaders came to power in 1966 does not mean that group was created or organized that year. On the contrary, it was already present within the denomination and represented significant sectors in its correlation of forces and power. Finally, the attentive reader of *Protestantism and Repression* has already noticed that all the empirical material of Alves’s analysis was extracted from sources of the IPB itself, mainly the newspapers *O Puritano* and *Brasil Presbiteriano*, from the late 1940s to the 1960s, which allows us to consider that the RDP was not in a latent state at the IPB before 1966 but in full activity.

It seems to us that there is a breath of disappointment from Shaull – in addition to praise and recognition by fact and right – in relation to the Alves in *Protestantism and Repression*. For Shaull, he was more concerned with understanding the *modus operandi* of Brazilian Protestantism in the past than in showing how it could be in the future. On the other hand, he does not deny that, in the last chapter of *Truth and Dogmatism*, the Brazilian theologian suggested the alternative form of faith including doubt as an antidote to the RDP. We believe that Alves himself has not shied away from a methodology that would allow his research to also be an intervention – that is, in addition to a reckoning with the past – and that his results would also add interest or conviction that the world can be changed or at least that people can change (from one world to another). Thus, *Protestantism and Repression* is also a political act. As a heretic, the title attributed to him by the IPB, Alves assumes that he has his conviction, does not give up on it, and hopes that others can also convert to his thoughts and worldview.

Language cannot be thought of merely as the effect of a cause; Alves is addressing some of Karl Marx’s responses to left-wing Hegelians, notably regarding the assumption that the world is sustained by consciousness. Therefore, Alves’s solution to the question is to emphasize that language cannot be taken simply as “the symbolic articulation of material relationships.”³⁹ For this very reason, Alves recognized the importance of Ricoeur’s philosophy in the truth-based discussion: “Language is both infrastructure and superstructure. It is necessary here to deliberately renounce the scheme of infra and superstructure and face a strictly circular phenomenon in which two terms alternatively are included and surpassed.”⁴⁰

Alves notes, “On the one hand, language cannot be regarded as the thing that sustains the world. On the other hand, we cannot possibly understand its function if we do not realize that language does help to keep the world going.”⁴¹ With arguments supported by the sociology of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann,⁴² Alves assumed that, if our knowledge works, then we suspend doubts about it – which also ensures that things work well and that life is organized in terms of future events. From sociology to theology, Alves

³⁹ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, xxxii.

⁴⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *História e verdade* (Rio de Janeiro: Forense, 1968), 206–207.

⁴¹ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, xxxii.

⁴² Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 44, 104.

claimed that Protestants call this Providence. Hence the importance of religious conversion: “the process of restructuring one’s schemes of meaning and value that can follow upon a crisis.”⁴³

Precisely because conversion can structure a subject’s biography, he divided his life into before and after conversion – from anomie to cosmos.⁴⁴ But there is no denying that, if taken to the fullest, any language will deliver or reveal its contradictions – which is no different from the language that supports a religious conversion. Hence the importance of a well-built cage, whose door is open only for new birds to enter, never for their departure. The girl needs to be vigilant. Consequently, for the PRD, in the context of IPB or outside it, there cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt when it comes to the statute of truth. Therefore, the sin of heresy becomes the only one that cannot be forgiven because, according to the logic of the RDP, sinners are not willing to change their attitude or to repent, for they are convinced of the truth: “Heretics have not succumbed to fleshly weakness; they have rejected some absolute knowledge and denied its claim to truth, proposing a new truth.”⁴⁵

To those who come out of the cage and want to return to it with news, compelled and affected by the new winds of doctrine (as is said in evangelical jargon to name heresy), putting the whole order at risk, only severe condemnation remains. Alves adds, and “to the infiniteness of the guilt corresponds...the infiniteness of the vengeance: eternal punishment.”⁴⁶ As for the primordial relationship between guilt and revenge, the Alvesian argument refers to Paul Ricoeur to say that we face a “matrix of terror.”⁴⁷ At least in the RDP, “the claim of purity for revenge”⁴⁸ reveals itself to be a God who sees everything and is always ready to punish through the human ecclesiastical agency responsible for safeguarding the truth and the institutional order.

That is to say, it is neither possible nor necessary for a church, as a community of true believers, custodian and guardian of sound doctrine, to live with the heretic and the related heresy, which can jeopardize the entire organization of a religious denomination. The obsession with truth, unconsciously, equates the RDP’s discourse with that of a primordial temptation to absolute knowledge; in other words, the RDP presents itself to those who belong in its circles as the updated voice of the serpent of the biblical myth. To be like God—to know all good and all evil—is what the supporters of the RDP want:

A “desire” has sprung up, the desire for infinity; but that infinity is not the infinity of reason and happiness, as we have interpreted it at the beginning of this work; it is the infinity of desire itself; it is the desire of desire, taking possession of knowing, of willing, of doing, and of being: “Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”.⁴⁹

⁴³ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 28.

⁴⁴ Peter Berger, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanist Perspective* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 63.

⁴⁵ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 138.

⁴⁶ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 35.

⁴⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967/1969), 30.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 30.

⁴⁹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 253.

According to Alves, the RDP wished to offer (and did offer) knowledge in such a way that it made faith useless. If everything were known (and in the right way), then there were no risks; but without risks, there was also no faith:

As Ricoeur suggests, it is necessary that we move beyond the circle of endless hermeneutics approximations, which place us on the level of simple comparisons. And this is done by means of a wager (Ricoeur 355). The assertion of faith, therefore, is not “I know that” but rather “I wager that.”⁵⁰

Cages and More Cages

The metaphor of “the church and the enchanted theologian” seems to offer a certain originality against studies published previously about Alves’s relationship with IPB (and vice versa).⁵¹ Even so, we believe it is necessary to go ahead and deepen the innovative character of the present article by investigating another aspect of fundamentalist cages similar to that of the RDP according to the exploratory character that Alves gave to the case of IPB in *Protestantism and Repression*. Following the inspiration from Alves, himself a reader of Paul Ricoeur (as already indicated in previous sections), the French philosopher is also our intellectual travel companion, in particular, in two of his publications: “Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable” from 1988 and “The Erosion of Tolerance and the Resistance of the Intolerable” published in 1996. Our hypothesis for the purposes of this article is that intolerance is nothing but the RDP’s own production and cage as well as those of other doctrinal movements (with ethical consequences), whether religious or not, with a pathological obsession with exclusive or exclusivist mastery of the absolute truth.

Let us begin, however, by recalling some observations by Alves himself to guide the development of the argument. He describes the obsession with truth, as in the RDP, according to the premise that salvation—which begins in this life and extends into eternity—coincides with the knowledge of the truth:

RDP assumes that salvation is a function of knowing the truth. It must logically conclude that its knowledge is the truth, that it is an absolute and final knowledge which must be upheld without vacillations or concessions. Doubt is a symptom of damnation. Its discourse and real being coincide, hence it holds a monopoly on truth. It possesses a body of knowledge that is totally objective and absolute.⁵²

Thus, for the RDP to offer a safe environment, and one that leads to salvation, its speech must be an accurate description of reality. Being and knowing must converge

⁵⁰ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 52.

⁵¹ For example, neither Cervantes-Ortiz nor Iuri Andréas Reblin – two excellent and comprehensive works on the thought, biography, and bibliography of Rubem Alves – explore the relationship proposed here between the girl (institution/Protestantism/IPB/cage) and the enchanted theologian (Rubem Alves/bird). See Cervantes-Ortiz, *A Iuri Andréas Reblin, Outros cheiros, outros sabores...: o pensamento teológico de Rubem Alves* (São Leopoldo: Oikos, 2009).

⁵² Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 195.

perfectly in such a way that the RDP is the holder of the discourse that reveals the truths that lead to salvation. The RDP's cage marks a total security zone in which it is possible to live "in truth"; it also clearly distinguishes an "inside" from an "outside"—and what is outside neither should nor deserves to be experienced. Otherwise, the security of the internal space—and not only for the subject but also for the group—is forever compromised.

Therefore, we are interested, even if briefly, in exploring the fact that, inside the cage the coincidence between being and knowing (represented by speech) is exclusive. Not only is there only truth in the doctrines proposed by the RDP, but also there aren't, as there cannot be, truths outside the RDP. A question is imposed on the bird-theologian: Why fly if all that is necessary to live well and achieve salvation is in the cage? There is no possibility of finding the truth outside the cage—which, thus, comes to be seen and experienced not as deprivation but as a safe refuge, protected from the outer emptiness (in evangelical jargon, "from the world outside").

Alves names the inside and outside of the cage, respectively, by the concepts of orthodoxy and heterodoxy (or heresy), according to the assumptions of the RDP, and adds a warning that the dichotomy between orthodoxy and heresy cannot be sustained except by intolerance:

[T]he dark side of this obsession is RDP's intolerance towards anything it defines as error vis-à-vis its absolute truth. A fundamental opposition undergirds the world of absolute truth: orthodoxy versus heterodoxy, correct thinking versus heresy. And since orthodoxy is bound up with the crucial problem of the eternal salvation of souls, absolute truth must be intolerant. Only doubters can be tolerant. When love of truth is identified with actual possession of the truth, the advocates of truth must be intolerant towards those who have a different way of thinking.⁵³

Like bars of a cage protecting the truth that lives exclusively inside the cage, intolerance must be the impermeable protection for the soul of the faithful against the denial of the truth (the non-truth), which is heterodoxy (or heresy). Since the whole truth is inside the cage – and only there – it must be a hermetically sealed space to prevent the movement of non-truths from the outside in. Such movement would only bring impurities to the safe and correctly ordered environment (orthos, orthodox) inside the cage. However, the same cage must also protect its residents against the temptation to move from the inside out. According to the logic of the RDP, wandering in the outer space of heterodoxy is, at best, a waste of time and, at worst, a loss of life. Intolerance is the material that sustains the closed spiritual environment of the RDP cage. Such material can even be precious, like the silver of the cage in the story of the girl and the enchanted bird, because "at first glance this obsession with truth would seem to be an extraordinary virtue."⁵⁴

⁵³ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 195.

⁵⁴ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 195.

At this point, the contributions of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur to our argument come into the picture in a more decisive way.⁵⁵ For our part, we will dialogue in an Alvesian manner with Ricoeur but in a way that Alves himself could not – even if only due to the chronology of the publications. In Ricoeur’s “Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable,” we find support for a structural analysis of what we are considering the bars of the RDP cage – and of all other similar cages, as we have already stated. Ricoeur suggests that one should approach the issue of tolerance by means of the exclamation: “This is intolerable!”⁵⁶ As a cry of indignation, it helps us think of a crucial distinction in the use of the concept of tolerance. Is the one who shouts the tolerant, outraged in the face of an unjust act (abjection), or the intolerant, who does not accept the difference (rejection)?

Ricoeur breaks down the denotations of the concept of tolerance according to three sociopolitical contexts: the state, cultural institutions, and religious and theological institutions. In each of these potential milieus and contexts of intolerance, a different type of cage is revealed, which needs to be distinguished and analyzed. The French philosopher warns of possible genus confusion since it is necessary to ask, “[W]hat is valid in the sphere of the constitutional right [State] also applies to mentalities and cultural traditions? What if the term [intolerance] doesn’t change in its meaning, or even loses its applicability, once extended in terms of religious practice and theological reflection?”⁵⁷ The Ricoeurian analytical framework, therefore, provides us with a matrix with the three contexts in which the tolerance-intolerance dyad manifests itself – state, culture, and religion – and two forms of tolerance-intolerance: abjection and rejection.

Ricoeur suggests an analysis of tolerance at the state level according to the political philosopher John Rawls’ concept of justice, which emphasizes the need to maximize the possibility of minorities’ expression, characterized by their socioeconomic situation, worldview, or religious beliefs.⁵⁸ Therefore, we return to the question of the truth in a very different way because, according to Ricoeur, in the institutional scope of the state, what is at stake is not the truth itself but the arbitration between conflicting claims. Ricoeur expands his account of tolerance in relation to dialogue with Rawls at the state level. For him, the most influential arguments and debates on tolerance were developed at the cultural level, mainly in the context of the Enlightenment, as a reaction to the religious intolerance of the previous period. Through a long and painful historical process, tolerance becomes an option to let others be different or think differently from us. For Ricoeur, it is essential to recognize that the case is not the same as the annihilation of convictions – which would bring the argument closer to absolute relativism. On the contrary, the conflictual consensus of tolerance on the cultural plane arises from the

⁵⁵ Ricoeur himself was of the reformed (or Calvinist) tradition, like the Brazilian (Presbyterian) theologian and also the RDP, despite his continuous and intentional effort to separate his philosophy from his Christian beliefs.

⁵⁶ Paul Ricoeur, “Tolérance, intolérance, intolérable,” *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, 134, n. 2 (1988): 435–450.

⁵⁷ Ricoeur, *Tolérance, intolérance, intolérable*, 435. Our translation. Original: “*ce qui vaut dans la sphère du droit constitutionnel vaut-il au plan des mentalités et des traditions culturelles? Et le terme ne change-t-il pas tout à fait de sens, si même il ne perd pas toute application, une fois étendu au plan de la pratique religieuse et de la réflexion théologique?*”

⁵⁸ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

rejection of a pathological impulse – possibly, but not necessarily – linked to the will to impose one’s convictions on others. The drama is established because, by accepting a worldview different from our belief, we find ourselves faced with the possibility of ignoring the difference between true and false, and “that would be to give equal rights to truth and error.”⁵⁹ The vertigo of the possibility of us being wrong becomes dread of divergent thinking, which threatens our identity. It is at the threshold of the precipice of conviction that we must choose between tolerance and violence.

The recognition of one’s freedom mediates the maintenance of our convictions and the acceptance of different thinking. Such recognition leads to the fundamental category of respect for one’s decision at the interpersonal level, which is the counterpart of justice at the institutional level. The risk of this domestication of the urge to impose our conviction due to the respect for others’ thoughts is that of relativizing our own thought. This seems to be one of the essential points for understanding religious intolerance, especially in institutionalized forms, such as the RDP case. For Ricoeur, the answer to the point of balance is in the formula of “conflictual consensus” as it makes room for the recognition of the other – that is, consensual points are sought, but the consensus remains conflictual, an index that the convictions have not been dissipated in relativism that can destroy convictions “from within.”⁶⁰ It is intriguing to consider the feeling of fear that accompanies the possibility of losing our convictions on a personal level, just as it is interesting to replicate the same exercise in the case of religious institutions where the fear of losing community convictions may take hold due to the recognition of others’ convictions. Still, on the cultural level, Ricoeur names the intolerable act as one that abstracts itself from the sphere of mutual respect for disrespecting one’s freedom.⁶¹

Underlying this dilemma of tolerance and the intolerable is the perception of a doctrine as either truth or conviction, which opens space for the other to be different and choose other convictions even if they are distant from the conviction of the group to which one belongs. This dynamic is a transformation that, for our understanding, has a direct impact on the structure of the cage by replacing the impenetrable metal of intolerance with the volatility of a simple nest of straws and sticks, which remains a common space but is now delimited by shared and celebrated convictions. The price to be paid is the risk of the fragility of those convictions.

What about religious and theological tolerance? One of the two parts of Ricoeur’s answer is hermeneutic in the sense that the symbolic source of the Bible, whose literal reading is the basis of the RDP, is always open to new interpretations – which should awaken tolerance for alternative meanings that are manifested at the institutional level of the plurality of ecclesial communities.⁶² It is a horizontal dimension of tolerance on the theological level that must be complemented by a vertical dimension, born from the recognition of God as the Absolute Other, who is always beyond our rationality and our certainties. The recognition of our limitations when it comes to the divine Mystery should corroborate the acceptance of different perspectives that are found in common practices,

⁵⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Tolérance, intolérance, intolérable*, 444 (Our translation).

⁶⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Tolérance, intolérance, intolérable*, 444.

⁶¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Tolérance, intolérance, intolérable*, 444.

⁶² Paul Ricoeur, *Tolérance, intolérance, intolérable*, 444.

such as charity, in a sense not far from the conflictual consensus on the cultural plane. On the religious plane, the intolerant is intolerable.

In another text, the French philosopher defines tolerance as “a personal and collective virtue, which is the result of an asceticism in the exercise of power.”⁶³ He proposes a scale that suggests interesting analogies regarding the construction of cages of intolerance. At the most basic level, we only support differing views because we do not have the power to do anything else. We cannot, for example, bring the other by force into our cage, nor can we prevent the other from existing. Next, at the first intermediate level, we disapprove of others’ flights. Still, we make an effort to accept them and respect the fact that they want to fly even if we still maintain our belief that the cage, or the nest, is the right place to live. At the second intermediate level, tolerance ceases to only passively accept that the other can fly somewhere that is, at best, dangerous and, at worst, harmful and deadly. The attitude shifts to an active tolerance, recognizing the possibility that the other’s conviction may also be part of a nest built on the tree of truth. The flight may be worth it but we are still convinced that our nest is a good place to be. Finally, there is the level at which we are convinced that all cages and nests are illusions, including our own. Thus, tolerance ceases to exist because convictions disappear.

It would seem that an interesting key to understanding the attachment of the RDP to truth is the failure to recognize the intermediate levels of tolerance. The simplification of the dualism between truth and perdition prevents cages from becoming nests (in an immense tree of truth) because nests are always in danger of becoming illusions.

Final Considerations

With expectation and some measure of security supported by empirical assessment, we can say that the studies of Alves’s work are an immense field and are only at the beginning. The disciplines devoted to research on the author’s thinking are diverse— theology, religious studies, education, literature, philosophy (even with the resistance of some philosophers), politics, psychoanalysis, and so on. Congresses, symposia, and seminars debating Alvesian themes have taken place all over Brazil, the country of origin of the theologian of *Hope and Liberation*, as well as in other places in the world. In the introduction of this article, as paradigmatic examples, we cited two events in 2019 with subsequent publications. In 2020, other meetings were already held to discuss Alves’s thoughts and legacy. Here, at least, three directions were pointed by the winds for this article’s final considerations.

The first is to assess whether Alves was right or wrong in publishing *Religion and Repression* about 30 years after the launch of *Protestantism and Repression*,⁶⁴ keeping the previous text in full with only the title changed and—it is true—adding a preface entitled “Thirty Years Later.” Religions are institutions that claim to have placed the

⁶³ Paul Ricoeur, “The Erosion of Tolerance and the Resistance of the Intolerable,” In *Tolerance between Intolerance and the Intolerable*, edited by Paul Ricoeur, 189. (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996).

⁶⁴ It might be worthy emphasize that, in 2005, Rubem Alves made the decision to extrapolate the foundations and consequences of his *Protestantism and Repression*, which deals with the PRD (an ideal-type), to religion (in general), when publishing the book *Religion and Repression* (published only in Portuguese).

enchanted bird in a cage. They do not realize that the creature in their cages of words is a “stuffed bird.”⁶⁵ In the text, Alves tells us that he lived in a cage of words for many years—and he enjoyed being imprisoned—but a lot has changed, and we have already dealt with biographical aspects of Alves in the previous sections. The remaining question concerns the following:

The temptation of absolutes is a universal characteristic of the human spirit. We all want to own the truth. In order to have the truth, it will have to be caged. To cage the truth, it is necessary to cage freedom and thought. I believe, therefore, that the conclusions of this book go beyond the limits of Protestantism and can be applied to other religions. These are the reasons why I suggested changing the original title, *Protestantism and Repression*, to *Religion and Repression*.⁶⁶

Methodologically, could the author transform an ideal type, the RDP, into religion as a whole? Moreover, theologically, could he state that every religion and all religions are cages that imprison? We believe that this may not be the case, but this debate is left for another occasion.

The second possible direction, inspired by Alves and Shaull—one that is simultaneously epistemological, theological, and political—would be to try to understand what the joining and engagement of IPB intellectual, theological, and political cadres in the current Brazilian federal government of president Jair Messias Bolsonaro means to IPB and the political scene in Brazil. However, it may be more prudent to allow time before we pin down the significance and risks of this flight of leaders of the denomination in question out of the cage.

