

Lived religion in Latin America and Europe

The Roman-Catholic experience in everyday life



edited by Gustavo Morello
Verónica Roldán



Quaderni del Csal - 4
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Contatti e indirizzo / Contacts and address - Editorial Unit *Visioni LatinoAmericane*, Centro studi per l'America Latina (Csal), Androna Campo Marzio 10, 34124 Trieste, Italia, e-mail: csal@units.it; website: <http://www2.units.it/csal>



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Introduction. Lived religion in Latin America and Europe. Roman Catholics¹ and their practices

Gustavo Morello*

Abstracts

Scholars in Latin America tend to agree that the religious landscape of the region is undergoing transformation. Yet, there are on-going discussions about the causes, depth, and direction of this change. There is evidence that the Catholic Church no longer holds a religious monopoly, but not much research on how Roman Catholicism is practiced today has been carried out. The Author introduces a series of papers that presents a broader qualitative, comparative study that investigates the lived religion of Latin Americans in a wider cultural context which accounts for the influences of Spain and Italy in South America.

Keywords: pluralisation, religious practices, personal religiosity, religious authority, individualization

Los académicos en América Latina tienden a estar de acuerdo en que el panorama religioso de la región está en transformación, aunque no hay acuerdo en torno a las causas, la profundidad y la dirección del cambio. Hay evidencia de que la iglesia católica ya no tiene un monopolio religioso, pero no hay mucha investigación sobre cómo se practica el catolicismo en la actualidad. El Autor presenta una amplia investigación cualitativa y comparativa sobre la religión vivida de los latinoamericanos en un contexto cultural que explica las influencias de España e Italia en América del Sur.

Palabras clave: pluralización, prácticas religiosas, religiosidad individual, autoridad religiosa, individualización

Gli studiosi tendono a concordare sul fatto che il panorama religioso della regione latinoamericana sia in trasformazione, ma per contro discutono ampiamente sulle cause, la profondità e la direzione di tale cambiamento. Vi sono evidenze che la chiesa cattolica non detenga più il monopolio religioso, ma al contempo non vi sono molte ricerche su come il cattolicesimo venga oggi praticato. L'Autore presenta un'articolata ricerca qualitativa e comparativa che cerca di dire come la religione sia vissuta dai lati-

¹ In the article, for the sake of brevity, the reference will be to Catholic, Catholics, Catholicism, etc.

* Sociology Department, Boston College (Usa); e-mail: morellog@bc.edu.



noamericani in un contesto culturale che risente delle influenze della Spagna e dell'Italia.

Parole chiave: pluralizzazione, pratiche religiose, la religiosità individuale, l'autorità religiosa, individualizzazione

1. Modernity and religion in Latin America and Southern Europe

Economic development, the emergence of democratic governments, and a growing middle class have changed the realm of spirituality in Latin America. Once dominated by Catholicism, today, Latin Americans are migrating from one religion to another, as they look for meanings that transcend the empirical world. However, secularisation theories do not account, satisfactorily, for religious phenomena as experienced in Latin America today.

Latin America is a context that has been either ignored or misunderstood by current debates concerning the transformation of the religious landscape. For example, scholars tend to assume that individuals practice a sole religion, clearly distinguishable from all others. This idea of exclusive commitment and belonging is based on Northern Atlantic religiosity and has been used uncritically as a yardstick by which to assess religion in other regions of the world. Many have failed to grasp factors other than membership, affiliation, and following, using conceptual tools limited by Eurocentric bias built to cater for the Northern Atlantic reality and, therefore inapplicable to other cultural contexts. The relationship between religion and society is culturally shaped and cannot, therefore, be described solely by applying Northern Atlantic parameters.

This special issue of *Visioni LatinoAmericane* gathers a group of studies that focus on *Lived religion in Latin America in comparison with Southern Europe*. We recognize that lived religiosity is an untidy, multifaceted mixture of beliefs expressed in everyday practices, in which people engage their bodies and emotions. Often these practices originate within a religious tradition, but they are creatively adapted, modified, and blended by the individual (Ammerman, 2014; McGuire, 2008; Orsi, 2010). Defining religiosity in terms of close adherence to a set of dogmatic beliefs and practices leaves unstudied many of the ways in which regular people experience transcendence every day in urban



settings (Ameigeiras, 2008; Romero, 2008; 2014). This group of studies attempt to make visible the parts of people's lived religiosity that scientific categories have made invisible and recognize that, in their daily lives, people may consider practice to be more important than beliefs (McGuire, 2008).

These articles explore the experience of ordinary people, voices found beyond the borders of religious institutions, as religious institutions do not provide a full or accurate picture of the spiritual landscape today. Ordinary Catholics are our interlocutors. What matters to them spiritually is the object of this special issue.

There are not many qualitative comparative studies that explore lived religion. Some research explores institutional statements and policies focusing on the macro level, or on the role of religious leadership in different contexts. We have polls and surveys that explore and measure the religiosity of the population, yet only on the basis of religiosity as defined by the parameters of Protestantism (like church attendance, or the relationship with the Bible). We lack studies that explore how the general population experiences the spiritual (whether people follow institutional precepts or not) and how this experience may, or may not, influence their daily lives.

We expect the comparison between Latin American and European cities to permit us to understand the general and particular ways in which modernity affects religious practices in different parts of the world. What is happening in areas of the Western world that share some cultural features? How do believers experience transcendence and connect within other modern Catholic cultures? The comparison between Europe and Latin America provides a better understanding of local religion as well as the relevance of history and space.

