

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY
THE NEW WORLD ORDER AND RELIGIONS

M. Dolors Oller i Sala

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For this reason, this booklet does not make reference to more recent international events, namely the global financial crisis of September 2008. Nevertheless, we believe that much of this booklet's content remains not only relevant, but in fact becomes even more pertinent in the light of the events that have caused turbulence at a global level.

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THE APPEARANCE OF A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY AND OF THE WORLD

It is clear that we live in a time of great historical change, immersed in the so-called globalisation process. The Third Industrial Revolution has led to a redefinition of the understanding of production, power, and experience within societies, and has deeply affected our way of life. Scientific and technological advances, particularly in the fields of transport, information and communication, and with the consequences they lead to regarding production systems, employment and the jobs market, as well as international competition, have brought about the appearance of a new social scenario. Today we are dealing with an employment network and a new economy.

However, this whole situation can also prove incredibly excluding to some, and leaves many victims in its wake. It has also brought about the appearance of a new understanding of society and of the world, a new scenario that revolves around five central ideas:

1. The importance of the individual understood from the point of view of both consumer and producer in a constant state of modernisation. This is

the individual that uses a utilitarian logic that is imbued with instrumental reason, in order to freely interact with others with the aim of maximising his own individual profit, and through these interactions, establish a code of conduct.

2. The market is the model that allows the improvement of transactions. This system is used by cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, and the State itself. This is why we refer to the market

economy, as well as the market society, viewing it as a natural way of organising and regulating citizenship.

3. It is the market that brings about real social justice, through equity. The market society is considered as being fair when it allows any individual to enter into competition, giving them the possibility of ensuring their well being through their own initiatives and creativity. Through the principle of equity, a State is considered fair if it allows a policy of access to education for all, increasingly using the education system to define social standing.

4. The private company is the organisation which, in a market society, best guarantees the management of business deals in a competitive environment, and allows a fairer distribution of costs and benefits in the global market. These are also the organisations that know how to gain the most from new technology, by transforming themselves into a company network operating through increasingly horizontal and decentralised structures, giving respon-

sibility to each member of the organisation and paying attention to everyone's interests.

5. Capital potential defines value; this is how any goods or services are measured, whether material or not - even human beings are reduced to the status of "human resources". The individual who is no longer profitable ceases to be of value, particularly in relation to financial capital.

These are the five main elements behind the new social narrative within the framework of globalisation. However, the economic processes of our society that are generated by globalisation must also be taken into account, as these affect us even in our most personal beliefs, given that «the way in which we live depends largely on the prevailing economic models» and «our way of life affects how we think and feel»². This viewpoint represents the triumph of the market economy and its laws over the policies and reasoning relating to the common good.

1. THE WORLD THAT WE HAVE BUILT: AN UNEQUAL WORLD, THAT IS VIOLENT AND UNSUSTAINABLE

The globalised world is a mosaic of networks. The impact that these networks have on information and merchandise, by ignoring formal borders, means that they throw the notion of territoriality into crisis, and along with it, the notion of sovereignty. The logic of the network –which instead divides itself into zones– overrides the logic of the territory: States are no longer the main player; they must share their power and decision-making capacity with other players that follow a transnational form of logic. In this way, a framework which provides a potential resolution for political differences is formed, where the notion of the common good has less to do with the internal legal system of a State, and instead raises the issue of governability on a global level.

The Nation-State has been overtaken, given that we see an increasing number of problems arising that are of a transnational nature, requiring cross-border solutions that go beyond the usual inter-State logic. For example, the changing climate, the emigration of people as a result of the poor distribution of global wealth, global terrorism, and market-related problems that go beyond the Nation-State dimension, etc. In order to respond to this situation, there has been a great increase in the number of transnational organisations

of various types, and these have led to the appearance of new transnational structures in the domain of the economy, production, work, in relation to different movements in support of Human Rights, environmentalist or feminist groups, pacifist movements, etc. All these new organisations that are so varied, are formed on the margins of the State, and by their very nature they also characterise this growing desire to spread their activity beyond their State's territory. This widely seen phenomenon has led to emergence of a new type of

politics, which some are calling a transnational and polycentric subpolitics –this breaks from the political monocentrism which makes up the traditional State formula³.

All this has resulted in the hope for an improved democracy –if we consider a global Civil Society of a transnational nature⁴–, but it has also transformed democracies into something like polyarchies: we often do not know who commands responsibility or how to exercise that power effectively. Traditional democratic structures within a State are no longer suitable to exercise power over something that has become transnational in nature.

If we think about the world as a whole, what strikes us is the lack of incredibly important changes needed to make the world more humane and more just. This is why the main problem of our world continues to be inequality. This globalisation that we are witnessing is profoundly selective: while a privileged few see themselves benefiting, three quarters of humanity are left out and find themselves victims of unyielding market laws. As a result, the economic growth that does occur only reinforces these inequalities, which exist both between countries and within national economies⁵. Differences between nations are more obvious in relation to access to health systems, education as well as opportunities for social, political and economic inclusion⁶.

In other words, the world is becoming more globalised according to the methods preferred by the larger economic powers.

The neoliberal model of globalisation leaves everything in the hands of the market and leads to an unsustainable situation that does not guarantee people the basics required to allow the entire world to live in dignity. The result is a situation of global social disorder, that compromises world peace and stability. In this sense, we cannot forget that peace should always be linked to a guarantee to meet basic needs and conditions required for living, or in other words, basic social rights such as the right to an education, the right to healthcare, the right to work and to a comfortable place to live, etc. This is why we refer to a positive peace that means so much more than the simple absence of war.

On the one hand, the development of new types of political organisations has resulted in the appearance of a multilateral world, but on the other hand, we are living in a time of great “disorder” on an international level as well as a tendency towards unilateralism of a hegemonic nature, such as that seen in the USA. We are moving dangerously close to a unipolar system supporting the notion of American peace.

This perspective is based on strategies of unilateralism and preventative attacks in order to slow down the so-called axis of evil, demonstrate technical and military supremacy, ensure impenetrability and secure fuel through the control of key regions (the Persian and Caspian Gulf). and all of this in the name of fighting against global terrorism that threatens national security. This imperial tendency that we have outlined is in contrast to the other trend

we have also described, which has seen the evaporation of such types of power, and instead witnessed the emergence of a notion of plurality in relation to power, similar to the idea of multilateralism.

The situation that humanity is facing today is the fruit of a great number of injustices and “corruption”.

1.1. The corruption of democracy and politics

The Democratic State of Rights has seen itself being gradually replaced by a Private State of Rights, reduced to a set of rules that are legitimised by their apparent ability to function well. This is how instrumental reason is imposed, and politics becomes managerial: in modern-day democracies, market values with their related laws clearly enjoy the dominant position, as these seem to have become practically the only point of reference, and given that their code of conduct is directed by business strategies motivated by profit, other values that are indispensable to the notion of living in a community are cast aside, such as the ideas of gratuity or the common good. In this way, the demands of competition are imposed on both people and nations⁷.