Finally, in the third and last direction with which we chose to end this article, we want to recover here an opinion of Louis Schweitzer:

If we are going to react [against fundamentalism], we need to be careful not to reproach people who don't think like us. ... Certainly, we will have to oppose, but always patiently reach out for dialogue, so that, in our thinking and in our practice, we do not become the image of the other reflected in the mirror.⁶⁷

Given that we consider ourselves neither dogmatic nor intolerant, we merely wish to point out a risk that the Alvesian community may encounter: that of creating a cage around itself, however beautiful it may be. We must understand ourselves belong to a nest, fragile, in the immense tree of knowledge. In conclusion, we must accept even those who like to jump from branch to branch; when they return, they are beautiful and colorful. An “Alvesianism of the Straight Doctrine” would be intolerable (in the sense of abjection).

⁶⁵ Alves, *Religião e Repressão*, 9.

⁶⁶ Alves, *Religião e Repressão*, 13–14.

⁶⁷ Schweitzer, “O fundamentalismo protestante,” 42.

La iglesia y el teólogo encantado

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Resumen

Siguiendo los caminos epistemológicos de la sociología y la filosofía—y con base en investigación bibliográfica, documentales, y exploratorias—este artículo de reflexión contribuye a la teología cristiana en Latinoamérica. El objeto de esta investigación es el pensamiento del teólogo de esperanza y liberación, Rubem Alves. Este artículo explora algunas de las metáforas en el trabajo de Alves, *La niña y el pájaro encantado*, como claves interpretativas de fundamentalismo religioso—en el sentido de apoyar enunciados doctrinales que no dejan lugar para la duda en la vida de los fieles. Se toma como trasfondo teórico otros trabajos de Alves y el concepto de Tolerancia de Paul Ricoeur.

• SEE PAGE 8 FOR ENGLISH VERSION •

Introducción

En la sección dedicada a la biografía del autor de la página web del Instituto Rubem Alves, encontramos la siguiente información: “2014 – Encantado¹ el 19 de julio”.² Cinco años después de su muerte, sea por coincidencia o no, en Brasil ocurrieron dos eventos académicos relacionados a Rubem Alves, con importantes repercusiones (principalmente por la contribución académica que estos dejaron). Los mencionamos como muestra de la relevancia de la vida y obra del autor, incluso como objeto de estudio en sí mismo. Aunque estos no son los únicos dos eventos en 2019 dedicados al teólogo brasileño y su producción

¹La palabra “encantado” se utiliza en este artículo como referencia al famoso libro de Alves *La niña y el pájaro encantado*.

² “Biografía”, consultado el 10 de agosto de 2020, <https://institutorubemalves.org.br/biografia/>.

intelectual, ambos ofrecen una buena muestra del constante impacto académico de Alves y están directamente relacionados con el objetivo y argumento de este artículo.

El seminario *Enigmas de la Religión: Esperanza y Liberación en la Obra de Rubem Alves* se llevó a cabo los días 11 y 12 de marzo de 2019, en la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Campinas, organizado por el Grupo de Investigación: *Lengua, Religión y Cultura* del Programa Graduado *Stricto Sensu* en Estudios en Religión. En la invitación en línea publicada por la universidad, Ceci Maria Costa Baptista Mariani, una de las organizadoras del evento, describe a Alves como un autor que enseña a vivir “una experiencia religiosa (la relación con lo Trascendente) de forma liberadora”. Continúa diciendo: “La religión para él es un gran enigma. De Dios, según Alves, lo que podemos saber es el bien que hace a nuestro cuerpo”.³ Como producto de este seminario, en 2020 se publicó el libro *Rubem Alves e as contas de vidro: Variações sobre teologia, mística, literatura e ciência*.⁴

El segundo evento, *Repensar lo Sagrado: Rubem Alves y la Teología de la Liberación*, tuvo lugar⁵ en la Universidad Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF) durante el cincuenta aniversario de la publicación de la tesis doctoral de Alves (“Una Teología de la Esperanza Humana”).⁶ Dentro del ámbito del programa general del simposio ocurrió la Asamblea que fundó la *Sociedade Internacionais Rubén Alves*. La revista *NUMEN*, una publicación de estudios e investigaciones sobre la religión del Programa Posgrado en Estudios en Religión de la UFJF, publicó el *Dossiê repensando o sagrado: Rubem Alves*⁷ con textos y artículos del evento relacionados al reconocido teólogo.

Con este trasfondo contextual, pretendemos demostrar, utilizando una pequeña muestra empírica, que la obra de Alves sigue latente en algunos de sus seguidores, y que es probable que sus obras continúen teniendo un impacto significativo en varios espacios académicos. Nuestros extractos de eventos y publicaciones, sin duda arbitrarios, muestran que, dentro de los límites de la religión y la teología, el autor es recordado, casi en su totalidad por el discurso (y el *ethos*) de la liberación. En este artículo pretendemos contribuir al estudio de la obra de Alves utilizando los lentes de la sociología y la filosofía, que sustentan – y al mismo tiempo problematizan – los contornos de represión dentro de las religiones y prácticas religiosas analizadas por el teólogo brasileño. De igual manera, esperamos desmenuzar algunas de sus líneas de pensamiento sobre el espectro opuesto: la tolerancia.

³ Enigmas da religião: Esperança e libertação na obra de Rubem Alves.

⁴ Campos, Mariani and Ribeiro, *Rubem Alves y as contas de vidro*.

⁵ El evento fue organizado por el Núcleo de Estudios en Protestantismo y Teologías del PPG en Ciencias de la Religión de la UFJF en colaboración con el Grupo de Investigación Correlativo: Estudios en Cultura y Religión del PPG en Ciencias de la Religión de la Universidad Federal de Sergipe.

⁶ The original title of Alves' 1968 doctoral dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary was: “Toward a Theology of Liberation: An Exploration of the Encounter between the Languages of Humanistic Messianism and Messianic Humanism”

⁷ “Dossier Rethinking the Sacred: Rubem Alves,” accessed August 10, 2020, <https://periodicos.ufjf.br/index.php/numen/issue/view/1391> .

Luego de este análisis, haremos una lectura crítica de *El Protestantismo y la Represión*, publicado originalmente en portugués en 1979⁸ y considerado por nosotros como uno de los trabajos más sociológicos del corpus Alvesiano.⁹ También evaluaremos cómo Peter Berger (y Thomas Luckmann) y Paul Ricoeur contribuyeron al pensamiento de Alves y sus críticas interacciones con la propia trayectoria intelectual y personal de Alves; aunque no sea nuestra intención, en este artículo, ofrecer una biografía detallada. Aun así, nos parece imposible ignorar datos de la vida de Alves en nuestra discusión. Como última aportación, intencionalmente atribuida a este artículo, pretendemos utilizar las referencias citadas – la sociología del conocimiento y la filosofía hermenéutica – para una discusión sobre la tolerancia y lo intolerable en la obra de Alves.

Vientos, huracán y vuelos del teólogo encantado

Según el Instituto Rubem Alves, el teólogo brasileño publicó 45 libros dirigidos a niños desde 1983 hasta 2009.¹⁰ Nosotros nos atrevemos a decir que uno de los textos más conocidos y leídos de todos es *La niña y el pájaro encantado* (originalmente publicado 1984).¹¹ “Esta historia, no la inventé yo”, revela Alves; “Estaba triste al ver la tristeza de una niña que lloraba una despedida... Y la historia simplemente apareció dentro de mí, casi lista para escribirse”.¹² Es imposible ofrecer todos los detalles que una lectura completa de la historia nos proporcionaría, sin embargo, para propósitos de nuestras intenciones, ofrecemos a continuación un resumen del texto.

La historia comienza narrando: "Había una vez una niña que tenía un pájaro que era su mejor amigo". Este pájaro estaba encantado; volaba libremente, se iba cuando quería y regresaba cuando extrañaba su hogar. El pájaro siempre traía, plasmado en los colores de sus plumas, recuerdos para la niña de los lugares que visitaba. “A la niña le encantaba ese pájaro y podía oírlo una y otra vez, día tras día. Y el pájaro amaba a la niña, y por eso siempre volvía donde ella”. Aún así, siempre se iba volando nuevamente porque necesitaba la nostalgia de extrañar su hogar para mantenerse encantado. Una noche, cuando el pájaro se había ido volando, la niña tuvo “la mala idea” de encerrar al pájaro en una jaula cuando regresara de su viaje. Así ella no lo extrañaría más y viviría por siempre feliz – como suele suceder en los cuentos de hadas madrinas. La niña compró una jaula hermosa, hecha de plata y “muy adecuada para el pájaro, al que amaba profundamente”. Como siempre, el pájaro llegó contando sus historias y mostrando los colores de sus alas. Sucedió que, cuando el pájaro se cansó y se acostó a dormir, la niña, teniendo mucho cuidado de no despertarlo, aprovechó para encerrarlo en la jaula. Cuando llegó el

⁸ La edición que utilizamos en este artículo es la de 1985: Alves, *Protestantismo y Represión*.

⁹ Cervantes-Ortiz organizó la obra de Alves en seis períodos. Cervantes-Ortiz coloca Protestantismo y Represión en el quinto período, de 1975 a 1982, el cual caracteriza como "aquellos libros que muestran un esfuerzo por alcanzar nuevas perspectivas de comprensión, mediante el abandono sistemático del dogmatismo propio de la teología protestante tradicional, sustituido por una actitud de admiración permanente y libre expresión de las ideas, por poco ortodoxas que parezcan". (2005, págs. 43-47)

¹⁰ “Obras”, Instituto Rubem Alves, consultado el 16 de febrero de 2021, <https://institutorubemalves.org.br/acervo/>.

¹¹ La edición que utilizamos aquí es de 1986, sin números de página: Alves, *A menina eo pássaro encantado*, consultado 22 de agosto, 2022, <https://qdoc.tips/rubem-alves-a-menina-e-o-passaro-encantado-estoria-infantilpdf-pdf-free.html>.

¹² Alves, *A menina eo pássaro encantado*.

amanecer, el pájaro se despertó y se quejó diciendo: “¡Ah! Niña... ¿qué has hecho? El hechizo se ha roto. Mis plumas ahora serán feas y olvidaré las historias... Sin la nostalgia, el amor se irá”. Sin embargo, la niña no le creyó al pájaro; “Ella pensó que él se acostumbraría a vivir encerrado”. Con el paso del tiempo, el pájaro se fue transformando; perdió algunas de sus plumas, otras se volvieron grises. También dejó de cantar. La niña, a su vez, estaba amargada. ¿Cómo podía ella causarle tanto mal a su amigo? “La niña no pudo soportarlo más. Abrió la puerta de la jaula”. El pájaro le dio las gracias y reconoció que tenía que irse para que así extrañara a la niña y deseara regresar. Ahora, la niña estaba sonriente y hermosa, añorando y esperando el regreso de su pájaro encantado y sus maravillosas historias de los lugares que había visitado.¹³

Antes de que especulemos sobre las intenciones del autor en este escrito, resulta conveniente compartir algunas explicaciones del propio Alves:

*Esta [La niña y el pájaro encantado] es una historia de separación: cuando dos personas que se aman tienen que despedirse... Después del adiós, queda ese vacío inmenso: la añoranza. Todo se llena de la presencia de la ausencia. ¡Ay! Que bueno sería que no hubiera despedidas... Algunos incluso piensan en encerrar a sus seres queridos en jaulas para que puedan ser suyos para siempre...*¹⁴

La niña y el pájaro encantado es la historia de la separación de dos individuos que se aman. Sin duda, el simbolismo que Alves describe es plausible, después de todo, él es el autor de la historia. Sin embargo, no nos parece descabellado proponer que este relato nos permite, por libre asociación, enfocar nuestras reflexiones en un sentido distinto: el de la separación entre una persona y una iglesia que se aman (o se han amado por un momento). En este artículo en particular nos referimos a la relación entre Alves y la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Brasil (IPB, en portugués).¹⁵ Es necesario, para esta discusión, saber que Alves se convirtió al protestantismo en 1945 (el mismo año en que se mudó con su familia del estado de Minas Gerais a Río de Janeiro en Brasil) y que en 1953 se mudó de Río de Janeiro a Campinas (estado de São Paulo) para iniciar su Licenciatura en Teología en el Seminario Teológico Presbiteriano (afiliado a la IPB). El 30 de noviembre de 1957 completó sus estudios y recibió una Licenciatura en Teología.¹⁶

En el capítulo “Del Paraíso al Desierto – Reflexiones Autobiográficas” de *O Enigma da religião*, Alves narra estos eventos de una manera muy interesante. Durante su residencia y vida en el estado de Minas Gerais, “no tenía conciencia de mí mismo, porque mi mundo y yo nos fusionamos en un todo”¹⁷ – un mundo en el que todo tenía sentido.

¹³ Alves, *A menina eo pássaro encantado*.

¹⁴ Alves, *A menina eo pássaro encantado*.

¹⁵ Para una discusión completa sobre la relación entre Rubem Alves y la institución religiosa representada por la IPB, ver Leopoldo Cervantes-Ortiz, *A teologia de Rubem Alves: poesia, brincadeira e erotismo*. (Campinas, SAO: Papyrus, 2005).

¹⁶ “Biografía”, Instituto Rubem Alves, consultado el 16 de febrero de 2021, <https://institutorubemalves.org.br/biografia/>.

¹⁷ Rubem Alves, *O enigma da religião: Esperança e libertação na obra de Rubem Alves* (Campinas, SAO: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Campinas, 2019), 9–10.

Cuando el mundo da sentido a la vida, no hay razón alguna para cuestionar o dudar. Sin embargo, continuó,

sin saberlo – y de repente – me expulsaron del paraíso. Me trasladaron a una gran ciudad. Mis “otros relevantes” se disolvieron en medio de la complejidad incomprensible de la vida urbana. Seguían siendo “otros” pero ya no “relevantes”. ... Por primera vez, conocí la vergüenza de ser diferente. Tomé conciencia de mí mismo.¹⁸

Volverse una persona religiosa, es decir, convertirse de un mundo a otro, fue el camino que Alves encontró para superar esta anomia: “Si nuestros 'otros relevantes' se reducen a lo insignificante y a la impotencia, hay un Otro Relevante que nos ama y nos conoce, cuyo poder es infinito.”¹⁹ Más que una mera persona religiosa, Alves confesó haberse convertido en un fundamentalista, en el sentido de atribuir un “carácter definitivo a sus propias creencias”.²⁰ Como consecuencia, Alves estaba condenado a actitudes de severa intolerancia contra quienes diferían de él. No hay nada mejor que un discurso capaz de estructurar la vida con convicciones definitivas (que liberan al sujeto de lidiar con la, siempre inacabada, realidad de la existencia). “Y para cualquiera que haya vivido este tipo de experiencia religiosa, el sendero natural a seguir es convertirse en apóstol de su verdad. Así que fui al seminario”.²¹

El impacto que tuvieron estos nuevos aires en la vida de Alves durante los tiempos del Seminario Teológico de Campinas está directamente relacionado con la persona y la teología de Richard Shaull, misionero protestante en Colombia, desde 1941, y posteriormente, en Brasil:²²

Llegamos juntos al mismo seminario, Campinas, en el año 1953. Yo [Alves] era novato y estaba lleno de convicciones. Shaull era profesor y estaba lleno de preguntas. Por supuesto, yo no sospechaba que pronto mis convicciones se derrumbarían; de lo contrario, me habría escapado. Una de las ilusiones de las personas que están tan seguras de sus convicciones es precisamente esta: que sus ideas nunca cambiarán, pues son verdaderas y están destinadas a la eternidad.²³

¹⁸ Alves, *El enigma de la religión*, 10.

¹⁹ Alves, *El enigma de la religión*, 11.

²⁰ Alves, *El enigma de la religión*, 11.

²¹ Alves, *El enigma de la religión*, 12.

²² Durante seis décadas, su relación con América Latina tomó muchas formas. Inspirado por John Mackay, Dick Shaull fue a Colombia en 1941, donde sirvió en una misión. En ese primer momento, buscó desarrollar una teología pastoral misiológica para interpretar una realidad profundamente afectada por la pobreza, la violencia y el sufrimiento. El segundo momento ocurrió en Brasil, a partir de 1953, cuando cumplió el papel de teólogo orgánico en un movimiento ecuménico emergente que buscaba madurar una nueva forma de pensar” (traducción nuestra) Raimundo César Barreto Jr., “Um convite a sonhar: [Una invitación a soñar], 113). A influencia de Richard Shaull na formação do pensamento de Rubem Alves, e sua relevância política”, *Numen: Revista de estudos e pesquisa da religião* 22, n. 2 (2019): 113. <https://periodicos.ufjf.br/index.php/numen/article/view/28914> .

²³ Rubem Alves, “O Deus do furacão”. En *De dentro do furacão: Richard Shaull e os primórdios da Teologia da Libertação*, 20 (São Paulo: Sagarana; CEDI; CLAI; Programa Ecumênico de Pós-Graduação em Ciências da Religião, 1985).

Nuevamente, Alves insistía en presentarse como un fundamentalista: “un caballero andante, convenciendo a los demás de sus verdades y persiguiendo a quienes piensen diferente”.²⁴ Al mismo tiempo, Alves se presentaba como un pietista (una huella de una identidad religiosa ajena al fundamentalismo típico) con un deseo profundo de vivir una vida santa; más a través de la expresión de emociones y pesares, que a través de la declaración de doctrinas ortodoxas. “Y quizás sea por esto – porque son actitudes opuestas – que finalmente se haya roto la precaria síntesis en la que vivía”, reconoció Alves.²⁵

Shaul (y toda la comunidad teológica que representaba) fue también decisivo en otro cambio de paradigma de Alves. El mundo simple de Alves y sus compañeros de seminario – Dios en el cielo (y en todas partes), la tierra como lugar temporero para vivir, el cielo o el infierno como destino eterno final para las almas, y la convicción de que “la Iglesia no tenía nada que ver con las peleas mezquinas de los hombres [sic]”²⁶ – fue arrastrado por la idea de que la misma palabra (Dios) puede nombrar, tanto lo sagrado domesticable como lo sagrado salvaje e indomable. Shaul hablaba de revolución, y la iglesia en la concepción de Alves se hacía responsable del “aquí y ahora” porque su Dios (el de Alves) era “el viento que sale de los desiertos, resucitando a los muertos, y de las ciudades, silbando en los mercados, escuelas, cuarteles, palacios, bancos.”²⁷ La secularización, para Alves, ya no era sinónimo de la muerte de Dios – o del fin de lo sagrado – sino, más bien, de que “Dios se escapó de los aposentos religiosos [una metáfora de un jardín interior y protegido] que hemos construido e invadió el mundo.”²⁸

En Brasil, en vez de la revolución que Shaul vio en varias señales de la época, el resultado fue el golpe cívico-militar de 1964. El viento había cambiado de dirección – o, de acuerdo con la teología de Alves – ya no eran indicios de Dios revelado en el huracán (según la imagen propuesta por Shaul) sino de otros golpes. La relación de las iglesias evangélicas brasileñas en general y de la IPB en particular con la dictadura militar ha sido muy bien documentada. Según el propio Shaul, en el prefacio que escribió para *El protestantismo y la represión*, “Cuando el régimen militar consolidó su poder, los miembros de la jerarquía católica romana tomaron una posición valiente contra la represión. Las iglesias protestantes permanecieron en silencio; y en algunos casos, apoyaron el régimen”²⁹ y comenzaron a perseguir a las voces internas que denunciaban el régimen de excepción establecido en el país.

Con el golpe cívico-militar y el establecimiento de la dictadura en Brasil, el compromiso de la iglesia con las responsabilidades sociales cambió. El ambiente de la pluralidad de ideas fue reemplazado por el “establecimiento de la hegemonía del modelo fundamentalista implantado en el Concilio Supremo [Asamblea General Nacional de la

²⁴ Alves, “O Deus do furacão”, 20–21.