2. The lived religion of Latin Americans

These studies are part of a broader research project on lived religion that is still being carried out. From August 2015 to April 2017, 22 researchers from three continents (North America, South America, and Europe) interviewed 240 subjects in six cities: Bilbao, Spain; Boston, Massachusetts, Usa; Córdoba, Argentina; Lima, Peru; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Rome, Italy. The field research generated 480 interview transcripts that were analysed and then discussed during 28 hours of



Skype meetings and four international workshops. The main fund for the Latin American research teams was granted by the John Templeton Foundation. The universities where we work (Universidad de Deusto, Boston College, Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Universidad Católica del Uruguay, Università di Roma Tre) provided additional funding and invaluable support. We are very grateful to each university and to the John Templeton Foundation.

The fieldwork was conducted in both large metropolitan areas like Lima (10.2 million inhabitants) and Rome (4.3), and in smaller ones like Montevideo (2.2), Bilbao (1.0) and Córdoba (1.2). Some locations are their country's capital (Montevideo, Rome, and Lima) while others are important regional centres (Bilbao and Córdoba). Each one will be introduced in the articles, so, here let me just present the current religious profile. The latest data on religious affiliation available for Córdoba indicate that 61% of its inhabitants self-identify as Catholics, 7.5% as Evangelicals, and less than 1% as members of other religions. Almost 30% of people residing in Córdoba self-identify as 'Nones' (Rabbia, 2014). The latest data available for Montevideo regarding religious affiliation (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2006) indicate that 42% of its inhabitants self-identify as Catholics, 15% as Evangelicals and less than 6% claim membership of other religions, 24% define themselves as unaffiliated believers , and 13% as atheists or agnostics. For Lima, data collected in 2012 (Ihrke-Buchroth, 2012) show that 78% of the population is Catholic, 15.7% self-identified as Evangelicals or other Christians, 3% do not belong to any religion, and 3.3% declare their membership of other religious traditions. For the Basque Country (El Correo, 2016), 55% of the population self-identify as Catholic, 38 as 'Nones' and 6% as members of other religious traditions. In Italy, 85% of the population self-identify as Catholics, agnostics and atheists total 9% and 6% belong to other confessions (Introvi-gne and Zoccatelli, 2016).

As we can see, Catholicism is the dominant religion in all the cities with Evangelicals and 'Nonaffiliated' on the rise. While Pentecostals represent the chief 'other' religion in Córdoba and Lima, Muslims are the 'others' in Rome while the 'Non-affiliated' are runners-up in Bilbao and Montevideo. The religious others in America are mainly Latin Americans who have switched their religious allegiance.



To explore individuals' religiosity, the researchers collected 'spiritual narratives' in each of these cities. A 'Spiritual narrative' (Ammerman, 2014: 9) refers to a story that says something about a reality beyond the immanent. This focus on stories reveals a 'weave' involving the mundane and the transcendent. Stories about those 'non-ordinary' realities, while how they interact with human beings need not be religious through and through, or even refer explicitly to religion. We found three main types of 'stories': 1) anecdotes or biographical stories, 2) narratives regarding a practice referring to the 'supra-empirical' world, 3) and explanations of a belief.

To collect these 'spiritual narratives,' we conducted two sets of meetings with the same individuals. The first, a semi-structured interview, provided an overview of an individual's daily routines and religious practices, of his/her pathway of faith, beliefs, decisions made, relationships with others (family, friends, and acquaintances), work and workplace, free time and their social and/or political involvement.

We held a second meeting with each interviewee which consisted in a 'participant-driven object-elicitation' interview. We asked our subjects to come back with objects, garments, images, or photos of people, symbols, things, or places in order to explore the meanings those objects have for them and for their spiritual/religious personal narratives. Using the objects we were able to register meanings and emotions (Ammerman, 2007; Ammerman, Williams, 2012; Porr, Mayan *et al.*, 2010; Williams, 2010). We chose the object-elicitation method, rather than photo-elicitation, because we wanted to encourage participants to show us something that is meaningful to them in terms of their spirituality. We did not want to narrow the range of items that people may bring to the second meeting in order to allow the significance of the objects to emerge naturally. However, most of the people came with pictures of the objects taken with their mobile phones.

3. Sample and methods

3.1. The respondents

We conducted a qualitative, transnational study that compared different socioeconomic status (Ses) groups, whose primary religious ori-



entation was Catholics, Protestants (including main-line Protestants, Pentecostals, and neo-Evangelicals), Other Traditions (Jewish, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Adventists, Muslims, Afro cults, Native American spiritualities, and New Age), and 'Nones' (disaffiliated or unaffiliated believers, agnostics and atheists). We used the main religious orientation self-reported by those subjects at the beginning of the interview.

By means of a stratified by-quota sampling, we assured the inclusion of people of minority religious groups that may be underrepresented by a conventional convenience or purposeful sampling technique we obtained significant information to describe variations within these groups while guaranteeing the comparability of the data between the different cities in the study (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994). We also understand that more segmentation variables might have led to a more complex sampling. Therefore, religious self-identification and Ses were our segmentation variables. We strove to include a balanced sample based on gender and age to ensure a comparison between different inhabitants and different generations (3 cohorts: 18-29, 30-59, and 60 and older) within the same city. Each city has its own sample of participants adjusted to cater for local differences, but using the same basic criteria for the distribution of the participants.

The total sample in each city was of approximately 80 persons. We recruited the sample by snowballing, filling the quotas we designed. Some interviews were discarded because the quota assigned had already been fulfilled, the interviewers did not ask the indicated questions, or the interviewees were unable to answer them whereby the interview was interrupted and cancelled. The data we collected are fascinating and vast. In this special issue, we present a preliminary analysis of partial results for the subsample of Catholics in the five cities.