The globalisation process is noticeably irregular on another matter: it has led to strong economic globalisation, and contrastingly, weak political globalisation. This leads to a serious imbalance, meaning that the laws of the economy and market go beyond State laws and meet with little or no obstacles at an international level either. The balance between the democratic state and the

capitalist market has been broken: today it is no longer the state that defines the limits of the market, but instead it is the global market that defines the limits of power of the state. The IMF, the WB, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the WTO outline political frameworks (their structural set-up), which local governments must then impose on their respective societies, thus distorting the notion of democracy.

1.2. The injustices of financial markets

One of the main characteristics of global capitalism is the free circulation of capital, which is speculative, unstable and responsible for generating huge disasters in poorer countries. Big financial players, banks, and other sources of massive investment dominate financial markets. They work for their own interests, seeking to maximise their profitability, without taking into account the actual needs of developing countries, whose economy depends on some of these markets⁸.

1.3. Unjust international economic relations

Free trade, a fundamental pillar of globalisation, is not a reality for everyone, even though developing countries have opened their economies to the products, technology and capital of developed countries, because these same developed countries behave in a protectionist way. Countries in the Northern hemisphere have liberalised

all the sectors that suit themselves within the framework of the WTO, but not the sectors that would suit developing countries, such as that of agriculture, for example. This is why, in a time of globalisation, business can be a source of wealth but at the same time exclude millions of people who are not able to compete under fair conditions in the market. And to this we must add the marked neoliberal emphasis present in institutions such as the WB, the IMF and the WTO that is not in keeping with their origins, which were originally Keynesian. For this reason, these institutions are perceived as being the political arms of rich countries and representative of the interests of large multinational companies ⁹.

1.4. The deterioration of the environment and the generation of global ecological injustice

Modern-day neoliberal globalisation is making man's attacks on the environment even worse. Economic forces have not taken into account the ecological consequences of production and consumerism. Many rich countries consume products as if there was no tomorrow. Unfortunately, poor people are also left to follow this dangerous path, since they have no choice but to take on our economic model and trends of consumerism.

The geography of environmental damage indicates that rich countries are contributing more to the deterioration of the environment, however it is the poorer countries that suffer the most loss of life and risks to their health due to this

deterioration. Environmental damage and the worrying disappearance of biodiversity not only threaten the life and nourishment of the inhabitants of our planet, but also affect the lives of future generations. This is why Ecological Social Movements are linking the preservation of life and the sustainability of development with the issue of justice, thus raising the issue of environmental justice¹⁰. They assert that various imperialist and colonialist regimes have left us with an enormous historical debt for the ransacking and pillaging of countries in the Southern hemisphere, that ironically were an essential part of the process of accumulating wealth by various countries in the North. This debt is known as the Ecological Debt ¹¹.

1.5. Injustice in the treatment of different cultures

It seems simplistic to make a unilateral link between globalisation and cultural homogenisation. Instead globalisation identifies itself with a heterogeneous and multi-directional process in which links can be found between that which is global and that which is local. Therefore, the process does not suppress identities; it relocates them. This means that the threat to cultural identities that are not in a position of power comes from the relentless use of logic pertaining to the global market, even in relation to culture. This is a particularly serious threat to cultural identities lacking the political power to participate in this process. The danger exists in the fact that the situation causes reactionary identi-

ties to emerge which sometimes go as far as using violent means to resist cultural uniformity, and assert their individuality. It is from this perspective that we can identify various types of fundamentalism as being traditions that have been backed into a corner.

This calls into question the appropriateness and suitability of mechanisms of liberal democracy to face the challenges of societies that are becoming increasingly multicultural, largely through migratory movements¹². We need to remember that the acknowledgement of different identities is primarily and unquestionably, an issue of justice and equality relating to access to power, decision-making and the distribution of wealth. Multiculturalism raises issues of the political, economic and social inclusion and participation that is available to different social groups, particularly those who have not been well integrated when it comes to the distribution of power and wealth due to their cultural differences, whether they be real or perceived.

1.6. Global mismanagement

There are many different situations in which the state has ceded to some of the main players involved in the globalisation process. These are all situations that require the adoption of measures that go beyond the strict territorial boundaries of various nations, and demand specific actions of a transnational nature.

The traditional Nation-State has made itself, as D. Bell said some years

ago: «too small for big problems and too big for small problems».

– The State cannot make free decisions in the domain of the economy, and consequently in the social arena–, given that its future is influenced by the dynamic imposed by the global economy and manifested through institutions such as the WB, the IMF, the WTO, etc.

– With the introduction of new technology, State power also finds itself unable to control media and communication systems on which public opinion depends.

– States find it difficult to face issues outside of their territory that go beyond formal boundaries, such as organised crime, global security or problems linked with ecology and the environment.

– At an international legal level, we find the issue of humanitarian mismanagement, tackled by states or groups of states working within other countries in order to preserve Human Rights. We should also mention the creation of a Tribunal or International Penal Court that judges crimes against humanity, opening the door for the extra-territoriality of certain crimes.

In the network of society, nations form part of a more complex system in which they must work alongside intra-state and international organisations. This diversification of their power has only served to make their responsibilities and capacity for controlling that same power more difficult. In the face of this global mismanagement, we urgently need to find ways of governing this complex situation.

2. REINTERPRETING THE WORLD OR THE BUILDING OF A SHARED HOME

We are undoubtedly living in a time of crisis, a time when it is fitting to ask what type of society and what type of world we want to build. A time when, once and for all, we are called to possess the clarity of mind needed to know how to identify the emerging possibilities that we may find in our present reality. Crises are, to a certain extent, a wake-up call demanding that we change direction and build a world on new foundations.

The current globalisation process has only served to clearly highlight the fact that we are all part of a network of relationships and that there is no one key element that makes this system work, but rather many pieces that need to be considered as working simultaneously and in a complementary way. This means that we need to avoid falling into the temptation of looking for easy solutions, that simplify the problems and challenges that we are facing. We need to search for a new model to help us understand reality, using a different form of reasoning, that is woven with initiatives, cooperation, a sense of responsibility, the ability to link elements and phenomena with other ideas and above all the ability of knowing how to recognise at all times the appearance of

that which is both new and at the same time, conceivable. It is a time for thinking clearly and being creatively daring.

2.1. Building the world on new foundations

We need to set four new social agreements in motion¹³, that will make up the pillars of a new understanding of the government of globalisation from a democratic point of view. These four social contracts are: a social agreement to eradicate poverty; a natural agreement to save the environment; a cultural agreement to obtain education for all throughout people's lives; and an ethical agreement that gives meaning and perspective to the human experience.

In order for this venture to be successful and eradicate extreme poverty, conserve the environment and offer education to all, it is particularly important to outline a new planetary structure that will serve to govern globalisation with justice. We should support an agreed international system, far-removed from any kind of unilateralism, with systems in place for dealing with major global issues.

However, it is not enough to create institutions and standards: since the issue of values also acquires huge importance. It is important to remember that ethics provide a reference point, meaning and also offer all that is necessary to tackle the challenge of reinventing the political, economic and social models that we have.