²⁵ Alves, “O Deus do furacão”, 23.

²⁶ Alves, “O Deus do furacão”, 21.

²⁷ Alves, “O Deus do furacão”, 22.

²⁸ Alves, “O Deus do furacão”, 22.

²⁹ Richard Shaul, “Foreword,” *Protestantism and Repression: A Brazilian Case Study*, by Rubem Alves (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), xv.

Denominación] de Fortaleza, en 1966”³⁰ – para revelar que la tensión y el conflicto ya estaban establecidos en la lucha por el poder, el dominio y la hegemonía dentro de la denominación.

Una jaula para el teólogo encantado

Como parte del microcosmos del protestantismo histórico en Brasil, no podemos dejar de considerar la complejidad de la IPB – como la de cualquier otra institución, religiosa – y el hecho de que esta siempre ha tenido que lidiar, interna y externamente, con contradicciones. En un principio, IPB era una iglesia (comunidad eclesial) capaz de ofrecer al joven Alves – un individuo complejo y marcado por las contradicciones, como todos los demás – la superación de la angustia ante la anomia provocada por la pérdida de sus “otros relevantes”. Simultáneamente, la misma y la única conversión del mundo a la iglesia fue, a la misma vez, la liberación (del mundo) y la prisión (a la iglesia). En un segundo momento (en medio de la llamada “era del huracán”, durante el período de influencia de Shaul), la IPB representó para Alves una apertura hacia el futuro ayudando a liberarlo del amparo del fundamentalismo. Finalmente, en un tercer momento, la misma IPB le aclaró a Alves que no permitiría las *idas y venidas* (literales o simbólicas) que él deseaba y practicaba. Los colores de las historias y los relatos del teólogo de la liberación se volvieron muy escandalosos para esa denominación eclesiástica.

“¡Ay! Niña... ¿Qué has hecho?”³¹ le dijo el pájaro encantado a su compañera, que lo quería solo para ella, privándole la libertad de ir y venir. Alves, a su vez, redactó un documento para su iglesia, con un tono de despedida, el 15 de septiembre de 1970. “¡Ah! IPB... ¿Qué hiciste?” preguntó el teólogo. A continuación, un extracto de su solicitud de exoneración (renuncia de jurisdicción) de la IPB³²: “Estoy convencido, teológicamente, de que la comunidad de fe ya ha emigrado [de la IPB]. Ninguna estructura legal ni de poder puede contenerlo o domesticarlo. ... El amor y la verdad, a menudo, nos obligan a emigrar. ... La vocación de la libertad es la vocación de emigrar”.³³

Unos años más tarde, ya fuera de la IPB, en *Protestantismo y Represión* (documento de investigación para este artículo), siguiendo los moldes de la metodología Weberiana, Alves propuso que el protestantismo en Brasil debía dividirse en al menos tres modelos ideales:

1. El protestantismo *de la doctrina correcta* (RDP por sus siglas en inglés en el libro [de Alves]). ¿Cuál es su rasgo característico? Resalta el *acuerdo con una serie de afirmaciones doctrinales, que son consideradas*

³⁰ Hélierson Da Silva, “A era do furacão: História contemporânea da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (1959–1966)”. Tesis de maestría (São Paulo: Universidade Metodista, 1996), 214.

³¹ Alves, *A menina eo pássaro encantado*.

³² Utilizamos como referencia la transcripción completa de la carta por Rubem Alves para el Presbiterio Occidental de Minas recopilado por João Dias de Araújo en *Inquisição sem fogueiras: Vinte anos de história da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (1954–1974)*, 3ra ed. (Río de Janeiro: ISER, 1985), a través de la cual también podemos resolver una aparente contradicción: Alves nunca fue despojado de su ministerio en el IPB; más bien, pidió ser despedido. Sin embargo, como indica Araújo, muchos pastores pasaron por la destitución obligatoria de la denominación, y muchos estaban relacionados con Alves o, mejor dicho, con el “espíritu” que representaba.

³³ De Araújo, *Inquisição sem fogueiras*, 99.

expresiones de la verdad y que deben ser afirmadas *sin duda ninguna*, como condición previa para la participación en la comunidad eclesial.³⁴

Los otros dos son el protestantismo sacramental, – cuyo énfasis está en la emoción y el misticismo en la liturgia y los sacramentos; no en la veracidad de las doctrinas – y el protestantismo del Espíritu – enfocado en una experiencia subjetiva de éxtasis, típica de las denominaciones pentecostales. Evidentemente, el libro de Alves trabaja con el primer tipo de protestantismo, que, de hecho, puede considerarse una forma fundamentalista de ser protestante. En cuanto al RDP, Alves no propone una discusión exclusivamente conceptual – que, de por sí ya sería incitador –, sino que su elaboración propone un fundamento concreto e históricamente ubicado.

He elaborado mis materiales empíricos de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Brasil. Esto no quiere decir que todos los miembros de esa Iglesia encajen en este modelo que estoy describiendo: el RDP. Tampoco quiere decir que la validez de mis conclusiones se limite a esa denominación. Dondequiera que encontremos este modelo, allí encontraremos su comportamiento característico.³⁵

¿Por qué la IPB, entonces? En *Protestantismo y Represión* Alves no explica su relación personal esta denominación protestante; sino que, explica su referencia a la IPB de la siguiente manera: “El hecho es que en los últimos años estallaron unos conflictos violentos intramuros dentro de esa organización”.³⁶ Es entonces, desde finales de la década de 1950 hasta el momento de la investigación de Alves en la década de 1970 que, según él, el RDP ocupó la IPB, es decir, ganó visibilidad y abandonó los escrúpulos de volverse totalitario. Alves escribió, “Me interesa ese modelo victorioso, en su espíritu. Estaba escondido dentro de la denominación. Cuando fue interpelado por un espíritu diferente, se manifestó en una serie de actos políticos concretos que terminaron por sofocar las voces disidentes”³⁷ – La declaración de Alves revela un juego de poder y cierta tensión dentro de la IPB. En el prólogo de *Protestantismo and Represión*, Shaull comienza su argumento con la siguiente declaración:

Durante los últimos veinte años, se han producido cambios increíbles en la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Brasil. En 1959, con motivo de las celebraciones de su centenario, la Iglesia fue reconocida como la historia más destacada del éxito del protestantismo en América Latina; fue elogiada por su vitalidad, sus perspectivas de crecimiento continuo y por el rol que parecía destinado a desempeñar en la vida de esa nación. Hoy, luego de quince años de dominio por un pequeño grupo de líderes reaccionarios, esto ha sido menoscabado. Muchos de los que alguna vez hablaron de su gran futuro ahora se preguntan cuánto tiempo más puede sobrevivir. La palabra

³⁴ Rubem Alves, *Protestantism and Repression: A Brazilian Case Study* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 8.

³⁵ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 8.

³⁶ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 8.

³⁷ Rubem Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 8.

“presbiteriano” ahora trae a la mente lo destructivo del fanatismo religioso y la represión.³⁸

El prólogo de Shaull revela dos aspectos de su compromiso personal y político que, si bien no comprometen el texto, tampoco deben silenciarse. (1) Se plantea como sujeto de la historia vivida por la IPB junto a una nueva generación (de jóvenes pastores y laicos) comprometida con los desafíos sociales de Brasil a fines de los años 50 y principios de los 60. (2) El argumento de su texto es advertir al protestantismo en los EE. UU. a no seguir los caminos tomados por la institución que se consagró heredera del protestantismo estadounidense en Brasil, porque, para Shaull, el presbiterianismo estadounidense parecía coquetear peligrosamente con la represión. Como adelantábamos, el carácter militante del texto no disminuye su fuerza y relevancia académica, pero sí nos deja espacio para presentar tres relativizaciones. Primero, la IPB ha pasado sus 160 años en Brasil, es decir, su existencia (o supervivencia) ocurrió independientemente de los proyectos de Shaull (y Alves); la pregunta sobre su relevancia social y su apego al poder constituido es otra discusión. En segundo lugar, el hecho de que el llamado pequeño grupo de líderes reaccionarios llegara al poder en 1966 no significa que ese grupo se haya creado u organizado ese año. Por el contrario, este grupo ya estaba presente dentro de la denominación y representaba a sectores significativos en su correlación de fuerzas y poder. Finalmente, quien lea atentamente *Protestantismo y Represión* notará que todo el material empírico del análisis de Alves fue extraído de fuentes de la propia IPB, principalmente de los diarios *O Puritano* y *Brasil Presbiteriano*, desde finales de la década de 1940 hasta la década de 1960. Esto nos permite ver que el RDP estaba ya en pleno apogeo en la IPB desde antes de 1966.

Nos parece que hay un aire de decepción por parte de Shaull. – además de elogios y reconocimientos de hecho y de derecho – en relación a Alves en *Protestantismo y Represión*. Para Shaull, Alves estaba más preocupado por comprender el *modus operandi* del protestantismo brasileño en el pasado que por ofrecer una idea de cómo podría ser en el futuro. Por otro lado, Shaull no niega que, en el último capítulo de *Verdad y Dogmatismo*, el teólogo brasileño sugirió una forma alternativa de fe, incluyendo la duda, como antídoto al RDP. Nosotros creemos que el propio Alves no ha rehuido una metodología que permitiera que su investigación fuera también una intervención – es decir, además de un ajuste de cuentas con el pasado – y que sus resultados añadieran también el interés o la convicción de que el mundo puede ser cambiado o al menos que la gente puede cambiar (de un mundo a otro). De este modo *Protestantismo y Represión* es también un acto político. Como hereje, título que le asignara la IPB, Alves asume su convicción, no se da por vencido y espera que otros también puedan convertirse a su pensamiento y cosmovisión.

El lenguaje no puede ser pensado simplemente como un efecto de la causa; Alves aborda algunas de las respuestas de Karl Marx a los hegelianos de izquierda, en particular con respecto a la suposición de que el mundo está sostenido por la conciencia. Por lo tanto, la solución de Alves es enfatizar que el lenguaje no puede ser tomado simplemente

³⁸ Shaull, “Prólogo”, xi.

como “la articulación simbólica de las relaciones materiales”.³⁹ Por esto, Alves reconoció la importancia de la filosofía de Ricoeur en la discusión de la verdad: “El lenguaje es, a la vez, infraestructura y superestructura. Es necesario aquí renunciar deliberadamente al esquema de infraestructura y superestructura y entender este fenómeno como uno estrictamente circular en el que se incluyen y superan alternativamente estos dos términos.”⁴⁰

Alves señala: “Por un lado, el lenguaje no puede ser considerado como eso que sostiene el mundo. Por otro lado, no podemos entender su función si no nos damos cuenta de que el lenguaje ayuda a que el mundo siga funcionando”.⁴¹ Con argumentos apoyados en la sociología de Peter Berger y Thomas Luckmann,⁴² Alves asumió que, si nuestro conocimiento funciona, entonces no dudamos de él, lo que garantiza que las cosas funcionen bien y que la vida se organice en función de eventos futuros. Desde la sociología hasta la teología, Alves afirmó que los protestantes llaman a esto Providencia. De ahí la importancia de la conversión religiosa: “el proceso de reestructuración de los propios esquemas de significado y valor que puede ocurrir luego de una crisis”.⁴³

Precisamente porque la conversión puede estructurar la biografía de un sujeto, Alves dividió su vida en un antes y un después de la conversión; de la anomia al cosmos.⁴⁴ Pero no se puede negar que, si se lleva al extremo, cualquier idioma revelará sus contradicciones – lo que también ocurre en el idioma de la conversión religiosa. De ahí la importancia de una jaula bien construida, cuya puerta esté abierta sólo para la entrada de nuevos pájaros, nunca para su salida. La niña debe estar atenta. Consecuentemente, para el RDP, en el contexto del IPB o fuera de él, no puede existir la menor duda sobre el estatuto de la verdad. Por tanto, el pecado de herejía se convierte en el único que no puede ser perdonado porque, según la lógica de la RDP, los pecadores no están dispuestos a cambiar de actitud ni a arrepentirse, porque están convencidos de la verdad: “Los herejes no han sucumbido a la debilidad carnal; han rechazado el conocimiento absoluto y negado su pretensión de verdad, han propuesto una nueva verdad.”⁴⁵

Las personas que salen de la jaula y quieren volver a ella con noticias, luego de ser influenciados por los nuevos vientos de la doctrina (como se dice en la jerga evangélica para hablar de la herejía), poniendo en riesgo todo el orden, les espera una condena severa. Alves agrega, y “a la infinidad de la culpa corresponde... la infinitud de la venganza: la pena eterna”.⁴⁶ En cuanto a la relación primordial entre culpa y venganza, el argumento de Alves remite a Paul Ricoeur para decir que nos encontramos ante una “matriz del terror”.⁴⁷ Al menos en el RDP, “el reclamo de la pureza para la venganza”⁴⁸ se

³⁹ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, xxxii.

⁴⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *História e verdade* (Río de Janeiro: Forense, 1968), 206–207.

⁴¹ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, xxxii.

⁴² Peter Berger y Thomas Luckmann, *La construcción social de la realidad: un tratado de sociología del conocimiento* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 44, 104.

⁴³ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 28.

⁴⁴ Berger, *Invitación a la sociología: una perspectiva humanista* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 63.

⁴⁵ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 138.

⁴⁶ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 35.

⁴⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967/1969), 30.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 30.

revela como un Dios que todo lo ve y está siempre dispuesto a castigar a través del organismo eclesiástico humano encargado de salvaguardar la verdad y el orden institucional.

Es decir, no es posible ni necesario que una iglesia, como comunidad de verdaderos creyentes, siendo custodios y guardianes de la sana doctrina, convivan con el hereje y la herejía que puedan poner en riesgo toda la organización de una denominación religiosa. La obsesión con la verdad, inconscientemente, equipara el discurso del RDP con el de una tentación primordial del conocimiento absoluto; en otras palabras, el RDP se presenta ante quienes pertenecen a sus círculos como una voz actualizada de la serpiente en el mito bíblico. Los partidarios de la RDP pretender ser como Dios, conocer todo el bien y el mal:

Ha surgido un “deseo”, el deseo por lo infinito; pero ese infinito no es el infinito de la razón y la felicidad, como lo hemos interpretado al principio de esta obra; es la infinidad del deseo mismo; es el deseo del deseo, tomando posesión del saber, del querer, del hacer y del ser: “Vuestros ojos serán abiertos, y seréis como dioses, sabiendo el bien y el mal”.⁴⁹

Según Alves, el RDP quiso presentar (y presentó) el conocimiento de una manera que reducía la fe a algo inservible. Si se pudiera saberlo todo (y de la manera correcta), entonces no habría riesgos; pero sin riesgos, tampoco habría fe:

Como sugiere Ricoeur, es necesario salir del círculo de las aproximaciones hermenéuticas interminables, que nos sitúan en el plano de las comparaciones simples. Y esto se hace por medio de una apuesta (Ricoeur 355). La afirmación de fe, por ende, no dice "yo sé que" sino más bien "apuesto a que".⁵⁰

Jaulas y Más Jaulas

La metáfora de “la iglesia y el teólogo encantado” parece ofrecer cierta originalidad ante algunas publicaciones anteriores que hablan sobre la relación de Alves con la IPB (y viceversa).⁵¹ Aun así, nos parece necesario profundizar en el presente artículo investigando otro aspecto, similar al del RDP sobre las jaulas fundamentalistas, de acuerdo a la exploración de Alves al caso de la IPB en *Protestantismo y Represión*. Siguiendo la inspiración de Alves, como lector de Paul Ricoeur (como hemos indicado anteriormente), el filósofo francés es también nuestro compañero intelectual de viaje, particularmente dos de sus publicaciones: “Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable” publicado en 1988 y “La Erosión de la Tolerancia y la Resistencia de lo Intolérable” publicado en 1996. Nuestra hipótesis, para los efectos de este artículo, es que la

⁴⁹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 253.

⁵⁰ Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 52.

⁵¹ Por ejemplo, ni Cervantes-Ortiz ni Iuri Andreas Reblin – dos excelentes trabajos sobre el pensamiento, la biografía y la bibliografía de Rubem Alves – exploran la relación que aquí se propone entre la niña (institución/protestantismo/IPB/jaula) y el teólogo encantado (Rubem Alves/pájaro). Véase Cervantes-Ortiz, *A Iuri Andréas Reblin, Outros cheiros, outros sabores...: o pensamento teológico de Rubem Alves* (São Leopoldo: Oikos, 2009).

intolerancia no es más que una producción y una jaula del propio RDP y de otros movimientos doctrinales (con consecuencias éticas), religiosos o no, con una obsesión patológica por el dominio exclusivo o exclusivista de la verdad absoluta.

Comencemos recordando algunas observaciones del mismo Alves que nos ayudan a desarrollar el argumento. Alves describe la obsesión por la verdad, como en el RDP, desde la premisa de que la salvación – que comienza en esta vida y se prolonga hasta la eternidad – coincide con el conocimiento de la verdad:

El RDP asume que la salvación es una función de conocer la verdad. Por ende, debe concluir lógicamente que su conocimiento es la verdad, que es un conocimiento absoluto y final que debe sostenerse sin dudas ni concesiones. La duda es un síntoma de condenación. Su discurso y su ser real coinciden, por ende, poseen el monopolio de la verdad. Poseen un cuerpo de conocimiento que es totalmente objetivo y absoluto.⁵²

Entonces, para que el RDP ofrezca un ambiente seguro y que conduzca a la salvación, su discurso debe ser una descripción precisa de la realidad. Ser y saber deben converger perfectamente uno con otro para que el RDP sea el dueño del discurso que revela las verdades que conducen a la salvación. La jaula del RDP establece un lugar seguro donde se vive “en la verdad”; también a la misma vez establece una clara distinción entre “adentro” y “afuera”; es decir lo que está afuera no debe ni merece ser experimentado, de lo contrario, la seguridad del espacio de “adentro” – y no solo del sujeto sino también del grupo – queda comprometida para siempre.

Por tanto, nos interesa, aunque de manera breve, explorar el hecho de que, dentro de la jaula, la coincidencia entre el ser y el saber (representado por el habla) es excluyente. No sólo hay una verdad absoluta en las doctrinas propuestas por el RDP, sino que tampoco hay, porque no puede haber, verdades fuera del RDP. Se impone entonces una pregunta al pájaro-teólogo: ¿Por qué volar si todo lo necesario para vivir bien y alcanzar la salvación está dentro de la jaula? No hay posibilidad de encontrar la verdad fuera de la jaula, por ende, la jaula pasa a ser vista y experimentada no como una privación, sino como un refugio seguro, protegido del vacío exterior (o en la jerga evangélica, “del mundo exterior”).