4. Very preliminary findings

From the very beginning, the attitude of the persons towards the interviews called our attention. When recruiting participants, Bilbao had problems to get subjects between the ages of 35 and 55. People in this age-group did not want to talk about their religious practice. Mean-



while, in the Latin American cities as well as in Rome, people were usually willing to talk. The difficulty the teams faced in Latin America was to find atheists among the lower classes.

The interviews were conducted in university classrooms and offices, religious facilities, bars, markets, homes and many other different places. The conversations were ‘semi-public,’ where people talked freely with a researcher about their private beliefs in a space of reflection and introspection rare in daily life. The interview appeared as a non-existent though highly desired space. Many interviewees admitted that they did not usually talk about their religious quest with their families or friends. People thanked the researchers for the opportunity to do so provided by the interview. They wanted to talk about religiosity and it was, for some of them, a way of legitimising their beliefs in front of another person.

Many subjects were moved during the interview. They were grateful because they could talk about what is broken in their lives, their emotions, and held that by telling their stories to a stranger they were making sense of their own lives and seeking coherence. In many cases, they adjusted their religious self-identification during the interview, expressing variations of, ‘I am a Catholic but...’ We heard this for all religious categories.

To be a believer means having doubts. People were comfortable talking about their doubts. Beliefs are a ‘work in progress,’ a fact that challenges social approaches to religion that focus heavily on the intellectual aspects of religiosity. People are on a religious pathway, find themselves in a certain ‘spiritual location,’ but have not necessarily reached a ‘destination,’ nor have they achieved dogmatic clarity.

In the cities we studied, history matters. As I mentioned before, the Catholic Church still enjoys a rich and significant institutional presence. However, Catholic believers do not place religious institutions at the centre of their daily lives. In general, Catholics are not largely against the church, but they are disappointed with it. Among the lower classes, Catholics are pragmatic and make use of what is available to them whether it be a Catholic, Pentecostal, or a non-confessional temple. If they live in its vicinity, they will use that institution, attending a Pentecostal celebration or volunteering in a secular Ngo. They rarely leave their own neighbourhood, therefore to find an outlet ‘near my



house' is a significant datum when exploring religiosity in daily life. This does not signify double affiliation, but everyday convenience.

Because Catholic rituals are mandatory, they are questioned. Mandatory religious rituals appear as practices hostile to the discovery of the self and at odds with the 'ethics of authenticity' (Taylor, 1992). What is really important for most of our interviewees is the personalisation of the experience. To some extent, believers are their own religious authority. For many in our sample, Church attendance does not matter. Instead, what matters is to practice what you believe is good. This, because religion, Catholicism in particular, in the case of this survey, means commitment to good. To be a good believer is tantamount to being good to others. In our interviews we found what Ammerman (1997) called 'Golden rule Christianity': what makes you a real believer is how you live your life. To be a good Catholic is to be a good person, to take care of people. This is also the rule some of our subjects use to evaluate their religious leaders.

We found strong evidence that for our sample ordinary life is the paramount reality. What matters is what you do in this life. Believers are interested in this world. In the answers we collected, we notice that most of our sample does not really care about the afterlife. However, this does not mean they live constrained by an immanent framework or that they live as if 'God does not exist' (Berger, 2014). We find that the ordinary world is not 'flat' for our interviewees. They understand Catholicism as something between immanence and transcendence. Transcendence is a dimension of daily life. For many of our interviewees, God's intervention in their earthly lives is constant and visible in many ways. Others foreground the presence of the transcendent when they talk about their jobs. The workplace, (a profane, immanent, public space par excellence), is a realm where religion is lived. It appeared as a space of many and diverse religious practices.

5. Conclusion

The comparative, qualitative nature of the research presented here makes a case for a 'lived-religion' approach which puts us on the pathway towards a new paradigm. Lived-religion is a new way by which to understand religion in America, Europe and other areas of the world



that acknowledges the influence of the transformations brought about by modernity in its different stages. At the same time, this model recognises the cultural particularities and the religious features of different geographies and histories.

Building upon explanations regarding secularisation, rational choice, and popular religiosity, we need to explore new ways to make sense of what we are observing. We are looking for a paradigm that addresses the shortcomings of the theories, acknowledges local particularities, and places the Latin American situation within the framework of a global discussion. This paradigm emphasises the idea of multiple modernities, allowing for comparative studies involving other regions of the world. The main contribution of the ‘lived religion’ construct is that, since it is not built around opposing terms, it avoids analytical bifurcations, like private vs. public, material vs. spiritual, religious vs. profane (Morello, Romero, Rabbia, Da Costa, 2017).

Latin American scholars have emphasised the creativity and autonomy of Latin American believers in past decades. The ‘lived religion’ approach stresses the agency of the actors since it observes the sacralisation process where actors enact rituals and symbols, or how particular people in particular places and times use the particular religious idioms available in their culture to express their relationship with the transcendent. The exploration of Latin Americans’ lived religiosity shows us how the whole human being – body, emotions, reason – is involved in the religious quest. Religiosity is not necessarily rational, but it is certainly reasonable for the believers who practice it. That reasonability involves emotions and embodiments.

The role of religious institutions in the public sphere has changed. Religion is not what it used to be, nor is it where it used to be. We must explain individuals’ autonomy *vis-à-vis* religious institutions, but also their connections with ‘spiritual tribes’ (Ammermann, 2014). Lived religion considers the institutional role, but acknowledges believers as legitimate creators of religious practices and is open to extra-ecclesial practices. It is interested in what believers can make of the religious traditions available to them. Lived religion allows scholars to be attentive towards the role of communities providing a common narrative, legitimising practices, and regulating them. At the same time, it acknowledges that the religious subject has become its own religious authority:



what makes sense for him or her, and then what is reasonable is accepted and incorporated into lived religiosity.