If the problems, or should we say illnesses, that we have found in our world are related to inequality, environmental damage and violence, and if we want to survive, we should work towards finding antidotes. And these antidotes are revealed with crystal clarity: justice, sustainable development, and a culture of peace that helps to manage and resolve conflicts.

2.1.1. Towards a new understanding of justice

We need to have a broader vision of justice, which obviously needs to be shared by all, as well as being capable of adapting to different situations -but it also needs to go beyond this. We need a form of justice that displays a more global understanding of the individual in his relationship with himself, with others

—other people as well as other nations—, with Nature, and if he is a believer, with God. A justice that encourages freedom, that is understood as a “freedom for”, and not just a “freedom to”, because according to the latter type of personal freedom, this will only lead to indifference and injustice. We need a type of freedom that can only be fully realised within a social context¹⁴.

2.1.2. Towards a new understanding of development

When development is only understood in terms of economic growth, it brings about an insane and destructive desire to obtain control of natural resources, which the more economically and politically powerful countries are able to take away from the poorer countries. This is why we need to move...

— ...from our own well being to justice. Working towards a more humane society and world inevitably involves putting greater emphasis on equity and justice more so than one's own well being or quality of life. It is necessary for economic logic to put itself at the service of man and his actual needs, and to work in relation to other people too. The time has come to support a way of life that favours a “progressive solidarity”, also called a “solidarity of awareness”, which does not simply involve sharing among the “less equal” the excesses of the “more equal”, but instead involves organising everything from the point of view of the needs and rights of these less equal and weaker individuals.

– ...from an over-dependency on a few areas of the planet to a real situation of inter-dependency. If we have been living and functioning in a fragmented way since time immemorial, focussed on individual interests and practices or following the practices of ethnocentrism, it is now high time to deepen links between continents, cultures, religions, and so learn things from each other. We need to introduce the idea of redistribution, not of profit or debt, and look at how our different strengths can complement each other in order to make the world a home for everyone, a communal dwelling-place.

– ...from out-of-control and predatory consumerism towards values of having enough or having things in moderation. Our societies are motivated by a culture of possessive individualism and a consumerism that is promoted through the demands of advertising. Therefore, moderation in consumerism needs to be encouraged. It is fitting to remember the prophetic words of Gandhi: «We need to learn how to live more simply, so that others can simply live». And here is the great challenge for the 21st century, «modern civilisation should not be about endlessly multiplying the needs of humanity, but instead should look at deliberately limiting them to the absolute essentials».

– ...from ecological indifference to ecological justice. You cannot consider the struggle against inequality without looking at the impact it will have on ecological issues: Ecological Justice implies a fair relationship with the environment, and this cannot be achieved in an unjust world. We ur-

gently need to promote the values of having enough which will encourage people to feel satisfied with less, as well as moving them towards a culture of moderation and limits.

2.1.3. Towards a global cultural Justice and a Dialogue between Civilisations

It is becoming increasingly necessary for us to know how to achieve the difficult balance between democracy and cultural identity, Human Rights and the right to cultural diversity, understood as a wealth that should be shared. It is also important to promote a Dialogue between Civilisations in the spirit of equality, at the heart of which Inter-religious Dialogue should play a role. This is the only way that cultural diversity can really be safeguarded. And at the same time it will help people to live with moral depth and promote a culture of solidarity that links our lives with the lives of others.

2.1.4. From a culture of violence towards a culture of peace

The strategies for the prevention of conflicts should play a central part in the mission of organisations such as the UN, strategies that should also become increasingly present in politics and in the relationships between different nations. In the same way, time should be invested in the construction of a positive peace, a peace that goes beyond the mere absence of war, and guarantees basic living conditions for all along with the respect of Human Rights, which would increase the sense of security for

the whole world. The absence of violence is a fundamental element for living in harmony and the best starting point for resolving conflicts.

2.2. A new international order as an alternative to today's model

Tackling new challenges demands a new international order that is very different from the one that was dangerously formed after the collapse of the bipolar world, as a result of the Cold War. This new world order needs to have the following characteristics:

- A world order that fosters peace, and is therefore needed by societies who support the promotion of peace and the pacifist resolution of conflicts.

- An ecological world order, which would require people to be sensitive to the needs of others, of Nature and of every living being.

- A world order that is more about a real Global Community than an International Society, so that a core of basic standards can be agreed upon and accepted by all players on the international scene, formed in such a way that all humanity can enjoy the same fundamental rights and conditions necessary to live their lives with dignity.

- A plural world order that not only recognises ideological pluralism but also pluralism within cultures, traditions and peoples, and that acknowledges the enriching potential that these can possess.

- A fraternal world order, in which societies and nations value the contribution of women in a spirit of equality,

and work to overcome the patriarchal nature present in many cultures.

All this of course brings with it a great responsibility, which requires the bringing to fruition of a new model of understanding, cooperation and political, economic and cultural integration. This is why it is so important to set the foundations for a new world structure, capable of governing globalisation, while taking all of these criteria into account¹⁵.

2.3. Globalising democracy in order to govern globalisation

The building of an alternative type of globalisation can only be possible with the introduction of a new political structure for the government of globalisation, promoting a just and effective form of global government¹⁶.

What this actually means is globalising democracy because we cannot live following a system of “domestic policy”, if the rest of the world is not democratically structured or organised. We need to build a system of global government¹⁷, a new idea which was introduced to refer to a system where that which is global and that which is local do not function exclusively and independently from each other, but instead work as if they were on two sides of the same coin¹⁸. Therefore, this government should not simply be a mere link or coalition between nations, but rather a real power with global influence and if it is democratic, it should at the same time be decentralised and open to outside influences.

3. THE CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

In order to confront the challenges that humanity is faced with, the collaboration of everyone, without exception, is needed. If we are part of the problem, we should also be part of the solution; this needs to be clearly understood. A reality that is as complex as ours requires us to search for solutions that will not be easy, but will instead be very complex. A fundamental part of this complexity is due to the different visions and interpretations of reality that currently exist: our world is multicultural, with people and nations of different backgrounds, beliefs and ways of life. When faced with the fear and insecurity caused by this diversity, we need to be aware that cultural diversity is the only guarantee of freedom. We should remember: «it is not freedom that assures diversity, but rather diversity that allows freedom to be filled with truth.»¹⁹

3.1. Why do we need to include religions?

Religions get such bad press! We often speak about cultures, but when it comes to the subject of religions, we tend to avoid the topic, particularly when we have to discuss their public portrayal. Some believe that religious identity represents a threat to freedom and living in harmony. While it is clear that a certain element of religious fanaticism does exist –although this is something that is common to any tradition or

culture²⁰– this fanaticism is clearly incompatible with issues of democracy.