Alves se refiere al interior y el exterior de la jaula, respectivamente, con los conceptos ortodoxia y heterodoxia (o herejía), según los presupuestos del RDP, y añade una advertencia de que la dicotomía entre ortodoxia y herejía no puede sustentarse sino en la intolerancia:

[E]l lado oscuro de esta obsesión es la intolerancia de RDP hacia cualquier cosa que se define como error desde su verdad absoluta. Una oposición fundamental sustenta el mundo de la verdad absoluta: ortodoxia versus heterodoxia, pensamiento correcto versus herejía. Y como la ortodoxia está ligada al problema crucial de la salvación eterna de las almas, la verdad

⁵²Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 195.

absoluta debe ser intolerante. Sólo los que dudan pueden ser tolerantes. Cuando el amor a la verdad ata a la con la posesión de la verdad, los defensores de esta verdad deben ser intolerantes con aquellos que piensan distinto.⁵³

Igual que los barrotes de una jaula que protegen la verdad que vive exclusivamente dentro de esta, la intolerancia debe ser la protección impermeable del alma de quienes se mantienen fieles contra la negación de la verdad (la no-verdad), que es la heterodoxia (o la herejía). Dado que toda la verdad está dentro de la jaula, y solo allí, esta debe ser un espacio herméticamente sellado para evitar la entrada de las no-verdades de afuera. Tal entrada solo traería impurezas al ambiente seguro y correctamente ordenado (orthos, orthodox) que existe dentro de la jaula. Sin embargo, la jaula también debe proteger a sus residentes de la tentación de moverse de adentro hacia afuera. Según la lógica del RDP, deambular por el espacio exterior de la heterodoxia es, en el mejor de los casos, una pérdida de tiempo y, en el peor, una pérdida de vidas. La intolerancia es lo que sostiene el limitado ambiente espiritual de la jaula del RDP. Esta intolerancia puede parecer incluso preciosa, como la plata de la jaula en el cuento de la niña y el pájaro encantado, porque “a primera vista esta obsesión por la verdad parecería una extraordinaria virtud”.⁵⁴

En este punto, las contribuciones del filósofo francés Paul Ricoeur a nuestro argumento entran en escena de una manera más evidente.⁵⁵ Por nuestra parte, pretendemos hablar de manera Alvesiana con Ricoeur; pero de un modo que ni el propio Alves podría, aunque solo sea por la cronología de las publicaciones. En “Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable” de Ricoeur encontramos un apoyo para un análisis estructural de lo que hemos llamado las barras de la jaula RDP – y de todas las demás jaulas similares, como ya hemos dicho. Ricoeur sugiere abordar el tema de la tolerancia a través del grito: “¡Esto es intolerable!”.⁵⁶ Como grito de indignación, esta exclamación nos ayuda a pensar sobre una distinción crucial en el uso del concepto de tolerancia. ¿El que grita es el tolerante, indignado ante un acto injusto (abyección), o es el intolerante, que no acepta la diferencia (rechazo)?

Ricoeur desglosa las denotaciones del concepto de tolerancia desde tres contextos sociopolíticos: el estado, las instituciones culturales y las instituciones religiosas y teológicas. En cada uno de estos potenciales contextos de intolerancia, se revela un tipo de jaula diferente, que es necesario distinguir y analizar. El filósofo francés advierte de una posible confusión con respecto a esto y encuentra necesario preguntar, “¿[L]o que es válido en el ámbito del derecho constitucional [Estado] lo es también para las mentalidades y tradiciones culturales? ¿Qué pasa si el término [intolerancia] no cambia su significado, o incluso pierde su aplicabilidad, una vez se utiliza en el campo de la de

⁵³Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 195.

⁵⁴Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 195.

⁵⁵ Ricoeur mismo era de la tradición reformada (o calvinista), como el teólogo brasileño (presbiteriano) y también el RDP, a pesar de su intencional y continuo esfuerzo por separar su filosofía de sus creencias cristianas.

⁵⁶Paul Ricoeur, “Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable”, *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, 134, n. 2 (1988): 435 – 450.

práctica religiosa y la reflexión teológica?”⁵⁷ El marco analítico Ricoeuriano, por tanto, nos proporciona una matriz con los tres contextos en los que se manifiesta la diada tolerancia-intolerancia – estado, cultura y religión – y dos formas de tolerancia-intolerancia: la abyección y el rechazo.

Ricoeur sugiere un análisis de la tolerancia a nivel estatal según el concepto de justicia del filósofo político John Rawls, quien enfatiza la necesidad de maximizar las posibilidades de expresiones de las minorías, caracterizadas por su situación socioeconómica, cosmovisión o creencias religiosas.⁵⁸ Por ende, volvemos a la cuestión de la verdad de un modo muy diferente porque, según Ricoeur, en el ámbito institucional del Estado lo que está en juego no es la verdad en sí misma sino el arbitraje entre pretensiones en conflicto. Ricoeur amplía su relato de la tolerancia en diálogo con Rawls a nivel estatal. Para él, los argumentos y debates más influyentes sobre la tolerancia se desarrollaron a nivel cultural, principalmente en el contexto de la Ilustración, como reacción a la intolerancia religiosa del período anterior. A través de un largo y doloroso proceso histórico, la tolerancia se convierte en una opción para dejar que los demás sean o piensen diferente a nosotros. Para Ricoeur, es fundamental reconocer que el caso no es lo mismo que la aniquilación de convicciones – lo que acercaría el argumento al relativismo absoluto. Por el contrario, el consenso conflictivo de la tolerancia en el plano cultural surge del rechazo a un impulso patológico – posiblemente, pero no necesariamente – ligado a la voluntad de imponer las propias convicciones a los demás. El drama surge porque, al aceptar una cosmovisión diferente a nuestras creencias, nos posicionamos ante la posibilidad de ignorar la diferencia entre lo verdadero y lo falso, y “eso sería dar los mismos derechos a la verdad y al error”.⁵⁹ El miedo de la posibilidad de que nos equivoquemos se transforma en miedo al pensamiento divergente, que amenaza nuestra identidad. Es en el umbral del precipicio de la convicción que debemos elegir entre la tolerancia y la violencia.

El reconocimiento de la libertad propia modera el mantenimiento de nuestras convicciones y la aceptación de pensamiento diferentes. Este reconocimiento nos mueve a la categoría fundamental del respeto por las propias decisiones a nivel interpersonal, que es la contraparte de la justicia a nivel institucional. El riesgo de la domesticación del afán de imponer nuestra convicción por el respeto al pensamiento ajeno consiste en relativizar el propio pensamiento. Este parece ser uno de los puntos esenciales para entender la intolerancia religiosa, especialmente en sus formas institucionalizadas, como es el caso de la RDP. Para Ricoeur, la respuesta se encuentra en el “consenso conflictivo” en tanto da cabida al reconocimiento del otro – o sea, se buscan espacios de consenso, pero el consenso sigue siendo conflictivo, índice de que las convicciones no se han disipado en un relativismo que puede destruir las convicciones “desde adentro”.⁶⁰ Resulta interesante considerar el sentimiento de miedo que acompaña a la posibilidad de perder

⁵⁷ Ricoeur, *Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable*, 435. Nuestra traducción. Original: “*ce qui vaut dans la sphère du droit constitutionnel vaut -il au plan des mentalités et des traditions culturelles? Et le terme ne change-t-il pas tout à fait de sens, si même il ne perd pas toute application, une fois étendu au plan de la pratique religieuse et de la réflexion théologique?*”

⁵⁸ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁵⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable*, 444 (traducción nuestra).

⁶⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable*, 444.

nuestras convicciones a nivel personal; igualmente, es interesante replicar el mismo ejercicio en el caso de instituciones religiosas donde el miedo a perder las convicciones comunitarias puede afianzarse debido a el reconocimiento de las convicciones de los demás. Aún así, en el plano cultural, Ricoeur nombra el acto intolerable como aquel que se abstrae del ámbito del respeto mutuo por faltar al respeto a la libertad.⁶¹

Detrás de este dilema de la tolerancia y lo intolerable está la percepción de una doctrina como verdad o como convicción, lo que abre espacio para que el otro sea diferente y elija otras convicciones, aunque sean lejanas a las convicciones del grupo al que pertenece. Esta dinámica es una transformación que, a nuestro entender, incide directamente en la estructura de la jaula al sustituir los barrotes impenetrables de la intolerancia por la volatilidad de un simple nido de pajas, que sigue siendo un espacio común, ahora delimitado por convicciones compartidas y celebradas. El precio a pagar es el riesgo de la fragilidad de esas convicciones.

¿Qué pasa con la tolerancia religiosa y teológica? Una de las dos partes de la respuesta de Ricoeur es hermenéutica, en el sentido en que la fuente simbólica de la Biblia, cuya lectura literal es la base del RDP, está siempre abierta a nuevas interpretaciones – lo que debe despertar la tolerancia por significados alternativos que se manifiestan a nivel institucional en la pluralidad de las comunidades eclesiales.⁶² Es una dimensión horizontal de tolerancia a nivel teológico que debe ser complementada con una dimensión vertical, que nace del reconocimiento de Dios como el Otro Absoluto; que está siempre más allá de nuestro raciocinio y de nuestras certezas. El reconocimiento de nuestras limitaciones frente al Misterio Divino debe afirmar la aceptación de diferentes perspectivas que se encuentran en prácticas comunes – como la caridad – en un sentido, no muy lejano de los consensos conflictivos en el plano cultural. En el plano religioso, el intolerante es intolerable.

En otro texto, el filósofo francés define la tolerancia como “una virtud personal y colectiva, resultado de un ascetismo en el ejercicio del poder”.⁶³ Ricoeur propone una escala que sugiere unas interesantes analogías sobre a la construcción de jaulas de intolerancia. En el nivel más básico, solo apoyamos diferentes puntos de vista porque no tenemos el poder para hacer nada más. No podemos, por ejemplo, traer a la otra persona a nuestra jaula por la fuerza, ni podemos impedir que la otra persona exista. En un primer nivel intermedio, desaprobamos el vuelo de los demás. Aún así, hacemos un esfuerzo por aceptarlos y respetar el hecho de que quieran volar, aunque aún mantengamos nuestra creencia de que la jaula, o el nido, es el lugar adecuado para vivir. En un segundo nivel intermedio, la tolerancia deja de aceptar pasivamente que el otro pueda volar a algún lugar, en el mejor de los casos, peligroso y, en el peor, dañino y mortal. La actitud, entonces, se desplaza hacia una tolerancia activa, reconociendo la posibilidad de que la convicción del otro también sea parte de un nido construido en el árbol de la verdad. El vuelo puede valer la pena pero seguimos convencidos de que nuestro nido es un buen lugar para estar. Finalmente, está el nivel en el que estamos convencidos de que todas las

⁶¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable*, 444.

⁶² Paul Ricoeur, *Tolérance, Intolérance, Intolérable*, 444.

⁶³ Paul Ricoeur, “The Erosion of Tolerance and the Resistance of the Intolerable,” In *Tolerance between Intolerance and the Intolerable*, editado por Paul Ricoeur. (Providencia, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996).

jaulas y nidos son ilusiones, incluida la nuestra. De este modo, la tolerancia desaparece porque desaparecen las convicciones.

Pareciera que una clave interesante para entender el apego del RDP a la verdad es la falta de reconocimiento de los niveles intermedios de tolerancia. La simplificación del dualismo entre verdad y herejía impide que las jaulas se conviertan en nidos (en un inmenso árbol de verdad) porque los nidos siempre corren el peligro de convertirse en ilusiones.

Consideraciones finales

Con cierta expectativa y seguridad apoyadas en la evaluación empírica, podemos decir que los estudios de la obra de Alves son un campo inmenso y que apenas están en sus comienzos. Las disciplinas dedicadas a la investigación del pensamiento del autor son diversas: teología, estudios religiosos, educación, literatura, filosofía (aún con la resistencia de algunos filósofos), política, psicoanálisis, etc. Congresos, simposios y seminarios que debaten temas Alvesianos se han realizado en todo Brasil, país de origen del teólogo de la *Esperanza y la Liberación*, así como en otros lugares del mundo. En la introducción de este artículo, como ejemplos paradigmáticos, citamos dos eventos en 2019 con publicaciones posteriores. En 2020 ya se realizaron otros encuentros para discutir el pensamiento y el legado de Alves. En este artículo, el viento parece apuntarnos hacia, al menos, tres consideraciones finales.

La primera es evaluar si Alves fue o no acertado al publicar *Religión y Represión* unos 30 años después del lanzamiento de *Protestantismo y Represión*,⁶⁴ manteniendo el texto anterior íntegro, cambiando sólo el título y añadiéndole un prefacio titulado “Treinta años después”. Las religiones son instituciones que afirman haber colocado al pájaro encantado en una jaula. Sin darse cuenta de que la criatura en sus jaulas de palabras es un “pájaro disecado”.⁶⁵ En el texto, Alves nos cuenta que vivió muchos años en una jaula de palabras – y disfrutó de estar encarcelado – pero muchas cosas han cambiado; y ya hemos trabajado en secciones anteriores algunos aspectos biográficos de Alves. La pregunta restante entonces se refiere a esta cita:

La tentación de los absolutos es una característica universal del espíritu humano. Todos queremos ser dueños de la verdad. Para tener la verdad, habrá que enjaularla. Para enjaular la verdad, es necesario enjaular la libertad y el pensamiento. Creo, por tanto, que las conclusiones de este libro van más allá de los límites del protestantismo y pueden aplicarse a otras religiones. Estas son las razones por las que sugerí cambiar el título original, *Protestantismo y Represión*, por *Religión y Represión*.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Cabe destacar que, en 2005, Rubem Alves tomó la decisión de extrapolar los fundamentos y consecuencias de su libro *Protestantismo y Represión*, que trata del RDP (un modelo ideal), a la religión (en general), al publicar el libro *Religión y Represión* (publicado sólo en portugués).

⁶⁵ Alves, *Religião e Repressão*, 9.

⁶⁶ Alves, *Religião e Repressão*, 13–14.

Metodológicamente, ¿podría el autor transformar el modelo ideal del RDP, en religión como un todo? Además, teológicamente, ¿podría afirmar que toda religión y todas las religiones son jaulas que aprisionan? Creemos que puede no ser así, pero este debate queda para otra ocasión.

La segunda dirección posible, inspirada en Alves y Shaul – que es a la vez epistemológica, teológica y política – sería tratar de entender qué significan para la IPB y la escena política en Brasil la unión y relación de los marcos intelectuales, políticos y teológicos de la IPB con el actual gobierno federal brasileño del presidente Jair Messias Bolsonaro. Sin embargo, puede ser más prudente dar tiempo antes de precisar el significado y los riesgos de esta fuga de líderes de la denominación en cuestión fuera de la jaula.

Finalmente, para la tercera y última dirección con la que hemos decidido terminar este artículo, queremos recuperar aquí una opinión de Louis Schweitzer:

Si vamos a reaccionar [contra el fundamentalismo], debemos tener cuidado de no reprochar a las personas que no piensan como nosotros. ... Ciertamente, tendremos que oponernos, pero siempre abriéndonos al diálogo con paciencia, para que, en nuestro pensamiento y en nuestra práctica, no nos convirtamos en la imagen del otro reflejada en el espejo.⁶⁷

Dado que no nos consideramos dogmáticos ni intolerantes, nos limitamos a señalar un riesgo que puede correr la comunidad Alvesiana: el de crear una jaula a su alrededor, por muy bonita que sea. Debemos entendernos como habitantes de un nido, frágil, en el inmenso árbol del saber. En conclusión, debemos aceptar incluso a aquellos a quienes les gusta saltar de rama en rama; porque cuando regresan, son hermosos y coloridos. Un “Alvesianismo de la *doctrina correcta*” sería intolerable (en el sentido de abyección).

Este artículo fue traducido por Rubén David Bonilla Ramos

⁶⁷ Schweitzer, “O fundamentalismo protestante”, 42.

Grave Importance: Religio-Political Architecture and the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan

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Abstract

Pluralism is increasingly valued and pervasive in the academy and across institutions. My aim is to place Indigenous groups' self-identity in tension with governmentally ascribed identities and status in order to demonstrate the insufficiency of pluralism as a discursive logic in accomplishing liberative ends. I focus on the experience of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan and their struggle for formal recognition of their burial grounds at the Misión San Antonio de Valero in San Antonio, Texas—more popularly known as “The Alamo.” I analyze discourse and governmental documents treating indigenous identity and surrounding ongoing planning to restore the site, particularly “The Alamo Master Plan.” I propose that the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan reject pluralism as a guiding logic in their interactions with state agencies and that “Latinx-Indigenous” be adopted as a mutually beneficial bridge identity to mobilize diverse communities.

• THIS ARTICLE IS ONLY AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH •

Introduction

In April of 2019, the Texas House of Representatives passed a resolution recognizing for the first time the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation as a Native American Indian Tribe.¹ The resolution's passage was a testament to the tribe's participation in the history of South Texas and the City of San Antonio. Recognition was also consequential for the

¹ Elaine Ayala, “Texas House passes bill giving San Antonio tribe state recognition,” *San Antonio Express News*. Published May 2, 2019. Accessed June 27, 2019, https://www.expressnews.com/news/news_columnists/elaine_ayala/article/Texas-House-passes-bill-giving-San-Antonio-tribe-13812035.php#photo-12706682.

Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan's efforts to exercise greater power in negotiations with government agencies around projects to expand and reinterpret an historic area of downtown San Antonio: The *Misión San Antonio de Valero*, better known as "The Alamo." As the most visited site in the second-largest state in the United States of America,² The Alamo is central not only in Texas' geography, economy, and politics but also in the struggle for recognition of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan buried there. The Alamo was designated a World Heritage Site at the 39th Session of UNESCO in 2015,³ and serves as a constant reminder of San Antonio's competing identities as the southernmost city of the United States of America and the northernmost city of Mexico.⁴

Disagreement as to what area of the *Misión San Antonio de Valero* should be designated a Texas Historic Cemetery has revived in the present a history of erasure, discrimination, and oppression.⁵ Furthermore, the discourse surrounding recognition of a historic cemetery on The Alamo grounds exemplifies pluralism's failure to address adequately the challenge of crafting a representative and participatory polity inclusive of minoritized groups. I aim to influence the terms of negotiation by dismantling pluralism as an appealing objective. First, I establish working definitions for the term pluralism, the concept of *religio-political architecture*, and Indigeneity. In particular, I suggest that *religio-political architecture* presents a challenge to the pluralistic self-conception of the United States of America. My analysis then places the description and identification of Indigenous groups by governmental bodies in tension with how these groups describe and identify themselves. This tension yields insight into how group identities are constructed and employed towards religious and political ends.

Second, I provide a Pre-Columbian historical context for the network of Missions to which the *Misión San Antonio de Valero* belongs. The Alamo is one in a network of Missions established by Spanish colonizers throughout the Southwest of the United States of America. These Missions constitute *religio-political architecture* expressing the religious and political identities of those colonizers. The Missions' continued existence shapes the lived identity and spirituality of those contemporary minoritized communities descended from the colonized.

² Richard R. Flores, "The Alamo: Myth, Public History, and the Politics of Inclusion," *Radical History Review* 77, (200): 91.

³ "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage: Decisions Adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th Session," United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (Bonn, Germany: World Heritage Committee, 2015), 213.

⁴ I refer, of course, not to geography but rather the role that San Antonio has come to play in the political consciousness of the continental United States of America. To suggest that San Antonio is literally the southernmost city in the United States of America is to ignore Texas border cities, a large swath of Florida, and the entirety of Puerto Rico. For a more detailed exploration of the multiplicity of meanings associated with the Alamo site in the minds of its visitors, see Lin, H.N, Mark Morgan and Theresa Colbe, "Remembering the Alamo: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Visitor Meanings." *Journal of Travel Research* 52, no. 1 (2013): 42-55. For a more nuanced description of the complex and fluid motivations of those who chose to defend the Alamo, see Flores, Richard. "The Alamo: Myth, Public History, and the Politics of Inclusion." *Radical History Review* 77 (2000): 91-103

⁵ Flores, "The Alamo," 98. As Flores notes, "At issue is the fact that the Alamo—as Mission San Antonio de Valero—contained within its walls, as did most mission compounds, a *campo santo*, or burial ground for Native Indians, Spanish missionaries and later on for slaves and mestizos from San Antonio."

Third, I describe the contemporary contest around the designation of an area of the *Misión San Antonio de Valero* grounds as a Historic Texas Cemetery. This designation has implications for recent efforts to expand and reinterpret The Alamo ground, placing the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan again in conflict with organs of the state.

Finally, I propose that the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan discard pluralism as a discursive logic in their efforts towards formal reverence and recognition of their burial sites on the Alamo grounds. I suggest that the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan instead organize around an identity politics of Latinx-Indigeneity by: 1) adopting such an identity and 2) engaging in coalition-building to establish a larger base with which to pressure governments for the reverence and recognition they so desire. The context of this work is theoretical and practical. It is theoretical insofar as pluralism is proliferating as an institutional value and is increasingly an object of theoretical critique. The context is practical in that the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan's efforts towards governmental recognition of their identity and ancestors' graves at the *Misión San Antonio de Valero* have been frustrated by governmental bodies that have accepted pluralism as a discursive logic when dealing with the tribe.