Finally, lived religion is an approach that allows us to grasp and understand the role of religious belief in the lives of social actors. It shows how subjects act in the public sphere in relation to a chosen community and to their degree of autonomy from religious institutions. If religious institutions are losing public influence (an aspect which varies according to regions and traditions), religious commitment may still inspire social and political action.

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1. Roman Catholicism lived in Latin America and in Rome. The methodology employed

Verónica Roldán *

Abstracts

The Author presents the constituent milestones of the methodological cycle of an international research survey called *The transformation of lived religion in urban Latin America: a study of the contemporary Latin Americans' experience of the transcendent (in comparison with Southern Europe)*, carried out and which involved the collaboration, in a comparative study, of six universities from six different countries of which three Latin American (Argentina, Peru, Uruguay), two European (Italy, Spain) and one North American (Usa). In particular, the aim of the qualitative method used here was an understanding of *the subjective sense and the point of view* of social actors with the intension of bringing to light the "sociological views".

Keywords: qualitative methodology, comparative research, [Roman] Catholicism, Lived Religion

La Autora presenta las etapas constitutivas del ciclo metodológico de la investigación internacional *La transformación de la religión vivida en América Latina: un estudio de la experiencia de lo trascendente de los latinoamericanos contemporáneos (en comparación con el Sur de Europa)*, en donde han colaborado, en un estudio comparativo, seis universidades de diferentes Países: tres latinoamericanos (Argentina, Perú, Uruguay), dos europeos (Italia, España) y uno norteamericano (Usa). El objetivo ha sido comprender, a través del método cualitativo, el *significado subjetivo y el punto de vista* del actor sobre los diferentes aspectos de su vida religiosa.

Palabras claves: religión vivida, catolicismo, América Latina, Roma, metodología cualitativa

L'Autrice presenta le tappe costitutive del ciclo metodologico della ricerca internazionale *La trasformazione della pratica religiosa in America Latina: uno studio sull'esperienza del trascendente dei latinoamericani contemporanei (in comparazione con il Sud Europa)*, che ha visto collaborare, in uno studio comparativo, sei università di sei differenti Paesi: tre latinoamericani (Argentina, Perù, Uruguay), due europei (Italia, Spagna) e uno nordamericano (Usa). L'obiettivo,

* Università degli studi di Roma Tre (Italy); e-mail: veronica.roldan@uniroma3.it.



è stato quello di comprendere, attraverso il metodo qualitativo, *il senso soggettivo* e il *punto di vista* dell'attore circa i diversi aspetti del suo vissuto religioso.

Parole chiave: *lived religion*, cattolicesimo, America Latina, Roma, metodologia qualitativa

Premise

The present issue of the *Visioni LatinoAmericane* journal is dedicated to the results of an international survey entitled *The transformation of lived religion in urban Latin America: a study of contemporary Latin Americans' experience of the transcendent (in comparison with Southern Europe)*, funded by the Templeton Foundation for the years 2015-2018, and which saw six teams from six universities from three Latin-American and two European countries engaged in a collaborative comparative study under the direction of Gustavo Morello from Boston College, Massachusetts, Usa.

The Latin-American research groups were from the Pontificia Università di Lima, Perù, led by Catalina Romero; the Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Argentina, coordinated by Hugo Rabbia; the Universidad Católica de Montevideo, Uruguay, under the guidance of Néstor Da Costa; the European groups came from the Universidad del Deusto, Bilbao, Spain directed by Miren Iziar Basterretxea and the Università degli studi di Roma Tre, Rome, Italy, coordinated by the Author of the present article. The scholars who took part in the various teams were Valentina Pereira Arena and Camila Brusoni for Montevideo; Lucas Gatica and David Avilés for Córdoba; Veronique Gauthier and Rolando Pérez for Lima; Cecilia Costa, Monica Simeoni, Simona Scotti, Katuscia Carnà and Jenn Lindsay for Rome. Some of these are Authors of the articles presented here.

The survey followed the research model designed by Nancy T. Ammerman and her collaborators, and the results of which appeared in *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes. Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (2014). The Ammerman-*et-al.* study was carried out in two cities of the Usa, different and antithetical from a religious point of view: Boston, Massachusetts and Atlanta, Georgia. The survey collected the life-stories of 95 peoples residing in the two above-mentioned urban areas, in the conviction that biographies, be they long or short, provide a



mechanism by means of which the world is perceived socially and constructed by social actors. As the Boston University scholar claims, it is possible to obtain «a great deal about the social shape of religion by listening for how everyday stories are told» (Ammerman, 2014: 9).

The life-stories which the American research team investigated were not purely spiritual, sacred or ultra-mundane, nor were they simply mundane or intra-mundane. They were stories of lives from which it emerged that to be “truly religious” did not imply the existence of a “sacred” environment separate from everyday life and devoted exclusively to spiritual events. Ammerman calls the “spiritual narratives” stories which concern the life of the spirit and the dialogical communities where spiritual traditions are lived. «The spirituality we are listening for is neither a quest for a sacred center that will orient all of life (as Pargament [2011] suggests) nor a supernatural force that will provide assistance or salvation (as Riesebrodt [2010] theorizes). It is a more modest, but nonetheless profound recognition that the world is not wholly a story that can be empirically told. There is another layer of consciousness that can weave, more or less pervasively, in and out of ordinary events. As philosopher Charles Taylor (2007) would put it, not everything can fit within the “immanent frame” of objective science. Or, to use Bellah’s (2011) notion, both ordinary and nonordinary reality can exist together» (*Idem*).