However, in taking this into account, we should not then ignore the importance of religions: they are still one of the most powerful forms of cultural identity in the world and one of the forces that is most capable of mobilising a society. For this reason, they merit our attention. The danger of falling into religious fanaticism should not be an obstacle to realising the value of the positive role religious traditions

have played in the domain of social cohesion. Religions have in some contexts, revealed their ability to be the true agents of social change, by helping to encourage the appearance of a multifaceted culture, which is such an important part of transforming reality.

Furthermore, cultures and religions are not isolated realities that exist independently from each other. In every human society there is a link between religious and cultural elements. «Every culture is a universe in itself, yet nevertheless, is not enclosed. Cultures provide religions with their language and religions offer every culture their essential meaning», UNESCO tells us²¹, and goes on to say that: «peace cannot be possible if we do not accept pluralism and respect diversity».

This is why we can say that religions are socio-cultural phenomena. Every culture possesses some religious elements, which behave like the very soul of that culture. The religious question is something that concerns all members of a group or community, whether they are believers or not. And this is because religions form part of cultures and civilisations, since the issue of religion is an inherent part of the patterns of thought, behaviour and practices of the human being.

Religion is a cultural phenomenon that offers people a set of guidelines, values, attitudes and behaviour to follow; it is a social issue that appears as an outward expression of the mindset and values of a group. In this sense, we can say that religious traditions form part of the social structures that every human group tries to establish. From

this perspective therefore, religions need to be heard, because of their nature as a social construction and their resulting public influence –although they are not merely a private aspect of people's minds and consciences.

It is clear then that we cannot ignore the religious issue and its visible appearance in various traditions. This is why, when we are supporting cultural diversity, we should also unreservedly support the freedom of believing in a religion (or of not believing in one). It is only in this way that we can truly create a situation of living together in harmony, a vital part of freedom, social cohesion, achieving the ideal of equality, and consequently, that of peace.

3.2. We need a spiritual perspective

Therefore, we need to realise that the Global Social and Economic Forums represent important visions that have the aim of building a fairer world²². In order to resolve the problems that are facing humanity, it is also very important to work from a spiritual perspective, based on the notion of unconditional Agape love and universal compassion. It is the realisation of the unity of all things as well as the sacredness that impregnates our existence that can bring us the strength necessary to be successful in our aim of building a new world, constructed on new foundations.

Religion alone cannot resolve the economic, political and social problems of our world but it can achieve something that a non-religious approach to

economic, social and political problems would be unable to –although and that is a change of mentality, or a metanoia– a transformation of the human heart through the conversion to a new attitude that manifests itself in a new way of life. We need therefore to think about the religious dimension of human relationships.

What we are talking about is creating a basic structure from which new models can be created. It is necessary to make a collective conscience arise from individual responsibility and to replace egotism with altruism, extreme competitiveness with cooperation, individualism with solidarity, consumerism with the basic essentials, having with being, and materialism with spirituality.

3.3. A God for everyone

Although religious traditions are expressed through wisdom, love, compassion and a life of piety, they are not immune to folly, sin and evil. Religious traditions and institutions have in the past supported and still occasionally support systems of oppression and exclusion, or have operated and sometimes continue to operate like such systems within their own structure.

But when it comes to building a more humane model of coexistence, we should point out that religions, the transcendent roots of cultures and being transcendent, they have the possibility of reaching beyond outward appearances, since they affect the very meaning of life. Religion can help us to live to-

gether and face new challenges on condition that:

a) Religion is lived as an experience in terms of our spirituality, more than in terms of moral heteronomy²³, in spite of the fact that our behaviour towards others, our moral behaviour, becomes the active proof of this personal religious experience. Different religious traditions make up a form of template for moral behaviour, that is the nucleus of beliefs, stipulations, attitudes, that give unity, identity, and meaning to people in their relationship with others, with reality and with God. Religious traditions are highly valuable in the formation of personal guidelines for living in society, but in order for this to come about, religion needs to be lived as a deep experience. Only in this way can it lead to personal ethics.

b) Religion avoids falling into the temptation of labelling its system as Absolute, a title sought by all religions, which only results in them becoming diverted from their real purpose, and causes their global vocation to become permanently threatened with turning into totalitarianism. As a result, instead of religions being presented as an opportunity for the whole world, they become a form of dominion over others. They turn into a form of idolatry that restricts and blocks the dynamic of personal experience, instead of presenting themselves as evidence of the Mystery, always pointing to something beyond our reach, that opens a person to a reality that can be experienced, but never fully possessed²⁴.

3.4. Reconnecting, rereading

The word religion comes from two possible sources and both make a clear reference not only to an interior experience, but also to the relationship of the individual with the human group²⁵. It originates from:

– *Religare*: to reconnect, which means create or establish links; firstly with that which we refer to as God, the Ultimate or Transcendent Reality; secondly, with other human beings; and thirdly, with the world and Nature. And in this sense, each religion integrates beliefs (in relation to God), codes of behaviour or ethical points of view (in relation to the human group), and ceremonies (that bring Nature and the planet into the picture).

– *Relegere*: reread, interpret the Mystery of God, the meaning of life and death, the meaning of our existence, the explanation for evil, etc. Religion makes the Mystery clear and accessible on a human level although it cannot ever –in any way– reach that Mystery, because it always remains beyond the bounds of interpretation. And this reinterpretation of the Mystery makes us aware of the profound link that exists between ourselves and others, or Nature and the entire cosmos.

Religious traditions are different ways of leading to an experience with God and, when lived fully, they can bring about the spiritual transformation of people and their ability to generate *holiness*. They play an important role in the cohesion of societies, and not because they allow man to form some limited and basic moral principles.

Instead, when lived fully, they lead to the formation of detailed dynamic principles, which in turn allows man to experience this constant, yet out of reach Absolute Being.

Religion views the human being as valuable in themselves and opens them up to experiencing this Mystery: they allow the sacredness of life to be experienced as well as the reward of giving oneself freely. In this sense then, they help to form a reality that is not dualistic in nature, but instead reveals the mysterious connection that exists between everything, because here is something that moves us towards the idea of communion from the perspective of diversity.

They also work towards moving the focus away from me and freeing ourselves from this obsession with self, towards empathy with others: when religious experience is authentic, it is never individualist, but always altruistic.

This is why different religious traditions today are hoping for a change in the process of globalisation so that it will be favourable for all humanity. Religion helps us to move towards the notion of sharing, from which springs real humane ethics. At the heart of their experience is acknowledging oneself to be in communion with this Reality that overwhelms us and at the same time is a fundamental part of our being, a reality that gives us meaning and allows us to truly live. So religions can help us live out the relationship between unity and diversity, globality and identity.

3.5. Reinterpreting secularism

In the world of globalisation, and in societies that are becoming increasingly multicultural, and therefore demonstrating a greater religious plurality, this global vision of pluralism inevitably pushes democratic societies to enter into the logic of pluralism that is not simply ideological, but also cultural in nature. And in this context, the secular model can no longer be one of neutrality or indifference, but instead should acknowledge religious traditions as being sources of wisdom, capable of enriching lives, and bringing about the appearance of that which is truly human.