The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan annually celebrate a *Semana de Recuerdos* from September 9th to the 15th.⁶ The *Semana de Recuerdos* is a private celebration for Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan families. It culminates with a "Feast of Remembrance," which members refer to as analogous to Memorial Day or Día de Los Muertos.⁷ Celebration of this ceremony began with the conception of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan as a people,⁸ connecting a reverence for the dead to communal identity and associating it with the tribe's traditional homeland in the states of Texas, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and northern San Luis Potosí.⁹ Thus, governmental bodies refusing to recognize formally the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan or their ancestor's graves strikes at the core of the tribe's identity.

Anthropologist Richard Flores highlights The Alamo's dominant narrative as centered on a battle between the forces of the Mexican General, Santa Anna, and members of the Texas Independence Movement in March of 1866. Flores notes that this

⁶ Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation – Homepage, "*Semana de Recuerdos* Memorial Ceremony Mission San Antonio de Valero," accessed July 9, 2019, <https://tappilam.org/>.

⁷ Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, "*Semana de Recuerdos*." The significance of Día de los Muertos in the U.S. Southwest and Mexico is too expansive a survey to cover in the present analysis, but readers may look to the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987) for an understanding of the importance of transgression across borders—whether geographic, ethnic, religious or cultural—as inherent to the identities of communities living in the context of the U.S.-Mexico Border. Luis D. León's article "Metaphor and Place: The U.S.-Mexico Border as Center and Periphery in the Interpretation of Religion" for the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* was also helpful for this writer in contextualizing the U.S.-Mexico Border in religious studies. For the purposes of this work, suffice it to say that the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan themselves note that the history of celebrating their *Semana de Recuerdos* is coterminous with their history as a people, evidencing its role as an essential element of their communal identity.

⁸ Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, "*Semana de Recuerdos*."

⁹ Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation – Blog, "April 14, 2020 Press Release," accessed December 15, 2021, <https://tappilam.org/april-14-2020-press-release/>.

battle is typically, though incorrectly, characterized as a battle between good and evil, represented by Texans and Mexicans respectively.¹⁰ In contrast, Flores offers two more inclusionary models of history for The Alamo. The first model builds on the work of Gilberto Hinojosa and Felix Almaráz, Jr., incorporating the role of Mexican Tejanos who participated in the defense of the Alamo.¹¹ The second model expands the history of the Alamo to include the Spanish Colonial period.¹² The present analysis follows Flores' second model and focuses on how a broader representation of the Alamo's past poses a challenge to the U.S.A.'s self-understanding as a pluralistic nation.

Conceptual Cartography: Mapping the Current State of Terms

Working definitions of pluralism, religio-political architecture, and Indigeneity may serve as an entryway to engaging the minoritization of ethnic and religious identity groups in the United States of America (henceforth US). I will accept the definition of pluralism provided by Diana L. Eck in her Presidential Address for the American Academy of Religion in 2006. As she wrote, pluralism is “the engagement of difference.”¹³ Pluralism does not seek to eliminate difference but acknowledges it as reality and works to foster peaceful discourse in societies of differences.¹⁴ The *Harvard Pluralism Project*, founded by Eck, further defines pluralism as “the engagement that creates a common society from all that diversity.”¹⁵ Pluralism is an active process in reaction to a state of diversity wherein diversity is not a desirable objective in itself. Rather, diversity must be harnessed as an instrument of social construction and aimed towards creating a common society, with all the negotiation, compromise, and exercise of power that the creation of something “common” entails.

Before understanding religio-political architecture, it is first necessary to highlight how alien these physical structures are, or should be, to a pluralistic liberal democracy such as the United States of America. The Establishment Clause in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America declares the following: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This clause is conventionally understood as an expression of the separation between Church and State in the country. For the present work, my category *religio-political architecture* refers to structures that defy the notion of a separation between Church and State, having taken on such meaning as to be representative of both religious and political identity in a supposedly secular society.

Finally, I come to the term “Indigenous,” which is most challenging to describe. In many ways, the Pre-Columbian Americas were a quintessential example of what the

¹⁰ Flores, “The Alamo,” 95.

¹¹ Flores, “The Alamo,” 97.

¹² Flores, “The Alamo,” 98.

¹³ Diana L. Eck, “Prospects for Pluralism: Voice and Vision in the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no.4 (2007): 758.

¹⁴ Eck, “Prospects for Pluralism,” 745.

¹⁵ The Pluralism Project: Harvard University, “From Diversity to Pluralism,” accessed June 3, 2019, <http://Pluralism.org/encounter/todays-challenges/from-diversity-to-Pluralism>.

contemporary pluralist/multiculturalist discourse of the academy would call “diversity.” As Ramón A. Gutiérrez notes in his piece, *What’s in a Name? The History and Politics of Hispanic and Latino Panethnicities*,

In 1491, on the eve of the Columbian voyages, there were some 123 distinct indigenous language families spoken in the Americas, with more than 260 different languages in Mexico alone. Perhaps as many as 20 million people were living in the Valley of Mexico in 1519, in hierarchical, complexly stratified theocratic states. But there were no Indians.¹⁶

Gutiérrez is here stressing that the soon-to-be colonized civilizations of the Pre-Columbian Americas were by no means the linguistically, phenotypically, culturally, or theologically static and monolithic people constructed by the Spanish invention and imposition of the term “*Indio*.”¹⁷ Inventing and applying the label *indios* to the broad swath of Pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Americas allowed imperial Spain to more easily erase their cultural diversity and complex political and religious systems.¹⁸ As such, in describing the term “Indigenous,” I will strive to hold in theoretical tension the capacity for such peoples to at once be grouped and classified as Indigenous while recognizing their inherent diversity.

The United States of America’s Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior has set forth criteria for recognition of a group as Native American Indians—the federal shorthand for Indigeneity—in the 25 Code of Federal Regulations Part 83 – *Procedures for Federal Acknowledgment of Indian Tribes*.¹⁹ This document requires that a petitioner for recognition provides evidence of its fulfillment of several criteria as described in the following abbreviated list: (1) *Indian entity identification*, in which the petitioner proves that, it has consistently been identified as an American Indian entity since 1900; (2) *Community*, in which the petitioner shows that it is a distinct community existing from 1900 to the present; (3) *Political influence or authority*, in which the petitioner demonstrates that it has autonomously maintained political authority over its members since 1900; (4) *Governing document*, in which the petitioner provides a copy of the group’s governing documents including its membership criteria, or provides a statement fully describing its membership criteria and governing procedures; (5) *Descent*, demonstrating that a petitioner’s membership comprises individuals descended from a historical Indian tribe, or from tribes which functioned as a single autonomous political entity; (6) *Unique membership*, in which the petitioner shows that its membership is mainly of persons not already members of any acknowledged North American Indian Tribe; and finally, (7) *Congressional termination*, in which, “The Department demonstrates that neither the petitioner nor its

¹⁶ Ramón A. Gutierrez, “What’s in a name? The History and Politics of Hispanic and Latino Panethnicities,” in *New Latino Studies Reader A Twenty-First Century Perspective*, Edited by Ramón A. Gutierrez and Tomás Almaguer. (19-53). (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 23.

¹⁷ Gutierrez, “What’s in a name?” 23.

¹⁸ Gutierrez, “What’s in a name?” 23.

¹⁹ Bureau of Indian Affairs, 25 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 83 – “Procedures for Federal Acknowledgment of Indian Tribes,” accessed December 10, 2021, https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/as-ia/ofa/admindocs/25CFRPart83_2015_abbrev.pdf

members are the subject of congressional legislation that has expressly terminated or forbidden the Federal relationship.”²⁰

Undoubtedly, the requirements for federal recognition as an American Indian Tribe are extensive, prohibitive, and hinge upon colonial and neo-imperialistic understandings of group identity, governance structures, and cataloged history. To use these requirements as theoretical standards for discussion of Indigeneity could only serve to perpetuate such problematic understandings, hindering efforts to construct a liberative discourse surrounding interactions between the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, the City of San Antonio, and the State of Texas. The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan are currently *not* a federally recognized American Indian Tribe according to the standards set forth by the U.S. Department of the Interior, despite submitting their petition for federal recognition in 1997.²¹ Placing the federal terms for recognition in contrast with the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan’s membership application further illustrates the inadequacy of governmental mechanisms for group definition.

The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Membership Application is nine pages long, comprising nine sections:²² (1) *An Application Cover Page*, where the applicant indicates whether she is applying as a Coahuiltecan person wishing to be recognized by the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation, or as a Native American wishing to place her citizenship with the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan; (2) *Instructions for Application* is a particularly interesting section for the present analysis as it encourages a full description of one’s Indigenous heritage, but the simple sentence “I am Coahuiltecan” is also acceptable. It also cites oral tradition as “fully acceptable in determining Indian Identity under federal law.” Moreover,

Your information will not normally be challenged but will be accepted. The membership committee has the right to require strict genealogical evidence, but each person is the best judge of his/her ancestry... The Tribe is known as the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation and recognizes all the Coahuiltecan bands of Coahuila [Mexico] and Texas as members of our Nation... Your application to the Nation may be made entirely by verbal means. Oral histories and testimony of oral tradition to the Nation are fully acceptable.²³

(3) *Membership Criteria*, in which the applicant may indicate under which criteria she is submitting her application; (4) *Personal Information*, including Name, Address, Date of Birth, etc.; (5) *Personal History*, consisting of a blank page on which the applicant may write the narrative of her heritage/identity; (6) *Native American Heritage*, where the applicant may recount family stories of Indigeneity; (7) *Native*

²⁰ Bureau of Indian Affairs, 25 Code of Federal Regulations Part 83.

²¹ HB 4451, *Bill Digest*, Committee on State Affairs of the Texas House of Representatives. Published April 23, 2019. Accessed June 27, 2019, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HB4451.PDF>

²² Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation - Tribal Documents, “Tāp Pīlam Membership Application,” accessed July 3, 2019, <https://tappilam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/tpcn-application1.pdf>

²³ Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, “Membership Application,” 2.

American Ancestry, in which the applicant may provide the names and Tribal/Band affiliation of relatives as evidence of their biological link to their indigenous identity; (8) *Missions/Pueblos*, where the applicant indicates whether any of their ancestors ever resided at any of the Missions; finally, the (9) *Signature Page*, which must be notarized and where the applicant formally requests inclusion in the Tribal Roll of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation.²⁴

The criteria in the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation Membership Application may be understood as less stringent than those articulated by the federal government. However, such an understanding relies on an imperialistic weighing of information, privileging written history over oral history, governmental naming over personal identification, and genealogical documentation over community and family tradition. The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan value personal narrative in the construction of identity, as expressed in the fifth and sixth sections of their Membership Application. Allowing substantial space for the applicant to provide her personal narrative of Indigeneity in section 5, and family histories in section 6, follows the Nation's communal valuing of narrative in constructing identity. At the communal level, identity is manifested in their celebration of the *Semana de Recuerdos* and their connection to the lands of South Texas and Northern Mexico. That is, this celebration is understood by the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan to extend to "time immemorial" and chronologically links their inception as a people with the land they consider their home.²⁵ This ceremony celebrates not only the memory of their deceased ancestors but is tied to a specific reverence for the land in which they are buried, thus involving those specific burial sites into a larger land-identity narrative of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan.

I find that a working definition of Indigeneity deferential to the self-description of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan themselves, as articulated in their Membership Application, is appropriate. Such a definition is entirely subject to later revision in recognition of the community's and identity's inherent and necessary fluidity, and as a means of accommodating potential extension of my analysis to other groups in the "Americas" that may claim or be ascribed the label of "Indigenous." That is, the present work understands and employs the term "Indigenous" to identify any individual or group which, whether by oral, geographic, genealogical, or written tradition or history, understands themselves or itself to be, and claims the identity, "Indigenous."

On Earth as it is in Heaven: Religio-Political Architecture as Social Expression of Value

The question of whether and to what degree the United States of America may be understood as a secular nation is an enduring and polemic one. The establishment clause in the First Amendment to the Constitution declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Thus, any challenge to the First Amendment strikes at the core of the U.S.A.'s self-

²⁴ Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, "Membership Application," 9.

²⁵ Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, "*Semana de Recuerdos*."

conception and may be a more meaningful, potentially existential challenge than war, economic hardship, or natural disaster. Religio-political architecture presents questions worthy of analysis regarding which values they propagate and whether those values are or should be reflective of the Nation.

Just as the communities of Pre-Columbian Indigenous peoples were linguistically heterodox and phenotypically diverse, so, too, were the Iberian colonizers disparate in their makeup, bound together more by their religious identity than any kind of “national consciousness.”²⁶ The Iberian Peninsula from which the colonizers set voyage had only been united by the marriage of Catherine of Aragon and Ferdinand of Castille in 1469. For almost eight centuries the diverse Spanish groups had been under Muslim rule until the *Reconquista* (between 711 and 1492). The religious crucible of the new alliance were the Crusades, which heightened the Iberian colonizer’s religious fervor.²⁷ Colonizers flattened the civilizations they found by the invention and imposition of the term *indio*. They discarded the Pre-Columbian taxonomy of reality in the Americas through the destruction and construction of physical spaces to reflect and enforce the colonizer’s political dominance and religious identities.

The colonizers established their political control of the land through *capitulaciones*—writs of incorporation that afforded them the “legal” means to establish towns, granted aristocratic titles, land, and tributary *indios* they could exploit and Christianize.²⁸ The Spanish Missions were a critical mechanism by which the colonizers erased indigenous identities, languages, and cosmologies in favor of their own Ibero-Christian ordering of the universe.²⁹ Physical structures and architecture transcended the material plane in representing both political and religious control. The geographic situation of Catholic Churches in the center of towns, the tone of Church bells to count the hours of the day, the baptism and burial of *indios* in Christian cemeteries all served to cement in the communal consciousness a new world order claiming to better reflect the Kingdom of Heaven. This new Ibero-Christian taxonomy of reality was violently proselytizing and hegemonic in its ambition, made manifest in the physical world by the construction and mapping of these communities to intentionally raze any pre-existing apprehensions of reality.

Evidence of this process exists from the network of Spanish Missions to which the *Misión San Antonio de Valero* belongs. Below, I include three such instructions given to missionaries of Mission *Concepción in San Antonio*. These instructions show that the

²⁶ Gutiérrez, “What’s in a name?”, 21.

²⁷ Gutiérrez, “What’s in a name?”, 21-22.

²⁸ Gutiérrez, “What’s in a name?”, 23. “The Catholic priests who accompanied these colonists carried all the symbols in which their ethnicity was rooted: the sacred texts and stories of the Bible; the altars, crosses, and statuary that connected the terrestrial community to the celestial one; and all religious ritual formulas that conjoined the sacred and profane, and which ordered time and space.”

²⁹ For an excellent description of the process of erasure that was a conventional element of the colonial project throughout the Spanish Americas, as well as of potentials for reclamation of pre-colonial indigenous place-names, see Barbara Mundy, “Place Names in Mexico-Tenochtitlan,” *Ethnohistory* 61:2 (2014): 329-355. Also, for a more general treatment, see Barbara Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

San Antonio Missions imposed the Spanish language on “Indians” from an early age. It also shows that the Indigenous were not allowed to leave the Missions, and that they would be returned if they escaped:

No. 79

The missionary should see to it also that the small children speak Spanish in order to meet the demands of various decrees, and because of the facility it promotes both for the missionary to understand what they are saying and for the Indians to understand him. The missionary has worked so hard on this that it is a pleasure to listen to the Indian children, even the tiniest ones speaking Spanish...

No. 80

From time to time the missionary should journey to the coast to bring back the fugitives who regularly leave the mission trying at the same time to gain some recruits, if possible, so that more conversions are realized and the mission does not come to an end because of lack of natives...

No. 82

The submission of the inferiors to the superior and subjects to the prelate is indispensable in communities and pueblos. Without it nothing would be well managed, but all would end up in confusion and disorder. The missionary must so conduct himself toward the Indians that all will show him respect, submission, and obedience. He must punish the disobedient, the rebellious and the arrogant without losing his usual gentleness, affability, and prudence in governing.³⁰

Conversion to Christianity was not only the metric of success but a fundamental and existential concern for the Missions, where all aspects of Mission life were ordered by a strict hierarchy, namely, the superiority of the Spanish over the native Indians.³¹ As such, the Missions formed part of a system of oppressive logics by which the land being colonized and society being constructed could be mapped and navigated. Through the rise and fall of governments, the Battle of The Alamo, the Texan War of Independence from Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and subsequently joining the United States of America in 1845, these sites of religio-political architecture have endured.

³⁰ Benedict Leutenegger, ed. *Documents Relating to the Old Spanish Missions of Texas - Guidelines for a Texas Mission: Instructions for the Missionary of Mission Concepción in San Antonio*, Vol. I, (San Antonio, TX: Old Spanish Missions Historical Research Library, Our Lady of the Lake University, 1994), 43.

³¹ This narrative of oppression is undoubtedly one-sided, glossing over numerous examples of participation of the native population in Mission and community life, capable of exerting influence and making decisions. The population being colonized cannot be reduced to mere objects of colonization. They were entirely human subjects undergoing—and at times participating in and affecting—a living process of negotiation. However, given the particular aims of the present analysis, I have found that an emphasis on the oppressive logics and mechanisms of dominance employed by the colonizers is appropriate.

A Narrative of Conflict: The *Misión San Antonio de Valero* as Contemporary Contest

The Historic Texas Cemetery designation was created in 1998 by the Texas Historical Commission as a means of protecting historic cemeteries, recording their boundaries, and alerting present and future neighbors to their existence.³² The designation is a prerequisite for applying for an Official Texas History Marker for the cemetery.³³ The description of this designation explicitly states that “The designation imposes no restrictions on private owners’ use of the land adjacent to the cemetery or daily operations of the cemetery.”³⁴ Nonetheless, the designation has become a flashpoint in the ongoing process of determining what histories to preserve, honor, and memorialize at the *Misión San Antonio de Valero*.

The Texas Historical Commission heard a request from the Texas General Land Office [GLO] to designate the Church on The Alamo grounds a historic cemetery in April of 2019.³⁵ This request would cover only the ground under the most iconic building of the *Misión San Antonio de Valero*, the shrine, and ignore a larger area containing an “abundance of historical, archeological, archival and ethnohistorical evidence that a cemetery exists on The Alamo grounds.”³⁶ The GLO request came after The Texas Historical Commission had tabled another request from the San Antonio Missions Cemetery Association [SAMCA] and the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation to designate a more extensive area on the grounds a Historic Texas Cemetery.³⁷ The GLO request has been characterized as an effort to circumvent the request from SAMCA and the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation.³⁸ Moreover, The Alamo Trust (which manages operation at The Alamo and is overseen by the GLO) has stated that “a ‘historic cemetery,’ as defined by Texas law, does not exist on Alamo property.”³⁹

This stands in stark contrast to the stated goals of The Alamo Master Plan, which was approved by the San Antonio City Council in May of 2017. The Alamo Master Plan describes the overall plan for restoring the church and the long barracks, delineating the historic footprint of the area, “Recaptur[ing] the Historic Mission Plaza,” and repurposing a number of buildings into a visitor center, thus creating a sense of arrival

³² Texas Historical Commission, “Historic Texas Cemetery Designation,” May 23, 2019, accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/cemetery-preservation/historic-texas-cemetery-designation>.

³³ Texas Historical Commission, “Historic Texas Cemetery Designation.”

³⁴ Texas Historical Commission, “Historic Texas Cemetery Designation.”

³⁵ Edmond Ortiz, “State Now Has Two Proposals for Designating an Alamo Historic Cemetery,” Rivard Report, April 3, 2019, accessed June 21, 2019, <https://therivardreport.com/state-now-has-two-proposals-for-designating-an-alamo-historic-cemetery/>.