As already pointed out by Gustavo Morello in the *Introduction* to this number, the Latin American researchers involved in the project collected 80 in-depth interviews from self-styled Roman Catholics, Protestants, members of others creeds as well as agnostics, atheists and *nones*, obtaining data to be compared with the findings of the Rome team.

This issue dwells, in particular, on the outcome of analyses of the data obtained from self-styled Catholics residing in four cities, three Latin-American and one Italian: Córdoba (Argentina), Lima (Peru), Montevideo (Uruguay) and Rome (Italy). In this case too, as in the study coordinated by Ammerman, the project availed itself of qualitative methods and used as its empirical basis a *corpus* of discursive interviews, that is, life stories, gathered upon two different occasions as far as the Latin-Americans are concerned, in a sole sitting as far as the Roman residents are concerned. This empirical work began at the end of 2015 and continued for the whole of 2016.



1. The aim of the research

As Luca Ricolfi (1998) holds, in keeping with Raymond Boudon (1984), empirical research is a succession of operations carried out to find answers to questions regarding the reality. This characterisation follows in the footsteps of Weber's thinking (1922) and contests, first of all, an excessively optimistic –or ingenuous – view of the cognitive capabilities of the social sciences, seeing that the social reality as such is “unknowable”. In actual fact, these scholars claim with conviction that the idea of grasping social “objects” in their entirety, in their essence or in their ultimate intimate meaning, is totally chimeric. Scientific action – contrary to a rather widespread notion – does not aim at explaining the real which, as such, is unknowable, or, at least knowable only in metaphysical terms (Boudon, 1984). Social research, instead, is a “finite section” which the observer selects from that infinity devoid of meaning which is the world's becoming (Weber, 1922) and on the basis of criteria of relevance. As a result, all we scholars can do is formulate specific questions about the reality and try to produce plausible answers.

The aim of Ammerman's study was to draw up models of the presence or absence of the religious dimension in the daily lives of present-day social actors. Her questions were, «In what ways do people experience and invoke transcendence and how does that occur in the many different social spheres of their lives? What kinds of situations call for the spiritual realities have? By systematically exploring the stories people tell about their everyday lives, we will trace the patterns of religious presence and absence in the social world. Where and how do spiritual characters, relationships, activities, moral imperatives, and emotions find their way into everyday stories?» (Ammermann, 2014: 9-10).

With regard to our survey, the aim was that of exploring the *lived religion* of Roman Catholics belonging to four different socio-economic contexts the majority of whose populations were, however, Roman Catholic: Argentina, Peru, even Latin-America's the most secularised country, Uruguay, and Italy. The purpose was that of investigating how the people there relate to the transcendent and how they express and experience their religious beliefs in their ordinary everyday lives.



This research provided a particularly relevant opportunity to «verify, using an international sample, one of the basic claims of the theory itself, that is, whether, in actual fact, religiosity, beyond individual and socio-cultural differences, is a universal phenomenon and whether, therefore, it is possible to study it availing oneself of social-research methods and techniques» (Martelli 2002: 199).

Our initial questions were:

- How are Latin Americans experiencing transcendence in the midst of a changing religious scenario? Is there a Latin American way of experiencing transcendence?

- How do Latin Americans articulate their creativity and free will with religious traditions in religious pluralised cities?

- Does the experience by Latin Americans of the transcendence change across generations, gender and social classes?

- What can Latin Americans teach humanity about the sacred?

To these questions for Latin America were added specific comparative ones for Rome.

The aim of this study was to investigate matters at the level of individual and ordinary life because it is at this level that change occurs. We assume that when we explore religion from the ‘bottom up’, we are able to discover transformation, not decline. Religion/spirituality is assuredly different today, but it has not disappeared. In everyday practice, we may not witness a ‘cultural war’ between the religious and the secular, but simply people making sense of their lives by resorting to religion as well as to secular institutions and ideas. The aim was to discover the strength or decline of religion by paying attention to everyday situations.

We are aware that the construction of religious identity in Latin America is dynamic and flexible in its own cultural way (e.g. enchantment of ordinary life, popular religiosity, de-institutionalisation, religious migration, multiple affiliations, new age spiritualities) (Romero, 2014). The relationship between religion and society is culturally shaped, and, therefore, cannot be described solely according to north-Atlantic parameters (Levine, 2012; Casanova, 1994). Theories of secularisation do not explain in a satisfactory manner the religious phenomena experienced today in Latin America, among other things, because analyses are conducted principally from a Eurocentric



viewpoint, with the French model of *laïcité* in mind. If we examined other ambits where religion is lived, we might discover a different Christianity, the kind that today's sociological literature calls «southern global Christianity» (Adeney, 2009) or the «Third Church» (Jenkins, 2004). To compare the characteristics of this kind of Catholicism with those of Rome was the main focus of this study.

2. The qualitative methodology. Life stories and “spiritual narratives”

Those who carry out sociological research are aware of the plurality of the theoretical approaches and the objects of analysis; the same holds for research methodologies and techniques. In the social sciences, qualitative research presupposes a humanistic paradigm. This means giving importance to the intersubjective relationship established between the researcher and the “object” of his/her investigation, which, in the social sciences is precisely the “subject”, that is, the social actor. It is believed, and with conviction, that the contribution made by social actors to knowledge of real situations that are investigated, is of the utmost importance (Roldán, 2003; 2009).

With specific reference to the qualitative method used here, the aim was to *understand the subjective meaning and point of view of the actor* without any rigid reconstituted hypotheses, in order to bring to light the “sociological view” of the social actors and their definitions of diverse aspects of their lived religion.

Harking back to Alan Bryman (1988) on this point, we can say that the qualitative method assumes the function of tool for the exploration of interpretations provided by social actors. The rapport between the researcher and the subject permits the joint construction of the data.