This is why, when faced with a form of secularism that wants to reduce religion to a personal and private experience and tries to hide its social dimension, we instead need to focus on normalising religious experience, highlighting its existence and the public nature of its practice. It is therefore important to make a clear distinction between religiosity, understood as a personal encounter with God, and religion, understood as a community-related issue. We are faced with the challenge of living out secularism within a pluralist culture, and reinterpreting it as intercultural secularism, that which leads to reshaping the public presence of religious experience²⁶.

Within a perfect democratic situation, religious traditions can help in the promotion of the values of civil society and political structures. Religions are important factors in the building of societies and can lend their help to the creation of a civic culture as well as the

formation of a new public morality within different countries. They can also be considered as important elements in achieving a just system of global government.

One way or another, religion answers the fundamental questions about what it is to be human: questions on love and suffering, guilt and forgiveness, life and death. The human being appears at the centre of all religions and in all of these is exalted to a state of unrivalled dignity. This is why we are able to say that religious traditions have helped bring about the absolute dignity and respect of the human being. We should therefore respect religions, and not misrepresent them²⁷.

3.6. The proposal for a global system of ethics

It is becoming more and more obvious that we need to govern this increasingly complex situation. And this is why it is so important to set up a transnational public arena, which will help bring about the democratisation of international relations and build the solid foundations for a global form of government. It needs to be an arena in which the main religious traditions can enjoy a fruitful dialogue with each other and with other players, on the shared problems of humanity, a public arena that has the capacity of influencing the decision-making process in relation to global issues and where shared ethics can be formulated. In a world that is as complex as ours, all voices must be heard, and decisions should not just be left up to governments. Today more

than ever, it is necessary to exercise the co-responsibility of all players on the global scene. There is a need for:

3.6.1. Basic moral standards on a global level

An agreement on basic moral standards which would help direct and regulate our interpersonal relations, as well as relations on a global level between nations and cultures. Without these basic standards, governing globalisation in order for everyone to reap its benefits is little more than a pipe dream.

Having reached this point of our discussion, it is now necessary to talk about the work that has already been carried out by different groups from various backgrounds working towards this same goal. The work carried out by the theologian Hans Küng deserves a special mention and follows these principles:

- There cannot be peace between nations without peace between religions first.
- There cannot be peace between religions without dialogue between religions.
- There cannot be dialogue between religions without universally held moral values.
- Our planet will not survive without ethics of a global and universal nature²⁸.

In 1993, in the II Parliament of the World's Religions convened in Chicago, the Declaration of the Religions for a Global Ethic came into the public eye, the author of which was the same Hans Küng²⁹. In this work, he formulates a list

of universal moral standards, based on the basic precepts of the main religious and non-religious ethical systems. Faced with the complexity of the challenges to be overcome and the need to create an effective form of co-responsibility on all fronts, the Declaration progresses from the fact that the ability to mobilise and motivate that is an inherent part of religions can bring about great hope for the world, founded on global cooperation by all, and consolidated in criteria that make up the basis of "global ethics". It is precisely these criteria and guidelines on human behaviour present in different religious traditions that would provide the necessary cohesion, and unite all nations and cultures so that they would be able to face the new global challenges and at the same time, create the potential for a new world order that would endure through time.

In this way, Hans Küng transforms Religion, or more precisely, the indispensable interreligious dialogue into a universal ethos that does not, however, signify one set of uniform ethics for all. When we refer to global ethics we are talking about a basic global consensus in relation to a specific set of fundamental values, rights and duties; an agreement that should be shared by all social groups, whether they are believers or non-believers, by members of different nations, religions, philosophies and perspectives. In other words, this social consensus that a democratic system should not impose but rather presuppose, is not a question of a shared moral system, but rather a shared moral attitude, or ethos—a mode

of behaviour– for humanity, which is not a new ideology, but something which brings together shared religious-philosophical resources that already exist in the world, without imposing them as an external law but instead allowing them to become personal values by choice.

3.6.2. *Two principles and four standards*

The Parliament of the World's Religions, and also the UN, have already taken on some fundamental principles as a basis for global ethics:

– *Every human being should be treated in a humane way:* life and human dignity should be respected, as well as individuality and difference.

– *Do as you would be done by.* We are all responsible for our actions, decisions, behaviour and failings, and each of these has consequences.

These two principles should constitute an unconditional standard that is set in stone and applicable to all people, families, social groups, races, nations and religions. And upon these foundations, four unquestionable standards should be set:

– An agreement in favour of a non-violent culture that shows respect for all life («thou shalt not kill»).

– An agreement in favour of a culture of solidarity and a just economic system («thou shalt not steal»).

– An agreement in favour of a culture of tolerance, and a truthful and honourable way of life («thou shalt not lie»).

– An agreement in favour of a culture of equality, and companionship between men and women («thou shalt not commit adultery»).

3.6.3. *The inadequacies of an agreement on moral standards when confronting the challenges faced by humanity*

These basic values, detailed in the previous section, are necessary so that problems affecting all of humanity can be legislated and so that the complexity of globalisation can be governed. These eternal values point to the need for a global authority to ensure their fulfilment.

But the problem facing any basic system of ethics, global and otherwise, arising from a basic social consensus and assisted by various religious traditions, is in deciding how to define these standards in such a way that they will be accepted by all cultures and ethical systems. The foundation of participation needed in order to develop this consensus therefore becomes fundamental to its success.

Clearly the more participation there is, the more the proposals can be legitimised. But at the same time, the broader the participation, the more difficult it will be to reach an agreement. Therefore, the outcome will always be excessively generic or abstract in nature, due to the desire to include all sensibilities³⁰. And when it comes to making these standards into a form of concrete legislation further down the line, either they would be too open to interpretation, according to the cultural parameters they are working within: or

they will evolve into a legislation that suits the challenges faced by only one particular group, nation or civilisation; or the agreement that is converted into a specific legal form will be so basic that it will be completely inadequate and of little use when dealing with the challenges faced by humanity. Furthermore, in the process of reaching the agreement, the issue of equality among the contributors would also be raised, something that is impossible to secure in a world as unjust as ours³¹.

Another weak point is that a basic system of morals can lead to a similar basic mentality and approach to moral values and standards, when what is really needed today is to be able to voluntarily move beyond such basic values.

If we only succeed in fulfilling this requirement, it will not be enough to resolve many of the problems of the modern world.

In reality, and so that these basic values can firstly be fulfilled, it is necessary for individuals to live out a more detailed system of values in their own lives.

3.7. Parallel and complementary to the agreement needed on a basic system of values, is the need to advocating diversity in relation to the larger problems that affect the very future of humanity

In a complementary and parallel way to the agreement on basic values, we should favour the attitude that when dealing with a problem that affects all of

humanity, we need to take advantage of the great potential offered by different religious and cultural traditions. This would mean not looking for a common thread that unites all these different groups, but instead tackling issues from the diverse perspectives that make these groups unique from each other.

Clearly there are values and practices that cannot be translated into one global value but that can however be lived out in a synergic way, dependent on the participation of all in our shared problems. Being careful not to give global priority to one particular model or vision of reality means we can avoid falling into the trap of ethnocentrism.