³⁶ Elaine Ayala, “GLO Trying to thwart Native Americans cemetery at The Alamo,” San Antonio Express-News, April 2, 2019, accessed July 8, 2019, https://www.expressnews.com/news/news_columnists/elaine_ayala/article/GLO-trying-to-thwart-Native-Americans-cemetery-at-13733619.php#

³⁷ Ortiz, “State Now Has Two Proposals for Designating an Alamo Historic Cemetery.”

³⁸ Ayala, “GLO Trying to thwart Native Americans cemetery at The Alamo.”

³⁹ Ortiz, “State Now Has Two Proposals for Designating an Alamo Historic Cemetery.”

to the site.⁴⁰ The stated goal of The Alamo Master Plan is to, “restore the reverence and dignity of the site and recapture and celebrate its real identity, based on evidence and the best principles of heritage conservation planning and design.”⁴¹

Privileging evidence and best principles of heritage conservation in the goal of The Alamo Master Plan replicates the same privileging observed in the criteria for recognition outlined by *25 CFR Part 83 – Procedures for Federal Acknowledgment of Indian Tribes* mentioned earlier. Determining the site’s “real identity, based on the evidence and best principles of heritage conservation” begs the question: evidence of whose heritage? If the historical significance of the area is determined by the structural, archaeological, and architectural evidence left by a colonizing force that deliberately sought to raze any pre-existing evidence of civilization, it is difficult to accept that such evidence could serve to justly memorialize the area with the respect and participation Indigenous communities deserve. Proceeding in this manner reinscribes the privileging of written history over oral history, governmental naming over personal identification, and genealogical documentation over community and family tradition seen in the *Procedures for Federal Acknowledgment of Indian Tribes*. This is further demonstrated when one considers The Alamo Master Plan’s guiding principle of “Preservation based on historical and archaeological evidence.”⁴² That is, the evidence that The Alamo Master Plan values is produced by work that has been government-sanctioned and conducted according to Western, colonial understandings of historiography, when weighing historical evidence.

The manner in which the issue of what area to designate a Texas Historical Cemetery has been discussed reveals oppressive logics embedded in the discourse surrounding Indigenous peoples, land to be memorialized, and how competing interests are weighted. Any attempt to extricate such oppressive logics presents its own challenges and suggests that the discursive logic of pluralism be discarded. The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan’s continued acceptance of such discursive logics—in guiding their efforts for governmental recognition of their group identity and burial sites at The Alamo—is to continue to play by the rules of a rigged game.

Oppression in Sheep’s Clothing: Pluralism’s Inadequacy as a Discursive Logic

As per the definition provided by the *Harvard Pluralism Project*, pluralism is inherently responsive and is not inevitable. Rather, pluralism is one of three ways Americans have approached increasing cultural and religious diversity, the other two

⁴⁰ The City of San Antonio, “Alamo Master Plan,” accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.sanantonio.gov/CCDO/Resources/Alamo-Master-Plan#25365937-background>

⁴¹ Texas General Land Office, “The Alamo Master Plan,” published May 2017, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://sanantonioreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Alamo-Master-Plan-as-of-May-11-2017.pdf>, 4.

⁴² Texas General Land Office, “The Alamo Master Plan,” 5.

being exclusion and assimilation.⁴³ The Pluralism Project cites efforts by the U.S.A. to prohibit entrance to Jewish, Asian, and Catholic immigrants as exemplary of the exclusionary approach.⁴⁴ It further cites the “melting pot” understanding of the country in which immigrants are welcomed but encouraged to abandon their differences and particularities as exemplary of the assimilationist approach.⁴⁵ Finally, the *Harvard Pluralism Project* describes the pluralistic approach as the U.S.A. promises to accept immigrants as they are, provided those immigrants pledge to fulfill the civic demands of citizenship.⁴⁶ In this respect, pluralism appears to be the most desirable of the three approaches to diversity. When reflecting on the Iberian colonization as possibly exemplifying the assimilation option, and the prohibitive categories for recognition of the *Procedures for Federal Acknowledgment of Indian Tribes* as a manifestation of the exclusion option, pluralism becomes an attractive choice, allowing for the creation of a just society out of diverse communities.

The Alamo Master Plan abides by a discursive logic of pluralism. The first aspect of its goal aims to restore dignity and reverence to the site.⁴⁷ A second aspect intends to recapture and celebrate the Alamo’s “real identity.”⁴⁸ These may be admirable pluralistic objectives, aiming to restore and memorialize a site of complicated history. However, a closer examination of the logics by which these goals are articulated demonstrates that, pluralism serves as a convenient means of obfuscating the replicated oppressions suffered by Indigenous communities in the United States of America from before its founding. Addressing the first aspect, one must question whose dignity and whose reverence does The Alamo Master Plan aim to restore? The Alamo Master Plan proposes to, “Celebrate the 1836 battlefield for its significance in Texas, the United States, and the World, and the ultimate sacrifice made by the Alamo defenders.”⁴⁹ It is apparent that the lives valued in re-constructing a spirit of reverence at the site are those of the Texans who died in the fight for independence—men who were in many ways heirs to the political hegemony over Indigenous populations instituted by the Iberian colonizers—not the lives of the many Indigenous people that lived, struggled, died, and were buried at the *Misión San Antonio de Valero*. The conflict between the Texas GLO and the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan regarding the designation of a Texas Historical Cemetery further demonstrates that the reverence extended to the site does not include the graves of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, or those of other Indigenous people buried at the *Misión San Antonio de Valero*.

Regarding the second aspect of The Alamo Master Plan’s goal, to recapture and celebrate its real identity,⁵⁰ one should consider that The Alamo, together with the other four missions along the San Antonio River, constitutes “one of the most complete examples of the Spanish Crown’s efforts to colonize, evangelize the indigenous

⁴³ The Pluralism Project, “From Diversity to Pluralism.”

⁴⁴ The Pluralism Project, “From Diversity to Pluralism.”

⁴⁵ The Pluralism Project, “From Diversity to Pluralism.”

⁴⁶ The Pluralism Project, “From Diversity to Pluralism.”

⁴⁷ Texas General Land Office, “The Alamo Master Plan,” 4.

⁴⁸ Texas General Land Office, “The Alamo Master Plan,” 4.

⁴⁹ Texas General Land Office, “The Alamo Master Plan,” 4.

⁵⁰ Texas General Land Office, “The Alamo Master Plan,” 4.

population and defend the northern frontier of New Spain.”⁵¹ If The Alamo Master Plan seeks to recapture and celebrate the *Misión San Antonio de Valero*’s identity as part of the San Antonio Missions, including *Misión Concepción*, then it seeks celebrate a community of structures that comprise the original systems of oppression and colonialization of the Iberian conquerors. Celebrating this identity thus reinscribes the very dehumanizing logics by which that system was ordered, as described in the *Instructions for the Missionary of Mission Concepción in San Antonio*.

The Alamo Master Plan’s phrasing may be an innocent mistake in word choice of an otherwise well-intentioned group seeking to articulate respect for what it deems relevant history at the site. However, that the Master Plan Team chose to employ language of “recapturing” in its description of the overall plan belies an intentional preference for the historical narrative of the oppressor, at worst, or an ignorant tone-deafness that inspires little confidence in its ability to carry out The Alamo Master Plan with any semblance of justice for the historical and contemporary experiences of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, at best.

Porque ya no hay Pueblos Aislados: Latinx-Indigenous and a New Logic of Indigeneity

Contextualizing The Alamo grounds as a site of contested recognition, as well as noting the degree to which the location of burial grounds is tied to the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan identity, my aim was to demonstrate that the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan’s construction of identity is narrative-driven, and as such, abstract. This understanding is supported when the *Procedures for Federal Acknowledgment of Indian Tribes* are placed in contrast with the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan’s Application for Membership to the Nation.⁵² Moreover, Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan identity and its connection to the burial grounds of their ancestors becomes concrete when considering how contemporary discourse minoritizes this identity group by privileging the insufficient discursive logic of pluralism over the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan’s valuing of a subject-determined narrative of Indigeneity in constructing and justifying identity.

The present analysis encouragement of the term “Latinx-Indigenous” to describe the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan is a final issue of concern. Although the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan allow for a subject-driven narrative of Indigeneity, at no point in their Membership Application do they use “Latinx” or related terms to describe themselves. As I have so far privileged their self-description over that of the federal government and the State of Texas, to label them Latinx-Indigenous without any evidence they have done so themselves merits explanation. One may point to a shared history of colonization, a shared familiarity with the Spanish language, geographic transcendence of the U.S./Mexico border, and the prevalence of Spanish surnames among the Tribal Council,⁵³ as justification for classifying the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan as not just

⁵¹ Texas General Land Office, “The Alamo Master Plan,” 6.

⁵² Specifically, the manner in which the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan emphasize subject-determined narratives of identity in their *Instructions for Application*, and in sections 5 and 6 of the application.

⁵³ Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan, “Tribal Council,” accessed July 9th, <https://tappilam.org/council/>.

Indigenous but also as Latinx. My reason for classifying them as such, however, is political. The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan's contemporary struggle with governmental bodies is constricted by a need to satisfy the structural demands of pluralism's naming them Indigenous, and doing so according to how the U.S.A. government has historically named and dealt with Native Americans/American Indians or First Nations.

Should the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan abide by this constriction of their Indigenous identity, they accept a narrower identity around which to politically mobilize. They may appeal to other Indigenous groups in forming coalitions but risk distancing themselves from the vast majority of U.S.A. citizens who do not identify as Indigenous. Moreover, to do so would be to accept that the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan are one amongst a number of Indigenous groups, necessarily competing for time, attention, and recognition from state and local governments of the United States of America. Adopting a Latinx-Indigenous identity would allow the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan to appeal to a growing Latinx segment of the population, a community that is on its way to becoming a demographic and political majority in Southwest Texas.

Organizing around a Latinx-Indigenous identity, the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan could more forcefully argue that the lives and graves being discounted by the state at the *Misión San Antonio de Valero* are not only deserving of reverence because they are Indigenous, but also because they are Latinx. This makes the issue more relevant to more people, expanding its appeal beyond the Indigenous communities of the Southwest U.S.A. to every Latinx individual and community in California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas—all states with significant Latinx populations. Additionally, the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan's identity is tied to lands that transcend the U.S.A./Mexico border, making them potentially powerful voices in the discourse around the issue of immigration, an issue conventionally characterized as being particularly relevant to the Latinx communities. Thus, Latinx-Indigenous may be understood as a mutually beneficial bridge identity, derived from the fluid and subject-determined narrative logic emphasized in the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan's Membership Application.

Buen Vivir: Historical Narrative of Environmental Resisters in the United States and Latin America

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• THIS ARTICLE IS ONLY AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH •

Abstract

Environmental Resisters in the U.S. Latinx community and indigenous peoples in Latin America are advocating for social justice issues that include linguistic availability, education, housing, labor, migration, culture and food security, and the end to violence against women. They are safeguarding their natural habitats and advocating for the material and spiritual wellness of individuals in their communities. I argue that their commitment to social justice and environmental justice issues share some of the values of the Andean-based *buen vivir* social philosophy which grants inalienable rights to Nature and humans.

Introduction

I argue that Latinx Environmental Resisters in the United States and in Latin America reflect shared values with South America's Andean-based *buen vivir* social philosophy as both communities give primacy to harmonious relationships between humans and Nature. Each also shares a commitment to the physical and socio-economic wellness of all members in their respective communities.¹ In these habitats, "material and spiritual well-being" are necessary to maintain equilibrium and balance in the communal spaces in which they inhabit. In this spirit, I will reflect on the Andean-based *buen vivir* philosophy in conversation with social justice and environmental justice movements in the U.S. Latinx community and in Latin America. As a Peruvian American educator, my aim is to identify parallels between the Andean-based *buen vivir* philosophy and the activist work of Latinx Environmental Resisters in the United States and in Latin America.

¹ Sara Caria and Rafael Domínguez, "Ecuador's *Buen vivir*: A New Ideology of Development," London: *Latin American Perspectives* 43, no. 1 (January 2016): 19.

Buen Vivir as Social Philosophy

Buen vivir is a social philosophy that values the interrelatedness of all living and non-living entities in the world's various ecosystems.² Moreover, this "millennia-old cosmovision"³ advocates the environmental rights of the natural world as "[it] envisions a different way to build society."⁴ In 2008, the Indigenous peoples of Ecuador successfully advocated to embed the *buen vivir* philosophy into their constitution.⁵ As a result, Ecuador's constitution now officially recognizes that Nature has "inalienable rights."⁶ This is a significant departure from "the Doctrine of Discovery-and the colonization and capitalism that accompany it,"⁷ which resulted in the commodification of Nature for capital profit through legislative measures, and which treat the natural world as property for any sanctioned use by individuals, corporations, and states. In the article, "Ecuador's *Buen vivir*: A New Ideology for Development," Sara Caria and Rafael Domínguez examine five principles that differentiate this philosophy from the Western viewpoint. They are: "[h]armony with Nature, respect for the values and principles of indigenous peoples, satisfaction of basic needs, social justice and equality as a responsibility of the state, and democracy."⁸ In this essay, I will consider these five themes in light of social justice and environmental justice movements in the U.S. Latinx community and in Latin America.

Social Location: *Personal Viewpoint*

As a Peruvian-American scholar, I experienced the *buen vivir* philosophy and its five principles as elaborated by Caria and Domínguez while on a ten-day community-based learning immersion trip to the *Sachamama* Center for Biocultural Regeneration in the High Amazon in Lamas, Perú.⁹ I accompanied twelve Western students whose educational background was from an elite institution in the United States. Early on, it was evident to us that an Andean worldview differed in focus from a Western understanding of Nature and time. In contrast, a Western worldview was highly structured and androcentric.

During our stay, we experienced *buen vivir* in the lifestyle of the *mestizos* and the Kichwa-Lamista Indigenous people in the region. Daily, they taught us about the spiritual and medicinal properties of plants and agricultural methods they utilized, which dated to pre-Columbian Amazonian times. The Kichwa-Lamista people also

² Caria and Domínguez, "Ecuador's *Buen vivir*," 20.

³ Néstor Medina, "Embracing A Millennia-Old Cosmovision," Washington, DC: *Sojourners* (January 2021): 34-38.

⁴ Medina, "Embracing A Millennia-Old Cosmovision," 36.

⁵ Caria and Domínguez, "Ecuador's *Buen vivir*," 19-20.

⁶ Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature, <https://therightsofnature.org> (accessed December 13, 2010).

⁷ Medina, "Embracing A Millennia-Old Cosmovision," 38.

⁸ Caria and Domínguez, "Ecuador's *Buen vivir*," 20.

⁹ The full name is The *Sachamama* Center for Biocultural Regeneration: Protecting soil, regenerating culture in the Peruvian Amazon. In Spanish, it is referred to as *Asociación Centro de Sachamama*, <http://sachamamacenter.org> (accessed December 17, 2020).

introduced us to their worldview, which was cyclical rather than linear. Their worldview was apparent in their ritual-practices, which were intimately connected to the cyclical nature of both the natural world and their agricultural habitats. These experiences demonstrated to us that the Kichwa-Lamista people held a very high value of the natural world. When they participated in such transcendental rituals, it was apparent that they experienced a profound interconnectedness with *Pachamama* or Mother Earth. Through those rituals, the Kichwa-Lamista people became one with Mother Earth-*Pachamama*.

As a Peruvian scholar and *paisana*, participation in these rituals resulted in a deep feeling of interconnectedness with Nature, which is a primary tenant of *buen vivir*. I am grateful to the *mestizos* and the Kichwa-Lamista Indigenous people for sharing with us how the principles of *buen vivir* manifest in their daily lives. It was this experience that spurred me to consider *buen vivir* in light of Environmental Resisters in the U.S. Latinx community and within Latin America.

***Buen Vivir* and Latinx Environmental Resisters in the United States and Indigenous Peoples in Latin America**

Latinx environmental resisters in the United States and indigenous peoples in Latin America are both addressing social justice and environmental justice issues in the spirit of *buen vivir*. Through a *buen vivir* lens, they are advocating for the “right[s] of [all] people to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment”¹⁰ The reality is that urban development is decimating social cohesion in both of these communities. In Latin America, we see the forceful removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands and the destruction of their natural habitats.¹¹ Similarly, in the United States, minority communities are being forced out of their communities as a consequence of high-end redevelopment projects within their neighborhoods. The result is gentrification, a reduced quality of life, the breakdown of the social family unit, and the abandonment of their communal spaces such as their local traditional marketplaces.

Mary Pardo argues that “People living in Third World countries as well as in minority communities in the United States face an increasingly degraded environment. Recognizing the threat to the well-being of their families, residents have mobilized at the neighborhood level to fight for ‘quality of life’ issues.”¹² To complement this, James Rojas, a Chicana urban planner points to the high value that U.S. Latinx communities place on their relationship to neighbor, the natural world in which they inhabit, and to

¹⁰ Caria and Domínguez, “Ecuador’s *Buen vivir*,” 20.

¹¹ Global Witness, “Their Faces: Defenders on the Frontlines,” <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/their-faces-defenders-frontline/?accessible=true> (accessed June 17, 2020).

¹² Mary Pardo, “Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists: “Mothers of East Los Angeles,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 11, no. 1 (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 5.

social cohesion in their communities.¹³ He argues that a Latinx commitment to social cohesion is represented in Los Angeles pop-up markets, Olvera Street, Mariachi Plaza, and Exposition Park, where they gather daily in communal spaces.¹⁴ Juan Tavárez’s article “The *Tianguis*: Mexican Model of a Green Ideology and Philosophy” further highlights the importance of traditional marketplaces in the U.S. Latinx community and in Latin America. In his essay, Tavárez argues that Latinx communal markets in the United States commonly referred to in Latin America as *tinguises*, are communal spaces where social and familiar ties are solidified and cultural identities are affirmed.¹⁵ More specifically, the entire Amazonian ecosystem is the communal and sacred space where Indigenous peoples build their neighborhoods, social ties, and interrelatedness with *Pachamama*.

To date, Pope Francis, the first Latin American pope in South America, is prophetically advocating for the Amazonian region. His encyclicals resonate with *buen vivir* as he advocates to safeguard the Amazonian forest and the Indigenous people who inhabit it. In *Laudato si’: On Care For Our Common Home*,¹⁶ he elaborates on the importance of an “integral ecology” which recognizes that “everything is closely related,” including our current global crisis which is both environmental and social.¹⁷ Moreover, Pope Francis’ choice to host a historic Synod of Bishops for the Amazon last October (6th-27th, 2019) — with bishops and representatives from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Venezuela, and the Suriname — was prophetic as he privileged a non-Western worldview in Rome, a major center in the Western world. At the end of the gathering, Pope Francis called on members within the Roman Catholic Church on a global-level to be an Amazonian people and an Amazonian Church.¹⁸ In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Querida Amazonia*, Pope Francis states:¹⁹

¹³ Amanda Merck, “James Rojas: How Latino Urbanism is Changing Life in American Neighborhoods,” *Salud America!*, January 14, 2020, <https://salud-america.org/james-rojas-how-latino-urbanism-is-changing-life-in-american-neighborhoods/>

¹⁴ Dolores Huerta, “Housing Is A Human Right Townhall” (conference, California State University, Los Angeles, CA, October 26, 2019). https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2463397613897834&ref=watch_permalink (accessed October 28, 2019).

¹⁵ Juan A. Tavárez, “The *Tianguis*: A Mexican Model of a Green Ideology and Philosophy,” in *Valuing Lives, Healing Earth: Religion, Gender and Life on Earth* (Leuven, Belgium: PEETERS Publishers, 2021).

¹⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato si’: On Care For Our Common Home* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015).

¹⁷ Thomas Reese, “Integral ecology: everything is interconnected,” *National Catholic Reporter*, August 27, 2015, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/integral-ecology-everything-connected> (accessed on December 19, 2020).