With this in mind, the teams availed themselves of techniques for the collection of biographical data such as in-depth interviews, life stories, participant observation and visual sociological tools, that is, photographs and audio-visual material like video recordings of some of the interviews considered exemplary.

The research strategy was procedural and the purpose of the results *idiographic*; this means that the image of the social reality emerging was that built socially by the actors. The nature of the data collected is, therefore, rich and profound and although qualitative research avails



itself of a micro-sociological approach, this does not mean that it is less worthy of scientific attention.

The value of the biographical data lies in the fact that not only is it of a personal nature, but is linked to the community, both local and general, to which the subject belongs. This is why an analysis of various individual diversifications can provide interpretative keys related to social *change*.

At the same time, it is necessary to make it clear that the use of qualitative techniques in social research makes no claim to the achievement of levels of generalisation. As Bachelard (1934; 1967) states, biographical methods offer useful indications and clues the value of which is, above all, *regional*. It is for this reason that every time this methodology is used, the boundaries of the regionality in question need to be defined. The unequalled uniqueness of a *life story* remains, nevertheless, as evidence of the particular character of the individual person, who, is at the same time linked to the sociological dimensions of his/her presence, his/her action, and his/her thinking. This leads to an indirect kind of knowledge of general data regarding a community or society (Cipriani, 2012).

Furthermore, the production of sociological knowledge must permit processes of comparison with other areas of sociological knowledge and measurements of the states of single properties of specific social "phenomena", in this case, *lived religion* in the social contexts of three Latin American cities and Rome. To this end, you need to dispose of valid tools for the collection of data.

3. The sample

As mentioned above, the total sample for each city was 80 life stories of people residing in urban areas and who were self-styled Roman Catholics or believers in other creeds (for example Pentecostals, Afro-Brazilians and other religions in Latin America; Moslems, Orthodox Christians and Jews in Rome). The sample also included self-declared "atheists", "agnostics" and "nones" (that is, believers who do not identify with any religion, that is, «unaffiliated, yet religious subjects» (Zurlo, Johnson, 2016)



The groups of Roman Catholic interviewees analysed here numbered 42 in Córdoba, 45 in Lima, 32, in Montevideo and, in the city of Rome, 29.

The selection of the interviewees was carried out deliberately with a view to creating variety of gender, age, area of residence, educational level and type of religious identification. In actual fact, the main structural variables considered were gender (female-male), age (18/29; 30/59; +60), socio-economic status (low; middling/high for Latin America; low, middling and high for Rome), residential area (peripheral; near-central, central /well-to-do areas), educational level and religious membership and/or identification.

In Rome, to define people's socio-economic status the selection criterion chosen differed from that used in the three Latin American countries where the socio-economic indicator chosen was educational level. In the Italian capital the indicator chosen was the interviewees' residential areas, seeing that, in Italy, even people belonging to the lower classes can be well-educated.

4. The survey tool

The research presented here went through the following constituent stages of the methodological research cycle: co-establishment of the information; identification of the techniques to apply to the survey; processing and analysis of the data gathered; and finally, what this publication is doing: dissemination of the results of the research (Cipolla, 1993, 1997; Cremonini 2002; Diotallevi, 2002).

The collection of the series of life stories (the scientific strength of personal documents) made it possible to follow the development of several individual biographies upon a terrain largely shared at social level. That way, it was possible to obtain a set of results, otherwise unreachable within the folds of a questionnaire whose nature it is to compress and reduce data in an almost stenographical manner (Cipriani, 2012).

As far as identification of the data-collection techniques was concerned, an in-depth analysis of sociological literature regarding the



issue was carried out in order to draw up a sole protocol to apply when collecting stories within different local contexts.

In actual fact, for the groups self-defined as “Catholics”, the same protocol as that used for those belonging to other non-Catholic religions as well as for those claiming to be atheists, agnostics or *nones*, was applied.

The protocol used consisted in a first part which referred to socio-demographic characteristics and a second phase regarding the interviewee's life story, with reference to the topics of belief, practice, experience, belonging and also to the areas and ambits in which religious experience may occur: the family, circle of friends, the workplace, leisure time and civil life. The protocol, which initially involved an analysis of the religious socialisation of the interviewees, also included questions concerning people's perceptions of the Pope, the Jubilee of Mercy, leisure, politics and voluntary service.

Given the characteristics of the qualitative method used here, it was also envisaged that the interviewees provide references to other dimensions of their religious experiences not provided for by the data-collection protocol.

5. The analysis of the life stories

We were particularly interested in the use grounded theorists made of narrative techniques and analysis, more so than in structural narrative analyses (which focus on the form and function of story-telling). This means that, by collecting many stories, we inductively created conceptual groupings by allowing for emergent conceptualisation of local salient experiences, oriented by previous theoretical discussions in the field (Riessman, 2005). The focal issue of interest here consisted in the stories of experiences associated with concepts of transcendence. It is for this reason that religious and spiritual beliefs, practices and belongingness were emphasised during the coding process.

While processing and analysing the data collected, we made constant comparisons between the data and continuous reference to theoretical annotations. Coding of the information collected allowed us to identify the categories and sub-categories available for the analysis of *lived religion* in the different localities. Constant comparisons were



made between the elements applicable to each category, integrating them with their properties.

The analysis was computer-assisted using the Atlas.ti program, a software package used mostly, though not exclusively, in qualitative research or qualitative data analysis.