Therefore, a multidimensional and global relationship between unity (a basic system of shared ethics) and diversity (various aspects from different traditions), needs to be achieved. This would be a way of releasing all the creative and transforming energy present in different religious traditions –and different cultures– so that they could be used in the search for ways of confronting new challenges.

3.8. How could religions contribute to global government?

Taking into account the fact that our society and our world cannot change for the better if we do not first change people's mentality, and given that religious traditions are in an optimal position to make this a reality, we can highlight a few points, that are by no means exhaustive, of how religion can contribute to living in a society. Religious traditions can help to:

3.8.1. Educate people about basic democratic moral attitudes

Religions can contribute effectively towards building a civic and democratic culture. Building a democratic society has a lot to do with “carefully” restoring the concept of the *common good* and everything that it involves, and with paying attention to the needs of others, the real needs of those living in our society³². For example, let us think about the process of self-purification, self-control, discipline and the moving away from the focus on oneself that religious traditions advocate in their belief systems, allowing them to be “truly present” in reality and play an active role in assisting believers to fully live the present here and now. A special mention should also be given to something as important as leading by example, one of the fruits of religious experience.

This capacity for self-awareness is a religious quality that is particularly present in Zen Buddhism and in Christianity. Leading by example favours the setting in motion by political leaders of a new type of politics that is more sensitive to the notion of the common good, setting the human being as a priority and working at the service of the people. It also helps in the struggle against political and social indifference and the inability of people to live together harmoniously, another problem in today’s world.

Religious traditions can also bring their particular contribution to the need to move away from an individualist understanding of freedom towards a freedom that, through love, is more

responsible in nature. The moral personality –whether that of an individual or a collective– whether that of an individual or a collective- can only be built through our encounter with others, and for this reason, we can assert that morals, as a meeting place between the “I” and the “you”, are a fundamental aspect of the freedom that carries with it the element of responsibility³³.

3.8.2. Educate people in responsible consumerism

It is therefore clear that without paying attention to the “example”, and without “educating” people’s awareness, it is impossible to overcome the greatest form of collective “distraction” in western civilisation: the focus on consumerism and money. We need to limit the importance given to commercial relationships in social behaviour, and the tendency to reduce reality to materialistic terms, labelling everything that is human as a mere piece of merchandise or goods, a trend that has infiltrated all aspects of life³⁴.

The consumerist system of values focuses on the notion of possessing, enjoying, earning, reaching success, and our outward appearance in front of others so that we do not seem worth less than they are. All of this brings us into a society of pretence and ostentation, fed by the media who fuel this desire and turn one’s much needed personal autonomy into a blind acceptance of others’ opinions, (living according to the dictates of fashion, for example)³⁵. It is often as a direct result of consumerism that the model of a person’s behaviour and life is formed.

The desire to possess generates an intellectual attitude, given that reality is seen from the point of view of its possessive potential. Everything is seen as an object that can be possessed and everything is understood in terms of its utility and value. This is why it is no surprise that the model of the consumer is both exploitative and damaging in relation to Nature and others, whether they be individuals, nations or groups, because they do not recognise the value of the other person other than in relation to their potential use or the notion of what can be gained from them³⁶. Faced with this increasing egocentric individualism, religions can bring their wisdom to the notion of suppressing such desires and living life in moderation.

3.8.3. Encouraging dialogue at all levels

Religions enable us to partake in dialogue and listen to others, a basic issue if we hope to reach an elemental consensus on shared values, opinions and standards recognised by all people at the heart of their religious and cultural traditions. This is why it is becoming more necessary and urgent to create a national and transnational arena where cultural and religious diversity can engage in dialogue in order to reach this agreement. .

Dialogue needs to be created at all levels, both cultural and interreligious, between different religious traditions, and between religious traditions and secular traditions³⁷. In this sense, it should be remembered that in order to speak as a group with moral authority, religious traditions must know how to

identify their shared values. This world needs to be of the same basic frame of mind, but due to its plural nature, what we definitely need to avoid is the dominance of one religion or one single ideal over another, that would be imposed on all people, since that would lead to the loss of the great potential and enrichment found in other traditions.

3.9. The two main areas of contribution for religious traditions

3.9.1. The building of a culture of awareness, showing respect towards the human being and their natural habitat

Religious traditions can make valuable contributions in relation to the construction of a culture of awareness, that shows respect for the human being and their environment; this is because they are already capable of giving people both self-control and awareness of others, two basic attitudes that are needed to create an even balance between the excessive consumerism of the Northern hemisphere and the extreme poverty of the South³⁸. On this subject, it is also necessary to highlight the contributions of the trend of so-called *downscaling*. This asserts that social justice cannot be reached through an economy based on exponential and disproportionate growth. We are not suggesting the economy should remain stationary or regress to its former state, but instead move towards a new post-development model, which will act as a radical critique of “developmentism”³⁹.

The ecological crisis that we are suffering now offers us the opportunity to learn how to live another way, restoring this fair balance which is also sought in the *Map of the World*, a declaration of fundamental ethical principles and a code of practice, with the aim of becoming a universal code of conduct to guide people and nations towards sustainable development⁴⁰.

Globalisation has made us realise again that we are part of the same species that share the same biosphere. And here is another important aspect that religions could help to develop: caring; taking care of the human being and of the eco-system in order to avoid the excesses of consumerism and the destruction of the environment. The social crisis that we are going through is closely linked to the ecological crisis, since both have the effect of harming our shared home, that is the Earth, opening the door to the destruction of eco-systems and making it impossible to live together harmoniously. Together they share the same origin «the crisis of human awareness»⁴¹.

It is only through dialogue between different religious and cultural traditions that we can find the antidote to the consuming anxiety facing western civilisation. The East has a lot to say and to teach us on the subject of caring for and showing respect towards all of Creation, as well as controlling our superfluous needs. We should not forget that Eastern religious traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and other

indigenous religions) place a great emphasis on the harmony of man and Nature, while religions from the Semitic tradition (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) place the emphasis on man and lean towards suggesting his dominion over Nature. Eastern religions and cultures have a more holistic approach and put man on the same level as other living things, always emphasising harmony and balance. If being a politician means taking care of people and their needs, and carrying this out with justice⁴², we can then understand the importance of the role of women in building these new models, as well as the sensibilities that need to be taken into account when forming a new type of politics. The feminine aspect of caring links perfectly well with the notion of compassion that is so typical of Eastern religious traditions, as well as with the idea of a compassionate and kind God, whose great mercy is spoken about in the Old Testament, and also communicated through the life and acts of Jesus of Nazareth.

Humanity needs to form an alliance to take care of the Earth and each other. What would make this alliance possible is the notion of sustainability and taking care, or behaving in a benevolent, respectful and non-aggressive way towards Nature which would allow us to regenerate that which has been devastated, and go on to proudly take care of what remains of our natural habitat, of which we form part, and with which we share a common destiny⁴³.