¹⁸ “Pope Francis calls for church with ‘Amazonian and indigenous’ face,” *Catholic News Service/U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 2018, <https://www.archbalt.org/pope-francis-calls-church-amazonian-indigenous-face/?print=print> (accessed December 19, 2020).

¹⁹ Pope Francis, *Querida Amazonia, Post-Synodal Exhortation to the People of God and to All Persons of Good Will*, February 2, 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html (accessed June 20, 2020), 11.

[I]t is clear that the original peoples of the Amazon region, have a strong sense of community. It permeates ‘their work, their rest, their relationships, their rites and celebrations. Everything is shared; private areas – typical of modernity – are minimal. Life is a communal journey where tasks and responsibilities are apportioned and shared on the basis of the common good. There is no room for the notion of an individual detached from the community or from the land.’ Their relationships are steeped in the surrounding Nature, which they feel and think of as a reality that integrates society and culture, and the prolongations of their bodies, personal, familial and communal.²⁰

I believe that the Amazonian Synod was trying to offer the same teaching of *buen vivir* that “the Indigenous communities of the Americas are offering us a *proyecto de vida* — a “life project” — that runs on a different path from the pervasive structures of capitalism, commodification of life, and extraction of natural resources.”²¹ Moreover, in the past two months, Pope Francis has also published another important encyclical coined *Fratelli Tutti*, in English, *All Brothers*. *Fratelli Tutti* complements *Laudato si'* because of its focus on how we engage with our neighbors on a local and global level. Again, like Rojas and Tavárez, Pope Francis is testifying to the importance of social cohesion, equilibrium, and balance in the creation of socio-economic societies that promote both material and spiritual wellness for all members of the community. Symbolically, Pope Francis signed *Fratelli Tutti* on October 3rd, during the celebration of Mass to honor St. Francis of Assisi, his patron saint of an “integral ecology.” Together, *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* implicitly affirm the spirit of the Andean-based *buen vivir* philosophy, and its cosmivision as reflected in how Indigenous peoples exist in the world.

***Buen Vivir* and Environmental Resisters in Latin America**

Today, the Andean, Mayan, and Nahua value of the principles of *Buen Vivir* is apparent in the lives of Environmental Resisters throughout Latin America. Global Witness, an organization that documents environmental abuses resulting in the exploitation and death of indigenous peoples on a global level states:

[T]hey are all part of a global movement to protect the planet. They are on the frontline of fighting climate change, preserving ecosystems and safeguarding human rights. They stand up for causes that benefit us all: sustainability, biodiversity and justice.²²

The harsh reality is that Environmental Resisters in the United States, unlike those in Latin America, are guaranteed human rights by our Constitution. As a result, they may go to jail for safeguarding the natural world in which they inhabit but will rarely lose their life in a U.S. setting. On the contrary, Environmental Resisters in Latin

²⁰ Pope Francis, *Querida Amazonia*, 6.

²¹ Medina, “Embracing A Millennia-Old Cosmovision,” 37.

²² Global Witness, “Their Faces: Defenders on the Frontlines”

America do not share these same rights. They thus are often persecuted and killed at the hands of government officials and global corporations that privilege the Western concept of development. Néstor Medina coins this Western concept as “the project of death” that “became the catalyst for the Western European military, genocidal, and colonizing project, through which Western Europeans (and eventually Americans) invaded and took possession of Indigenous lands around the world.”²³ Unfortunately, as stated by Medina, the reality is that many of these corporations are American and headquartered in the USA and Canada. Paul Angelo continues in another article,

Latin America was the world’s most dangerous region for human rights activists in 2019, according to Amnesty International, with 208 people killed for their activism. This tally includes LGBTQ+ advocates, women’s rights defenders, and anticorruption champions.²⁴

In Latin America, among the individuals who have died for defending the natural world are Raquel Padilla Ramos and Samir Flores Soberanes from México; Chico Mendes, Raimundo Santos Rodrigues, José Cláudio Ribeiro da Silva, and Maria de Espíritu Santo from Brazil; and Hernán Bedoya from Colombia.²⁵ For myself, and her community, the death of Indigenous Honduran Environmental Resister Berta Cáceres is painful to remember because she was one of Latin America's most prophetic ecological voices. On March 4, 2016, Berta’s voice was silenced as she was assassinated for her defense of the water system utilized by the Indigenous Lenca community. During her lifetime, Cáceres was the co-founder and coordinator of the organization Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). Upon her death, I argue that Cáceres transitioned into an *ecological soldadera* who like earlier women freedom fighters during the Mexican Revolution fought on the front lines for the basic rights of their people against abusive governments who privileged capital profit over the material and spiritual wellness of the inhabitants in their respective regions. Unfortunately, past and present, environmental resisters in Latin America continue to be killed by governments and multinational corporations who lack a *buen vivir* sensibility of universe-wellness.

In memory of the fallen ecological soldiers and *soldaderas*, I say *Presente!*

Environmental Resisters in the United States

In the United States, Latinx Environmental Resisters are ecological advocates who like myself are present in the fight to secure the principles of *buen vivir* in our local communities. Our struggles include equal access to community members most basic needs which are clean water, air, and land. Today, I am in solidarity with the following Latinx social justice and environmental justice movements that include César Chávez

²³ Medina, “Embracing A Millennia-Old Cosmvision,” 38.

²⁴ Paul J. Angelo, “Who Is Killing Latin America’s Environmentalists?” *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 20, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/who-killing-latin-americas-environmentalists> (accessed June 17, 2020).

²⁵ Angelo, “Who Is Killing Latin America’s Environmentalists?”

and Dolores Huerta in the U.S. Labor Movement, to Sal Castro and the Mexican American men and women who walked out with him, to the Brown Berets, to *Los Four* and ASCO, to *El Pueblo para el Aire Limpio* (Peoples for Clean Air and Water), and students and faculty at California State University, Los Angeles.

The U.S. Labor Movement Latinx Farmers Are “Essential Workers” in 2020

In the United States, César Chávez and Dolores Huerta are ecological icons for their protection of farmworkers, Mother Earth, and the symbolic monarch butterfly.²⁶ Since the origins of the movement, Chávez and Huerta understood the interconnectedness between the farmer, the soil, and the insects that compose the fragile ecosystem of the farm fields. And because of this, they fought for both the occupational health and safety of farmworkers and the farm fields. As a result, they have waged war on the use of deadly pesticides that have harmed the farmers’ health and have contaminated the farm fields’ ecosystem. But their fight rages on. The continued use of pesticides is harmful for the farmers and the farm fields as it contaminates the soil, air, and water, and negatively affects the overall health of all central valley Californian communities. In addition, the use of pesticides is a major factor in the death and decline of the monarch butterfly. Still, their decade-long fight has inspired a nationwide Latinx movement that has transcended the borders of the central valley in California. Today, Chávez and Huerta are known as pioneer environmental resisters in the United States who led “the first nationally known effort by people of color to address an environmental justice issue.”²⁷

Currently, Dolores Huerta continues César Chávez’s legacy in her advocacy for farm workers to be recognized as “essential workers” by our U.S. government. On March 27, 2020, farmworkers were denied financial assistance through Congress’ life-saving CARES Act,²⁸ which was legislated to financially assist U.S. citizens and U.S. residents through the coronavirus pandemic. Subsequently, Huerta spearheaded a letter-writing campaign to California Governor Gavin Newsom to advocate for farm workers to receive financial assistance in the State of California. In an interview with the organization *Facing History and Ourselves*, Huerta declared that farm workers are “essential workers” as they are keeping Americans fed, and thus should be financially subsidized.²⁹ Francisco Lozano, a farm worker in Santa Maria, California insists “our situation is worse now than ever,” as our wages are minimal and harvests are dependent on

²⁶ Eric Anderson, “California’s Monarch Butterflies May Be In Extinction Spiral,” December 15, 2020, <https://www.kpbs.org/news/2020/dec/15/californias-monarch-butterflies-may-be-extinction/> (accessed December 20, 2020).

²⁷ Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 27.

²⁸ David Bacon, “America’s Farmworkers—Now ‘Essential,’ but Denied the Just-Enacted Benefits,” *The American Prospect: Ideas, Politics & Power*, April 1, 2020, <https://prospect.org/coronavirus/american-farmworkers-essential-but-unprotected/> (accessed June 17, 2020).

²⁹ Dolores Huerta, “Becoming an Activist: A Conversation with Dolores Huerta,” *Facing History and Ourselves*, April 14, 2020, <https://www.facinghistory.org/professional-development/ondemand/becoming-activist-conversation-dolores-huerta> (accessed April 14, 2020).

seasonal conditions.³⁰ As a result, farmworkers are struggling to meet their most basic needs. At the same time, farmworkers nationwide are being directly exposed to COVID-19 because they lack both personal protective equipment and preventative education by their employers.³¹ Moreover, these deficits are compounded by acts of governmental officials such as Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida who has publicly demonized Hispanic day laborers and agricultural workers by arguing that they are causing the spike in the spread of the coronavirus in his state.³²

Today, Huerta's activist work is imperative as farm workers still lack full human rights by the U.S. government. I would argue that her political activism reflects a *buen vivir* focus of social justice and equality and calling the government to account for the satisfaction of basic needs of farm workers. Past and present, I argue that César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and members of the U.S. Labor Movement are modern-day U.S. Latinx environmental resisters.

The Walkouts/East Los Angeles School Blowouts, the Brown Berets and Chicano Moratorium

Sal Castro is a Mexican American educator and activist who is also a U.S. Latinx Environmental Resister. He mobilized "the first major mass protest against racism undertaken by Mexican-Americans in the history of the United States."³³ This mass Movement rallied in the streets of East Los Angeles on March 5, 1968. It is inspiring that the movement brought out an estimated 20,000-50,000³⁴ Mexican American men and women, many of whom were students. The day of the walkouts the natural habitat of East Los Angeles was not safe for Latinx individuals because the police were physically abusive in their tactics to suppress the protesters' efforts. Still, they marched on the streets of East Los Angeles to demand that the Spanish language and Mexican culture be fully integrated into the educational school curriculum. On their own streets, they fought for the:

implementation of bilingual and bicultural training for teachers, elimination of tracking based on standardized tests, improvement and replacement of inferior school facilities, removal of racist teachers and

³⁰ Bacon, "America's Farmworkers—Now 'Essential,' but Denied the Just-Enacted Benefits"

³¹ Pilar Marrero, "A Different Kind of Pest," *Angelus* 5, no. 15 (Los Angeles: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, 2020), 22-23.

³² Amanda Woods, "Florida gov blames coronavirus rise on 'overwhelmingly Hispanic' workers," *New York Post*, June 19, 2020, <https://nypost.com/2020/06/19/desantis-blames-covid-spike-on-overwhelmingly-hispanic-laborers/> accessed June 20, 2020).

³³ "East L.A. Walkouts," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_L.A._walkouts (accessed December 20, 2020).

³⁴ The "SAL CASTRO & the 1968 East LA Walkouts" documentary estimates that 20,000 students participated in this Movement, April 18, 2003, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3TKnjofXZs> (accessed June 20, 2020). In the Sal Castro Lecture @ SDSU, "Walkout: Sal Castro & the Chicano Struggle for Environmental Justice," May 3, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1xK1prqC2Q&t=4s> (accessed June 17, 2020). Sal Castro comments were based on research done in 2006 for the movie "Walkouts". He noted that there were an estimated 50,000 students involved in this walkout, including non-Hispanic youth.

administrators, and inclusion of Mexican history and culture into the curriculum.³⁵

Though the movement was situated in East Los Angeles, the vision it supported was broad in scope: they demanded that all Latinx students in the United States have equal access to a quality education.

It is important to note that this movement would not have been successful if not for Mexican American women who were also on the frontlines advocating for a focus akin to *buen vivir* based on social justice and equality as responsibilities of the state. Among these women were Celeste Baca, Vickie Castro, Paula Crisostomo, Mita Cuaron, Tanya Luna Mount, Rosalinda Mendez González, Rachael Ochoa Cervera, and Cassandra Zacarías.³⁶ In her article “Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts,” Dolores Delgado Bernal prophetically reclaims the legacy of these women as political organizers and actors who networked, engaged in consciousness raising, held elected or appointed office, and acted as official or unofficial spokespersons.³⁷ Beyond that, these Mexican American women supported Latino political leaders who fought against police brutality in their communities and participated in organizing the antiwar Chicano Moratorium Movement.³⁸ Delgado Bernal points out:

Their participation was vital to the Blowouts, yet because a traditional leadership paradigm does not acknowledge the importance of those who participate in organizing, developing consciousness, and networking, their leadership remains unrecognized and unappreciated by most historians.³⁹

I propose that Sal Castro and the Mexican American students who rallied on the unsafe streets of East Los Angeles for their U.S. constitutional right to a quality education are Environmental Resisters in the United States.

Similarly, I also argue that the Brown Berets, spearheaded by David Sánchez, were environmental resisters because of their focus on social justice and equality, as the responsibility of the state, resonated with *buen vivir*. More specifically, their political activist work centered on protesting the Vietnam War. At the time, they were demanding that the U.S. government enforce a Chicano Moratorium to inhibit the disproportionate numbers of Latinx individuals who were being recruited and killed, in Vietnam. Subsequently, on August 29, 1970, an estimated 30,000 Latinx individuals again took to the streets to say that the bodies of all Latinx were guaranteed equal protection by our U.S. Constitution. Similar to the East Los Angeles walkouts, in 1968,

³⁵ Dolores Delgado Bernal, “Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19, no. 2 (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 117.

³⁶ Delgado Bernal, “Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized,” 117.

³⁷ Delgado Bernal, “Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized,” 124.

³⁸ Delgado Bernal, “Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized,” 126.

³⁹ Delgado Bernal, “Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized,” 125.

the streets were a war zone of activists confronting police officers who were leveraging their power using weapons and tear gas to suppress the movement. Sadly, Rubén Salazar, the first Mexican American journalist in mainstream media to address issues affecting the U.S. Latinx community, died that day. He died as a martyr, assassinated for the cause. Today, I argue that he is also a U.S. environmental resister.

Chicano Collaborative Art Movements: *Los Four* & ASCO

Los Four and ASCO were — two Chicana art movements in the early ‘70s and ‘80s which can be considered Environmental Resisters in the United States as well. During these decades, both groups fully embodied principles of *buen vivir* of social justice and equality as a responsibility of the state, as they leveraged their artwork to address socioeconomic and political injustices faced by the Latinx community in East Los Angeles.⁴⁰ Members of *Los Four*, were Carlos Almaraz, Beto de la Rocha, Judith Hernández, Frank Romero, and Gilbert Luján, while members of ASCO, were Harry Gamboa Jr., Glugio “Gronk” Nicandro, Willie Herrón and Patssi Valdez. In each case, the landscape for their political activist work was the streets of East Los Angeles where they lived, worked, played, and prayed. More specifically, *Los Four* reclaimed “space” in their natural habitat by painting two-dimensional murals. Themes in their murals addressed the issue of gentrification that took the form of the displacement of Latinx communities by the development of urban freeways in Los Angeles. Today, their murals document a history of resistance in the U.S. Latinx community from soldiers in the Mexican Revolution, to the Bracero immigrants, to César Chávez and Dolores Huerta and the death of Rubén Salazar. For myself, the most striking mural was painted by Frank Romero. It is called “Dreamland.”⁴¹ In it, he situates the hybrid experience of the Latinx community in Los Angeles as a result of urban freeways. Distinct from *Los Four*, ASCO physically reclaimed “space” within East Los Angeles. Their Spanish name ASCO is most telling; it translates in English as “disgust.” At the time, they were disgusted by the way that the U.S. Latinx community was being treated. Thus, they protested on Whittier Boulevard which was/is deemed to be the heart of East Los Angeles.⁴² For example, on Christmas Eve in 1971, members of ASCO dressed up in costumes and carried huge cardboard crosses down Whittier Blvd in protest of the Vietnam War.⁴³ It was their way of mocking the U.S. system that was negating their voice in the public sphere. In this spirit, I argue that members of both groups are U.S. Latinx environmental resisters, because in their art they sought to reclaim a more socially just and equitable world for all Latinx U.S. citizens.

⁴⁰ “Asco (art collective),” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asco_\(art_collective\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asco_(art_collective)) (accessed June 16, 2020).

⁴¹ “Dreamland: A Frank Romero Retrospective,” Museum of Latin American Art, Los Angeles, CA, January 11-May 21, 2017, <https://molaa.org/dreamland> (accessed December 22, 2020).

⁴² José Luis Gámez, “Representing the City: The Imagination and Critical Practice in East Los Angeles,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 27, no. 1 (Los Angeles, CA: Chicano Studies Research Studies Center Publications, 2002), 104.

⁴³ Gámez, “Representing the City: The Imagination and Critical Practice in East Los Angeles,” 104.

El Pueblo para el Aire y Agua Limpia

The activist work of the group *El Pueblo para el Aire y Agua Limpia* (People for Clean Air and Water), focuses on the value of the satisfaction of basic needs which also resonates with *buen vivir*. In the early '80s, this group emerged in the Central Valley of California when the demographic make-up of the city was ninety-five percent Spanish-speaking Latino farmworkers.⁴⁴ They discovered that they were living next to the largest toxic waste dump in the nation.⁴⁵ The company involved was the Chemical Waste Management Company which created these waste sites without the community's knowledge or consent.⁴⁶ From the beginning, the Resisters' concern was safeguarding their community and habitat, which had been exposed to these toxins since the early '70s. Like César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, their concern was not just the waste site but the toxins that were going into their water and soil. Their activist work paralleled an important research project entitled The Cerrell Report, published in California in 1984, which documented that "companies and localities" were intentionally targeting low-income communities with "fewer than 25,000 residents for toxic waste sites."⁴⁷ Ultimately, *El Pueblo para el Aire y Agua Limpia* protested and in 1993, took the Chemical Waste Management group to court — and won! As a result, Chem Waste withdrew the construction of toxic waste incinerators from this targeted community.⁴⁸

In the words of Dolores Huerta, *Sí, se puede!*

Las Madres del Este de Los Angeles

Meanwhile, *Las Madres del Este de Los Angeles* (the Mothers of East Los Angeles [MELA]) reflect the spirit of *buen vivir* in their commitment to social justice and equality as a responsibility of the state. Their advocacy efforts focus on "quality of life" issues that affect the environmental well-being of their whole community, residents, and the natural world alike.⁴⁹ The movement was spearheaded by a group of Latinx mothers in 1986, in collaboration with Gloria Molina, a former member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. They gathered to protest then Governor Deukmejian's state initiative to build a prison in East Los Angeles. If built, it would be located in Boyle Heights which is already struggling with quality-of-life issues that include poor air quality as a result of being surrounded by freeways, in addition to gentrification and displacement as the result of invasion of corporations that have intentionally chosen the area because of its low-income status. Amidst these already serious challenges, a major concern for these mothers was that it would be built "within two miles of thirty-four schools."⁵⁰ This would mean that their children would be suffering in tangible ways

⁴⁴ Cole and Foster, *From the Ground Up*, 1.

⁴⁵ Cole and Foster, *From the Ground Up*, 2.

⁴⁶ Cole and Foster, *From the Ground Up*, 2.

⁴⁷ Cole and Foster, *From the Ground Up*, 3.

⁴⁸ Cole and Foster, *From the Ground Up*, 4, 9.

⁴⁹ Pardo, "Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists," 5.

⁵⁰ Pardo, "Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists," 2.

from the presence of this prison in their community which, they argued, would bring increased violence.