In the coding process, the initial codes were subsequently incorporated into more abstract categories which allowed for a more structured analysis. We cannot present all the categories here for reasons of space. However, by way of example, it is possible to present the *practice* category which incorporates the following items:

- *sacraments*
- *community celebrations*
- *prayer*
- *pilgrimages*
- *cult of images (Our Lady-Saints)*
- *reading the Bible/sacred scripture*
- *reading other material*
- *mission/evangelisation*
- *community/voluntary service*
- *inter-religious coexistence*
- *meditation/reflection*
- *disconnecting*
- *psychological therapies*
- *physical activities*
- *writing*
- *music/art*
- *nature.*

We are also in a position to present, by way of example, some of the main categories identified during the coding process:

- Proximity (having a point of view close to that of the Church)
- Anticlericalism
- But (reinterpretations)
- Education
- Community
- Beliefs
- Crisis of faith
- Distances
- Socialisation
- Emotions



- Getting/being angry with God
- Space (street / urban, home / private/domestic, de-territorialised, nature, temple, work)
- Spirituality / Religion
- Ethics
- Gender
- Institution
- Person
- Migrations / Change of residence
- Object
- Poverty
- Crucial moments / changes
- Religion-political relationships
- Practice
- Religiosity
- Sacraments
- Being a good person
- Health
- Time
- Non-believer
- Believer
- Work
- Transcendence
- Evaluation
- Values

The codes have been analyzed by all the research teams during many Skype meetings and four international workshops. This has allowed us to obtain a comparative framework.

6. Conclusion

Concluding this brief methodological introduction, it is possible to claim that in order to reflect on binomials like Individual/Institution; Spirituality/Religion; Autonomy of the individual/Influence of the community to which one belongs, the topics of religious socialisation, belief, practice, belonging and experience of the spiritual/transcendent and



the values of Catholics within diverse everyday contexts, were analysed. The analysis focused on the spheres where people declared experiencing a sense of the transcendent: at home, in the workplace, in the public domain, in contact with nature, within “non-places” (Augé, 1992) here defined as “de-territorialised spaces”.

In the various chapters that comprise this special issue of *Visione Latinoamericana*, some of the features of southern global Catholicism are presented and compared with lived religion in Rome, a city which hosts within its geographical territory the Papal State, the emblematic seat of universal Roman Catholicism.

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2. Being a Roman Catholic in a context of religious diversity. An exploration of lived religion among Catholics in Córdoba, Argentina

Hugo H. Rabbia*
Lucas Gatica**

Abstracts

From a *lived religion* approach, the Authors explore how Catholics and ex-Catholics from Córdoba, Argentina, conceive “being Catholics”, and how they react to the plurality of religious options in their everyday lives. The conceptions are diverse and contested. Inter-religious practices are multiple, but when diversity is present within their own homes (inter-religious families) they prefer to avoid speaking of religion.

Keywords: lived religion, being a Catholic, religious pluralism, religious practices, spiritual narratives

Desde un enfoque de la *religión vivida* (*lived religion*), los Autores exploran cómo los católicos y ex católicos de Córdoba, Argentina, conciben el “ser católico” y cómo actúan o reaccionan ante la pluralidad de opciones religiosas presentes en su vida cotidiana. Las concepciones son diversas y se presentan como disputadas. Las prácticas interreligiosas son múltiples pero, cuando la diversidad se encuentra en la propia casa (familias interreligiosas), se evita hablar de religión.

Palabras clave: religión vivida, ser católico, pluralismo religioso, prácticas religiosas, narrativas espirituales

Partendo da un approccio di *religione vissuta*, gli Autori esplorano come i cattolici e gli ex cattolici di Córdoba, Argentina, concepiscono “l’essere cattolico” e come agiscono o reagiscono alla pluralità delle scelte religiose presenti nella loro vita quotidiana. Le concezioni sono diverse e sono presentate come controverse. Le pratiche interreligiose sono molteplici ma, quando la diversità è presente in casa (famiglie interrelate), si evita di parlare di religione.

Parole chiave: religione vissuta, essere cattolici, pluralismo religioso, pratiche religiose, narrazioni spirituali

* Universidad católica de Córdoba, Argentina; e-mail: hrabbia@gmail.com.

** Universidad católica de Córdoba, Argentina; e-mail: lucasmgatica@gmail.com.



1. The transformations of the religious field in Latin America

Religiosity in Latin Americans, once predominantly Catholic¹, is facing important transformations. During the last three decades at least, many scholars have observed a process of religious pluralisation with an on-going increase in the number of Pentecostals, the recovery of folk, Afro and native religious traditions, and an increasing presence of *New Age* and oriental spiritualities (De la Torre, Gutiérrez Zuñiga, 2007; Levine, 2005; Romero, 2017; Stoll, 1990). Despite the peculiarities of each country, the global number of self-identified Catholics has dropped in most of the area while the numbers of Pentecostals and non-religious or unaffiliated are increasing (Pew Research Center, 2014). Available data suggest processes of religious fluidity, conversions and de-conversions, even when the number of believers in God remains relatively stable.

Argentina is no exception although quantitative data regarding past religious affiliation are scarce and mostly unreliable (Esquivel, 2017). A recent national survey has reported that 76.4% of Argentinians identify themselves as Catholics, 9% as Evangelicals or Protestants, almost 3% as members of Other religions (Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews, Muslims, etc.) and more than 11% claim no religious identification (Mallimaci, 2013). Their practices and beliefs seem to combine different elements from multiple religious, spiritual and secular traditions: they are syncretic and often self-directed, and sometimes affected by cultural and social motivations which transcend the religious ones. At the same time, most of the believers favour the development of a personal relationship with God (61.1%) without the mediation of religious leaders or communities, even if among people of lower socio-economic status (Ses), personal contact with priests, pastors, gurus, *paes/maes* and other religious leaders is recurrent (Suárez, 2015).