3.9.2. *Building a culture of peace*

In a world that is so full of violence, it is important for us to move towards a culture of active non-violence, capable of transforming those structures that are responsible for creating violence. In this domain, religious traditions would also be able to make their valuable contribution, because in order to overcome violence it is necessary to go to the very heart of the human being and create peace there so that this peace can then extend to interpersonal and social relationships. The cultivation of spirituality allows people to enjoy an inner freedom, something that is indispensable if we hope to encourage attitudes of active non-violence, which need solid foundations.

The solution for problems facing humanity and the planet lies in encouraging and giving special importance to the notion of fraternity, which is closely linked with the notion of peace. This is why the spiritual experience that is so deep-rooted in the fraternal messages of all religious traditions is so important, because it represents a symbol of the union to which we are called by He who is the Source of all Life. In this way, religion

expresses some of the deepest feelings and sensibilities of individuals and communities; at the same time, it is the bearer of a deep historical memory and often fuels a confessional solidarity. The idea of inviting religious traditions to take part in interreligious dialogue has the aim of avoiding this misuse of religion and giving believers the opportunity to be agents of healing and reconciliation. The desire for peace is a very important part of the spiritual dimension of all religious traditions.

Encouraging a culture of peace is closely linked with the quest for solidarity, that is so necessary in this divided, unequal and fragmented world of today, and in the framework of this imbalanced globalisation. It is therefore also linked with the building of bridges which serve to take down the walls around our cultures and traditions and make them more accessible, since on a global scale, we are all neighbours and need to live together in peace if we hope to move forward. It is therefore necessary to travel the road of fear to reach the point of trust. Fear is an enemy that causes people to assert their identities in a way that excludes others.

The dialogue between different religious traditions and also with different secular traditions is both necessary and urgent in today's world if we hope to break with stereotypes and cease criminalizing that which is unknown. Economic migrations have made and are making many people from different religious backgrounds live together in the same society and instead of being seen as a problem, this should be viewed as an opportunity to promote a deeper knowledge of other religions, to the advantage of deepening one's own self-knowledge. Humanity needs to learn how to live in a spirit of relational identities instead of choosing to live as isolated identities. On the other hand, it is more important than ever to work at a global level to prevent the growing polarisation that exists between different religious communities. An interreligious agreement in the midst of conflicts can make an essential contribution to reconstruction and reconciliation right at the heart of the original conflict. Building peace with justice should become a global strategy for the entire world, because the destiny of a few people is the destiny of all people.

Religious traditions can assist, enrich, and nourish each other, helping us to walk with those who are last or most vulnerable, from a perspective of shared austerity that is capable of limiting the possessive desires of the human being, and in this way making it possible to build a world for all people. Meetings with other traditions help to build awareness of the significance of our shared humanity "before God", all of us companions in search of the fullness of Truth.

1. R. PETRELLA, «The Dispossession of the State», in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 29-IX-1999.2.
2. A. MARQUÉS, *Contribución a una crítica filosófica del economicismo*, (*Contribution towards a critical philosophy of economicism*) inaugural lecture of the academic course 200-2001, Barcelona, Faculty of Theology of Catalonia, 2000, p. 53.
3. On this subject, see M. D. OLLER I SALA, *Un futur per a la democràcia. Una democràcia per a la governabilitat mundial*, (*A future for democracy. A democracy for global governability*), Barcelona, *Booklet 115*, of *Cristianisme i Justícia*, 2002. Also Gurutz JÀUREGUI, *La democràcia planetària*, (*Planetary Democracy*) Oviedo, Ediciones Nobel, 2000, p. 60.
4. Used by major non-governmental organisations, from Greenpeace, Amnesty International or Oxfam to the World Wild Life Fund-ADENA (Association for the Defence of Nature). They also form part of the global society of the new, international, enlightened elite, made up of politicians, government workers, managing directors, executives, experts, etc., that operate within the framework of inter-governmental organisations.
5. It is scandalous that 225 people have a greater wealth than the annual economic income of 2,600 million people from poorer countries. Or the fact that the fortune of just 3 people outweighs the GNP of the 48 poorest countries in the world, where 600 million people live.
6. Everything seems to indicate that the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) –to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; to obtain universal primary education; to promote the equality of genders and the autonomy of the woman; to reduce infant mortality; to improve maternal healthcare; to fight HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases; to guarantee the sustainability of the environment; to promote a global Association for Development– to which the 191 member States of the United Nations would belong, as well as the most important global institutions for development, in the General Assembly that was held in September 2000, cannot be achieved by the deadline of 2015, if we follow current world trends. The last Report on Human Development (UNDP 2006) pointed out that 1,200 million people in the world live on less than one dollar a day.
7. The dominant position enjoyed by neoliberalist politics has meant that, in an ideological sense, it is considered today as the only realistic possibility. This means that those who defend this form of politics and impose it in such a way that it seems like the only way forward, thus justifying the status quo, ultimately succeed in reinforcing the position of powerful multinational companies. On this subject, see M. D. OLLER I SALA, «Democràcia: present obscur, futur possible», (*Democracy: obscured in the present, possible in the future*) in J. SOLS and others, *Aldea global, justícia parcial*, (*Global village, partial justice*) Barcelona, Centre d'Estudis Cristianisme i Justícia, 2003; also by the same author, *Un futur per a la democràcia*, (*A future for democracy*), *op. cit.*
8. The global economy, which depends on financial markets, has been responsible for some serious crises in important areas of the planet (eg., Mexico, 1994; Indonesia, 1977), and has brought about an urgent need to regulate global capitalism, so as to put the financial markets at the service of the economic growth of countries in the Southern hemisphere.
9. J.E. STIGLITZ, *El malestar en la globalización*, (*The malaise in globalisation*) Madrid, Taurus, 2002; and also Toni COMÍN, *Autoritat mundial per a un lideratge planetari*, (*Global authority for a planetary leadership*) Barcelona, Cristianisme i Justícia (Booklet 134), 2005.
10. In the Report by the UN on the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released this February, the experts, in agreement with previous studies confirmed that the threat that is facing the