Subsequently, in the summer of 1986, 2,000 community members rallied and marched in Boyle Heights to protest the construction of this prison in their community. Among these participants were 400 Mexican American Latinx women and mothers. Mary Pardo asserts that “[t]his march marked the beginning of one of the largest grassroots coalitions to emerge from the Latino community in the last decade.”⁵¹ Latinx mother, Marta Molinas-Avila comments “[we] were warriors . . . but . . . also peace activists.”⁵² She continues:

On a weekly basis, hundreds of mothers along with their children and husbands would march against the prison proposal, generating attention and traveling to the state capitol, Sacramento, to state their case. They wore white scarves on their heads, and they generated headlines and attention. The fight started in the church basement was ultimately successful; it took over a decade, but the prison was not built in Boyle Heights.⁵³

Pardo continues that their traditional roles as mothers spurred them to become grassroots activists because they desired their children to be educated and protected in “the surrounding community.”⁵⁴ In the process, she states proudly that these Latinx mothers “have transformed social identity – ethnic identity, class identity, and gender identity – into an impetus as well as a basis for activism. And, in transforming their existing social networks into grassroots political networks, they have also transformed themselves.”⁵⁵

Today, these Latinx mothers continue to organize in opposition to projects “detrimental to the quality of life in the central city.”⁵⁶ In 1987, they organized a protest and march against the construction of incinerators in the city of Vernon by the corporation California Thermal Treatment Systems. Ultimately, “after a six-year battle,” MELA sued the Environmental Protection Agency for their failure to provide an Environmental Impact Report to continue with the project.⁵⁷ In 1991, because of their efforts, the incinerator project was abandoned.⁵⁸ Currently, MELA's focus are “health education programs, raising money for scholarships, informing the community about environmental injustice through mass demonstrations, community and legal

⁵¹ Pardo, “Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists,” 2. Since the march took place in 1986, the last decade Pardo is referring to would be the 1970s.

⁵² Emily Gwash and Ashley Schroeder, “Politics Start Locally: The Legacy of the ‘Mothers of East L.A.’” September 25, 2014, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/hispanic-heritage-month/politics-starts-locally-legacy-mothers-east-l-n211286> (accessed June 13, 2020).

⁵³ Gwash and Schroeder, “Politics Start Locally: The Legacy of the ‘Mothers of East L.A.’”

⁵⁴ Pardo, “Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists,” 3.

⁵⁵ Pardo, “Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists,” 2.

⁵⁶ Pardo, “Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists,” 2.

⁵⁷ “Mothers of East Los Angeles,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mothers_of_East_Los_Angeles (accessed June 17, 2020).

⁵⁸ Pardo, “Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists,” 2.

hearings.”⁵⁹ Since 2011, these Latinx mothers have focused on improving the air quality surrounding seven schools in Boyle Heights. To do this, they secured a million-dollar grant from the Reformulated Gasoline Fund. In the spirit of *buen vivir*, I argue that these Latinx mothers are also U.S. environmental resisters.

Buen Vivir: California State University, Los Angeles

Like each of the groups and movements discussed above, members of the California State University, Los Angeles have a rich history as U.S. Latinx Environmental Resisters because of their commitment to safeguard the political rights of members in the U.S. community particularly with regards to clean and safe water, air, and soil. Robert J. López confirms that we are fully engaged in the transformation of the social and political landscape of Southern California.⁶⁰ In his article, “Pioneering Latino Leaders Trace Their Roots to Cal State LA” he states that “[i]t's impossible to talk about Latino leadership in Southern California without discussing Cal State LA.”⁶¹ As such, many of our graduates are now elected officials or public servants including Richard Alatorre, Gloria Molina, Esteban Torres, Antonio Villaraigosa, Lucille Roybal-Allard and Lillian Roybal-Rose. Today, I am also proud to be a part of this community as a professor in the Chicana/o & Latina/o Studies department.

Of historical importance, in 1968 Cal State LA created the first Mexican American Studies Program in the United States in their efforts to provide a quality level of education to Latinx individuals within the United States.⁶² In 2018, our department celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of this program which is now called the Chicana/o & Latina/o Studies Department. Since the 1960s, Cal State LA has housed one of the first Educational Opportunity Programs in the State of California which provides a safety net for highly motivated Latinx students who lack mentorship and the financial support needed to successfully finish their degrees. Margaret Hart — faculty member at Cal State LA, and author of *Educating the Excluded: What Led to the Mandate for Educational Opportunity at California State University* — documents the early beginnings of the EOP program at Cal State LA. She comments that these students despite the challenges they faced, “had the courage of their convictions, continuing the struggles over time, even to the present day, despite setbacks.”⁶³ She explains:

The evolution of EOP could be seen, simply, as a movement to stop the waste of human potential, to develop the hearts and minds of young people brimming with untapped talent, who may not have received the

⁵⁹ “MELA’s work during the 21st Century,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mothers_of_East_Los_Angeles#MELA'S_work_during_the_21st_century (accessed December 22, 2020).

⁶⁰ Robert J. Lopez, “Pioneering Latino Leaders Trace Their Roots to Cal State LA” (Los Angeles, CA: *California State University Los Angeles Magazine*, Fall 2019), 35.

⁶¹ Lopez, “Pioneering Latino Leaders Trace Their Roots to Cal State LA,” 35.

⁶² “History (1968-Present): The History of The Department of Chicana/o & Latina/o Studies,” <http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/cls/history-1968-present> (accessed June 16, 2020).

⁶³ Margaret Hart, *Excluding the Excluded: What Led to the Mandate for Educational Opportunity at California State University* (Los Angeles: Educational Opportunity Program, 2016), 2.

necessary preparation for college at their high school, but with a little extra help could achieve things that were previously beyond their ken.⁶⁴

These Latinx leaders “knew that making education more accessible could have a powerful impact on problems that needed to be addressed in their neighborhoods.”⁶⁵ Felix Gutiérrez, student activist and member of the United Mexican American Students (UMAS) on campus asserts, “We were fighting for Chicano students.” As a result, “in 1968 a list of nonnegotiable demands from UMAS was presented to the administration, among them, an Educational Opportunity Program type of Admission Program.”⁶⁶ He articulates that at the time, their ideas were radical because they were “diametrically opposed to the current train of thought... To say: ‘we should go out and find kids who don't qualify to go to college and bring them here.’”⁶⁷ He continues, “They were saying you don't belong here, and we did belong here; we were going to school here, working here.”⁶⁸

Moreover, as of Fall 2020, Cal State University, Los Angeles will be one of two universities in the nation to have an Ethnic Studies College. The creation of this college reflects a *buen vivir* philosophy as it stipulates that communities of color have a voice within California’s educational system, and hopefully within the U.S. educational system. Current Chicana/o & Latina/o Studies Department Chair Dolores Delgado Bernal states:

[T]he effort to get a college was a collective one with PAS, AAAS, and CLS.⁶⁹ It had been decades in the making but was really pushed after the 2016 CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies. It will be the second in the nation, behind San Francisco State’s college which is 50+ years old.⁷⁰

In my own case, as a faculty member in the Chicana/o & Latina/o Studies Department my commitment to the *buen vivir* philosophy is evident in securing two grants to educate my students about social justice and environmental justice issues that are affecting communities of color in Los Angeles on a day-to-day basis. Together, both grants subsidized water-testing kits and a bus for 60 students in my Environmental Justice classes to participate in a four-hour Toxic Tour Trip in Los Angeles. The tour taught them about toxic industries in their communities and how it affects their families’ overall health. For my students, it was a transformational experience. Daisy Castaneda, who participated in it, commented that the trip “definitely changed my

⁶⁴ Hart, *Excluding the Excluded*, 3.

⁶⁵ Hart, *Excluding the Excluded*, 2.

⁶⁶ Hart, *Excluding the Excluded*, 5.

⁶⁷ Hart, *Excluding the Excluded*, 6.

⁶⁸ Hart, *Excluding the Excluded*, 7.

⁶⁹ The acronyms are Pan-African Studies (PAS), Asian and Asian American Studies (AAAS), and Chicana/o & Latina/o Studies (CLS).

⁷⁰ Dolores Delgado Bernal, email communication, June 18, 2020.

perception of the environment and encouraged me to want to make positive changes for my children's future."⁷¹

Buen Vivir & Women Environmental Resisters in the Americas

In doing research for this essay, I was fascinated to find parallel commitments to the principles and values behind *buen vivir* in the following Latinx grassroots women's movements in the United States and in Latin America. All of them reflect a shared value of physical and spiritual equilibrium between humans and Nature, social cohesion in the community, and reclaiming the ancestral heritage and wisdom rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, including medicinal practices and rituals. Equally important to these groups is the focus of a socially equitable world for all. These groups testify to my argument that *buen vivir* is part of an ecological sensibility of members in the U.S. Latinx community and in Indigenous populations in Latin America.

Con-spirando (Breathing Together)

In Latin America, *Con-spirando* is a *colectivo*, a collective of women Environmental Resisters. It was co-founded in 1991 by Judy Ress, Josefina Hurtado, Ute Seibert and Elena Aguila. In English, the term *Con-spirando* literally translates as *con*, meaning "with" and *respirar*, meaning "breathing."⁷² The metaphor of breathing together intersects with *buen vivir* in its emphasis on harmony with Nature, respect for the values and principles of Indigenous peoples, and an affirmation of social cohesion and community. *Con-spirando* also shares with *buen vivir* the importance of the physical and spiritual health of women along with the ecological health of the universe. Since the early '90s, when the group began to organize, they have affirmed the ancestral heritage and wisdom of pre-Columbian original peoples in Latin America. Their mission states, "We seek a spirituality that will both heal and liberate, that will nourish our Christian tradition as well as take up the long-repressed roots of the native peoples of this continent."⁷³ In this respect, they have published 50+ journals that engage multiple themes that affirm the empowerment of women in the Christian and non-Christian traditions and Indigenous knowledge-system practices.⁷⁴ In 2004, *Con-spirando* also co-authored a book with Red Latinoamericana, called *Virgenes y diosas en América Latina: La resignación de lo sagrado* which examines the dual-role of Indigenous

⁷¹ "Communities for a Better Environment Reflection," Environmental Justice class, Dr. Theresa Yugar, October 14, 2019.

⁷² Mary Judy Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America: Women From The Margins* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 136.

⁷³ Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America*, 136-137.

⁷⁴ During my time, as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Gender and Women's Studies Department at Loyola Marymount University (2018-2019), I advocated that *Con-spirando's* journals be archived on LMU's Digital Commons database. This was a priority for me because I wanted to help secure the ecological wisdom by women in Latin America whose voices, visions, and activist work are for the most part unknown to Latinx/Chicanx activists and scholars in the United States, <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1050&context=con-spirando> (accessed December 17, 2020).

goddesses and Marian devotions in a modern-day Latin American context.⁷⁵ Today, Ivone Gebara, an esteemed Brazilian ecofeminist theologian who has collaborated with the movement since its beginnings, affirms “that *Con-spirando* epitomizes a new cosmology, a new anthropology, a new epistemology, and a new ecology for our times.”⁷⁶

***Mujeres de Maiz* (Women of the Corn)**

Like *Con-spirando* in Latin America, *Mujeres de Maiz* in East Los Angeles connects with the principles of *buen vivir* in its shared value of harmony with Nature and respect for the values and principles of Indigenous peoples, which includes pre-Columbian ideals and rituals. This *colectivo* of women privileges concern for the physical and spiritual health not only of Latinx women but of the communities they represent.⁷⁷ They are also interested in reclaiming herbal remedies, healthy eating and cooking, writing, and women's health.⁷⁸ Their name is significant because it integrates the indigenous population's value of corn, which has been both sacred and a staple food in the diet of “Indigenous peoples of the American continent” for millennia.⁷⁹ The collective was founded in 1997, in Los Angeles, by Felicia “Fe” Montes and Claudia Mercado. Michelle López states,

As a collective they seek to empower women of all ages and ethnicities to find and use their voices whether it is through visual arts, poetry, healing arts, or political action. They do this by providing workshops, organizing conferences, giving guest lectures, collaborating on projects, and working with other local collectives and organizations in the East Los Angeles area.⁸⁰

Normally, in a non-Covid-19 world, they have monthly lunar moon rituals to remember Coyolxāuhqui, the Aztec goddess of fertility, often equated with Mother Earth. Though their rituals are symbolic and differ in their function and form from pre-Columbian times, they demonstrate their desire to affirm ancestral Indigenous wisdom. As artists, performers, healers, and community activists, the ultimate desire of members of *Mujeres de Maiz* is to create a more sustainable world where a focus on equilibrium and balance prevails. As I can gather, *Mujeres de Maiz* are also environmental resisters in the United States.

⁷⁵ Verónica Cordero, Graciela Pujol, Mary Judith Ress, and Coca Trillini, *Virgenes y diosas en América Latina: La resignificación de lo sagrado* (Santiago, Chile: *Colectivo Con-spirando/Red Latinoamericana*, 2004).

⁷⁶ Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America*, 135.

⁷⁷ Michelle Lynn López, “*Mujeres de Maiz*: Forcing Change in the Art Landscape of Los Angeles,” June 2016, MA Thesis, California State University, Los Angeles, 9. The actual citation for this quote are the words of Amber Rose González author of “Another City is Possible: *Mujeres de Maiz*, Radical *Mestizaje* and Activist Scholarship,” 3, 8.

⁷⁸ López, “*Mujeres de Maiz*,” 4.

⁷⁹ López, “*Mujeres de Maiz*,” 1.

⁸⁰ López, “*Mujeres de Maiz*,” 7-8.

The Ovarian Pscos, East Los Angeles

The Ovarian Pscos in East Los Angeles is a *colectivo* of women founded in 2010, to protest the systemic violence that Latinx women were experiencing in the homes they inhabit daily.⁸¹ Like members of *Mujeres de Maiz*, they affirm the values and principles of Indigenous peoples in the Americas and in doing so intersect with *buen vivir*. More specifically, they criticize violence against women in Los Angeles that is resulting in disequilibrium, and the breakdown of the family unit in our local communities. Since their origins, they saw a need for physical and spiritual healing in response to physical and verbal violence within their families and communities. In their eyes, violence, whether individual or collective, disrupts the balance and equilibrium of communal living. As a group, they desire that our local communities be characterized by the value of physical and spiritual wellness, which they perceive comes with an increased “consciousness, confidence, community, health, access to the city, and closeness to mother earth.”⁸² Jennifer Ruth Hosek tells us that these women gather as womxn of color to defy prescribed gender norms for women in Hispanic culture, just as they denounce the objectification of women’s bodies.⁸³ The Ovarian Pscos embrace the spirit of *buen vivir* as they affirm their value as women of Indigenous descent within Mexican culture.⁸⁴ In a pre-Covid-19 world, they normally gather monthly for a lunar bike ritual to remember the Aztec goddess, Coyolxāuhqui, who was tragically dismembered by her brother Huitzilopochtli. The Aztec legend states:

Huitzilopchtli killed Coyolxāuhqui, beheading her and throwing her down the side of Caltepec: “He pierced Coyolxāuhqui, and then quickly struck off her head. It stopped there at the edge of Coatepetl. And her body came falling below. It fell breaking into pieces, in various places her arms, her legs, parts of her body each fell.”⁸⁵

For members of The Ovarian Pscos, this story resonates with their lives as it is symbolic of the violence they experience within Latinx communities by men as a result of *machista* misogynist attitudes toward women. At the same time, it is a source of inspiration as they gather on the streets in East Los Angeles for lunar bike rides where – like ASCO – they reclaim their own space, i.e., their habitat. For their vision and commitment to the health and wellness of women and social cohesion in our Latinx communities, they also fit within the scope of environmental resisters in the United States.

Hermanas (Sisters)

⁸¹ Jennifer Ruth Hosek, “Ovarian Pscos: An Urban Cadence of Power and Precarity,” *Transfers* 7, Summer 2017, 123.

⁸² Hosek, “Ovarian Pscos,” 123.

⁸³ Hosek, “Ovarian Pscos,” 121-122.

⁸⁴ Hosek, “Ovarian Pscos,” 121.

⁸⁵ Bernadino Sahagún, *Florentine Codex* Book 3, 1569.

Finally, *Hermanas* is another group of activist U.S. Latinx/Chicanx women with goals much like *Mujeres de Maiz* and *The Ovarian Psycos*. In the early 1970s, *Hermanas*, a group of nuns, recognized the negation of U.S. Hispanic culture not only in U.S. politics, but in the politics of the Roman Catholic Church as well. The political activist work of *Hermanas* has focused on social justice, equality, and democracy for Chicanos and Chicanas within both the Roman Catholic Church and U.S. society at large. In her book *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U. S. Catholic Church*, Lara Medina states that this group of nuns in their political activism uniquely bridged the “civil rights struggles of Chicanos and Chicanas and their religious needs.”⁸⁶ Medina continues, “Their presence brought the Chicano movement into the Church and the Church into the Chicano movement.”⁸⁷ As an organic grassroots movement, their aim has been the empowerment of Latinx/Chicanx women in the United States. Accordingly, their focus has been on “issues of leadership development, moral agency, reproductive rights, sexuality, and domestic abuse” for “grassroots Latinas.”⁸⁸ Medina explains:

Their early concerns included institutional representation and accountability for a rapidly growing Latino Catholic population, culturally sensitive ministry and educational programs, church and secular labor practices, women's empowerment, and ecclesial support for the Chicano movement.⁸⁹

Though not fully active at present, I argue that members of *Hermanas* were significant women to be reckoned with resulting in a church that is more inclusive of the U.S. Latinx experience. As Latinx/Chicanas, they leveraged their power and influence as nuns to address this injustice to church leaders on the United States Council of Catholic Bishops. Today, the U.S. Roman Catholic church has integrated Spanish masses nationwide and has an estimated 25 Latinx bishops,⁹⁰ including Archbishop José H. Gomez, the first Latinx President of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops. As can be seen, due to their work against “overt discrimination toward Chicanos and Latinos in the Catholic Church and in society at large,”⁹¹ *Las Hermanas* fit the label of Environmental Resisters in the United States. Additionally, I would also argue that because of their commitment of faith and spirituality and its role in the social sphere, they also reflect the values of *buen vivir*.

Conclusion: Reflection on Environmental Resisters in the United States & Latin America

⁸⁶ Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 204), 1.

⁸⁷ Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 4.

⁸⁸ Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 3.

⁸⁹ Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 3.

⁹⁰ “Active Hispanic/Latino Bishops,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website, <https://www.usccb.org/committees/hispaniclatino-affairs/active-hispaniclatino-bishops> (accessed December 20, 2020).

⁹¹ “Active Hispanic/Latino Bishops”

In this essay, I have argued that the U.S. Latinx environmental resisters share much in common with the Indigenous peoples in Latin America in terms of the values and principles of *buen vivir*. In their activist work to safeguard the inalienable rights of humans and Nature as well as their shared commitment to the material and spiritual wellness of their community members these groups put on display a wide range of ethical values that resonate with *buen vivir* as a fundamental philosophy for life. The names of Latinx Environmental Justice activists extend beyond the individuals and movements explored in this essay. Some other names that are worth mentioning are Elena Popp – Executive Director of the Eviction Defense Network (EDN), Chicax organizer Trinidad Ruiz, of the Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU), Latinx scholar Magally Miranda Alcázar, Alex Contreras, Regional Organizing Director for California YIMBY (“Yes, in my backyard”), and Xugo Luján, South East LA Community Organizer with *Communities for a Better Environment*, in Huntington Park Los Angeles.⁹² Among theologian Environmental Resisters I also include Daniel Castillo, Nelson Araque, Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández, Melissa Págan, Peter Mena, and Ahida Calderón Pilarski among many others.

As I reflect on the ethical imperative of *buen vivir*, I celebrate how its principles are reflected among the U.S. Latinx community of environmental resisters. I am also convinced that the principles and values of *buen vivir* can hold crucial insights for addressing the pressing climate challenge that humans and the natural world are facing at this critical moment in history. In my view, it is the original peoples in Latin America who hold the key to open a new door to our “common home.” And the key, in the spirit of Pope Francis, is the Andean-based *buen vivir* philosophy.

⁹² “Communities for a Better Environment,” <http://www.cbecal.org/> (accessed June 16, 2020).