- planet due to climate change is already irreversible, and is for the most part caused by man.
11. In recent years, an awareness of ecological issues has developed in several countries in the Southern hemisphere surrounding conflicts related to communication and the provision of water, the protection of woodlands, forests and rivers in the face of threats from large transnational oil, gas, mineral and wood companies, etc. The compensation for this debt has become a central element of global justice movements.
 12. On this subject, see M. D. OLLER I SALA, «Identitats col·lectives i idolatria: l'absolutització d'allò que ens fa ser», José I. GONZÁLEZ FAUS i altres, *Idolatries d'Occident*, (Western Idolatries), Centre d'Estudis Cristianisme i Justícia, 2004.
 13. F. MAYOR ZARAGOZA, J. BINDÉ, *Un món nou*, (A new world), Barcelona, Centre Unesco de Catalunya, 2007, p. 27 and ff.
 14. The movements associated with the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre are fighting for an alternative type of globalisation; they believe that the shared legacy of humanity is made up of a collection of universal goods that can in no way be turned into merchandise, or privatised. They remind us of the social obligation that goes with property according to the Social Doctrine of the Church, based on the acknowledgement that only God can be the real owner of the resources of this world, while we are merely the administrators and must ensure that these resources reach all of humanity.
 15. See among others, A. OLIVERAS, *Un altre món*, (Another World) Barcelona, Angle, 2006, in which the author considers that not only is another world possible, but also necessary when faced with the social injustice and environmental degradation in our world.
 16. G. JAUREGUI, *La democràcia en la encrucijada*, (At the crossroads of democracy) Barcelona, Anagrama, 1994.
 17. We should therefore link local experiences and cases –those from our own area– with those taking place at a global level.
 18. This is how the dangerous phenomenon of unilateralism which has been occurring since the Fall of the Berlin Wall, could be slowed, since it focuses its energy into the dominion of one power, the United States, in a system that is clearly one-sided.
 19. A. COLOMINES I COMPANYYS, «Religions i diversitat, una de les formes d'identitat cultural més potents del món», (Religions and diversity, one of the most powerful cultural forms of identity in the world) *Avui*.
 20. Everything that is human, including those people in exalted positions, can be corrupted. This is why nothing should be allowed to become absolute.
 21. *Declaració sobre el paper de la religió en la promoció d'una cultura de la pau* (1994). (Declaration on the role of religion in the promotion of a culture of peace).
 22. For reforms that are both urgent and at the same time feasible, see for example M. D. OLLER I SALA, «Por una gobernabilidad mundial con justicia», (Towards a global and just government), in *Repensar la Igualdad y la desigualdad social*, (Reinterpreting Equality, and social inequality), València, Frontera pastoral misionera, Oct-Dec. 2005.
 23. Today we can see a very promising sign in First World societies, in that the issue of religion is seen in more existentialist terms, understood as going beyond the mere outward institutions and dogma associated with religion.
 24. X. MELLONI, *Els cecs i l'elefant. El diàleg inter-religiós*, (The blind men and the elephant. Interreligious dialogue), Barcelona, Cristianisme i Justícia (Booklet 97), Barcelona, 2000, p. 6-8. The work of OLLER can also be consulted on this: «Identitats col·lectives...», (Western idolatries) p. 104-105, 108-109.
 25. We have taken this distinction from X. MELLONI, «El Diàleg Interreligiós» (Interreligious Dialogue) in *Investigación* (Barcelona), 33 (novembre, 2004), *Framenors Caputxins de Catalunya i Balears*, pp. 10 and ff.
 26. Today secularism finds itself at a crossroads: either it needs to transform itself or it will not be able to tackle the new challenges that are arising by maintaining its original liberal character, which has in fact been gradually lost, while the socio-political and economic system has gradually been evolving. It should therefore be reinterpreted as intercultural secularism, understood as an inclusive form of secularism, encouraging pluralism, and demonstrating that even the political sphere has a moral responsibility, present in everyone's heart and in the case of believers, closely connected with the idea of the Transcendent One. It

- must be taken into account for example, that when Christian faith is privatised, it can become corrupted and lose its ability to unite people and generate a sense of fraternity.
27. In this sense, fundamentalism represents a corruption of religion. According to these groups, the human being is considered as an instrument and not as an end in itself.
 28. Hans KÜNG, *Projecte d'una ètica mundial*, (Project for global ethics) Barcelona, Planeta-De Agostini, 2004, pág. 9.
 29. The Declaration was prepared in Tubinga and presented in Chicago by an editorial Committee of the "Council" of the Parliament of World Religions. An Introduction was added there, developed from the Declaration, in order to offer a brief summary of the Declaration and explain what it was about (<http://www.audir.org>; també, H. KÜNG, K-J. KUSCHEL (ed.), *Declaración del Parlamento de las Religiones del mundo*, (Declaration of the Parliament of World Religions), Barcelona, Trotta, 1994.
 30. On the other hand, if only a few parties participate in the agreement, both the dialogue and agreement will be easier, although the agreements reached can only ever be considered as partial ones, because they will only apply to the beliefs of a particular set of cultural groups.
 31. On the need for a shared system of ethics or one of a basic and global nature and the weaknesses of the same, see, J. CARRERA, «Món global, ètica global» in SOLS et.al., *Aldea global...*, (Global village...), p. 146-152.
 32. R. BELLAH, *The Good Society*, New York Vintage Books, 1992, p. 254, quoted by Pedro CODURAS, *Discípulos y ciudadanos*, (Disciples and citizens) Barcelona, Cristianisme i Justícia (Booklet 68), 1995, p. 4.
 33. As pointed out by Paul Ricoeur, quoted by J. M. ARTADI, *Razón económica y razón ética*, (Economic and ethical reason), Madrid-Santander, Cuadernos Fe y Secularidad, 1990, p. 17.
 34. Marqués, *Contribució...*, p. 26; See also, J. CUETO, *La sociedad de consumo de masas*, (The society of mass consumerism), Barcelona, Salvat, 1981.
 35. We could say that the human being believes himself "born to be a consumer" in "the great superstore of society"; on this, see, J. M^a MARDONES and Rafael AGUIRRE, «El hombre y la Sociedad de consumo ante el "juicio" del Evangelio», (Man and the consumerist society faced with the "judgement" of the Gospels) *Aquí y Ahora* (Santander), 1, Sal Terrae, 1989, p. 9.
 36. This possessive vision of the world has become so quite "naturally" according to the way of life and relationships in the consumerist society. See, MARDONES and AGUIRRE, pp. 9-11.
 37. Interreligious dialogue needs to take on many forms: a dialogue of life, shoulder to shoulder, involving people from different religions with one common goal; a dialogue between different theologies, a dialogue between different religious experiences...
 38. See Ramón ALCOBERRO, «Leonardo Boff: Una Ecología de l'Alliberament per al tercer milen-ni», ("An Ecology of Liberation for the third millennium") in *USERDA* (Supplement with *El Triangle*), March 2006.
 39. On this subject, see the article by Santiago VILANOVA, «Decreixement o caos», ("Decrease or chaos") in the *Avui* from December 9th 2006. See also www.unasolaterra.org.
 40. The principles of the *Map of the World* reflect international discussions held over a long period of time, with contributions and debate from non-governmental organisations, community groups, professional societies, international experts in various fields, etc. The text began to take shape in the Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This was developed by experts, and by representatives from various communities. It was based on the participation of thousands of individuals, hundreds of organisations from all over the world, and different cultures and sectors of society. To consult the text, refer to www.cartadelatierra.org.
 41. ALCOBERRO, «Leonardo Boff: una Ecología...», and refer to www.alcoberro.info.
 42. L. BOFF, *¿Qué ética va a prevalecer?* (What ethics will prevail?) Oct. 13th 2006, www.servicioskoinonia.org.
 43. L. BOFF, «*Carta de la terra ¿nou reencantament del món?*» (*Map of the World*, a new planetary vision?) Dec. 16th 2005; www.servicioskoinonia.org.