The transformations within the religious field seem to be more prominent in urban settings. As some scholars have noticed, cities are the privileged *locus* for cognitive and normative religious and non-

¹ In the article the adjective “Roman” will be omitted for the sake of brevity.



religious pluralism (Berger, 2014), religious reflexivity (Martí, 2015), and spiritual and religious experimentation (Fernandes, 2009).

Latin America's contemporary urban religious landscape has also been characterised as a sum of encounters and tensions between institutional and personal dimensions of religion, heterodoxy and orthodoxy, sacred and profane elements that coexists in the daily experiences of ordinary people (De la Torre, 2013). Religious individuals are positive creative agents of their own spiritual and religious experiences (Parker Gumucio, 2008; Semán, 2001). Latin Americans often embrace the "sacralization" of the practices of their daily lives (Martín, 2009), and they live in an «enchanted modernity», which is a way of dealing with secularisation and pluralisation trends (Morello *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, religion is still a social force in Latin American public sphere, even when religious "experts" do not exercise a total control over "non-experts" (*Ibidem*, 2017).

Catholicism in Argentina has not been immune from these trends: new religious movements and communities have acquired a significant presence in the daily lives of many Catholics (Giménez Beliveau, 2013; Roldán, 1999). Additionally, some elements of *New Age* spiritualities have made an important contribution to an understanding of the experiences of ordinary Ses Catholics (Viotti, 2011) and popular expressions of religiosity are still relevant and constantly being reshaped (Ameigeiras, 2010).

In short, being a Catholic is not homogenous as a social or self-identification category. Fluctuations and changes during people's lifetimes may act as common references in their autobiographical narratives. Some studies have indicated processes of internal conversion from a peripheral stance to a more individual commitment within the Catholic Church, as a way of people reaffirm and deepen their own particular experiences of faith (Giménez Beliveau, Esquivel, 1996). Nevertheless, there are also processes of de-conversion in which the autobiographical narratives express tensions between new spiritual and religious experiences and residual elements of past Catholic socialisation (Giménez Beliveau, 2013). Just as has been shown by literature, there is internal diversity in the Catholic Church, which coexists with, and is affected by social and religious diversity in a broader context.



2. Catholicism in Córdoba: a “two-faced city”

In Córdoba, the second largest city in Argentina with 1,329,604 inhabitants according to the 2010 census, the number of people self-identified as Catholics has been dropping consistently since the turn of the millennium (from 83% in 1995 to 66% in 2016). Protestant and Evangelicals represent at least a 10% of the population, and the number of non-affiliated and non-religious has been growing faster (from 5.6% in 1995 to almost 25% in 2016) (Rabbia, 2014; Consultora Delfos 2016, in Carreras, October/2016). The weekly attendance at Sunday Mass is not as frequent as other practices, like praying at home, meditating and helping others. However, the Catholic Church is one of the most trusted institutions according to the local samples, and most of the people who are active members of a social organisation claim to be part of Catholic or Evangelical groups (Rabbia, Brussino, 2010).

The historical presence of the Catholic Church is still evident in the colonial architecture of downtown Córdoba, in the relevance of their universities (two of them founded by the Jesuits), in the local political debate, and in different traditional rituals and public devotion. However, as reported in relation to the national and regional context, the presence of Catholicism in local culture is best characterised as diffused because it is expressed in values, sentiments and other elements that transcend the institutional religious field (Cipriani, 2003; 2017; Mallimaci, Giménez Beliveau, 2008). The notion of “diffused religion” involves considering the fact that religious experiences form a value-oriented habitus which persists far beyond any visible religious expression, and tends to imprint different social levels in a general sense (Cipriani, 2003). As the data suggest, most of Córdoba’s inhabitants have been, at some point of their lives, socialised into Catholicism, especially by their parents (primary socialisation), so the idea of Catholicism as a “diffused religion” may be appropriate.

Scholars have also referred to the existence of an ambivalent religious culture based on a mixture of traditional and progressive Catholicism². This social imaginary led to a local historian to consider Cór-

² For the growing local relevance of the Catholic Church since the International Eucharistic Congress of 1934, see Mauro (2016). For the contradictions and tensions in the local context between a conservative and a progressive agenda in Catholic



doba as “a two-faced city” (*ciudad bifronte*) (Tcach, 1994). In a similar way, Lacombe (2014) identified local religious leaders’ recollections of “two churches” that echo narratives concerning Post-Conciliar Catholicism and the emergence of the Third World option. Considering the different positions held by Catholics during the last dictatorship, Morello (2014) identifies at least three different types of “being a Catholic”: the anti-secular, the institutional, and the committed. Each type involved different personal stances concerning state terrorism and violations of human rights during the last dictatorship. The social representations of how the Catholic Church behaved during that dictatorship still resound, even when its role has been reconfigured as a reservoir of confidence and social legitimacy after 2001 political and economic collapse (Mallimaci, 2008).

Nowadays, self-identification as a Catholic in Córdoba seems to rely on these heterogeneous imagings of the past in a context of increasing diversity of religious, spiritual and secular discourses.

Adopting a narrative *lived religion* approach (Ammerman, 2003; 2014), this article explores what the meanings associated with “being a Catholic” are in contemporary Córdoba, and how Catholics respond or react to the diversity of religious options present in their everyday lives. A *lived religion* approach allows us to consider the voices of “non-experts”, contemplate the multiple ways of being part of and practising religion emerging from ordinary people’s narratives. *Lived religion* embraces the idea that religious or spiritual elements may be present in a diverse set of emotions, practices and spaces, instead of those explicitly promoted by traditional religious institutions (Ammerman, 2003; 2014).

3. The Catholic Church and religion as a matter of opinion

Most of our interviewees were baptised by the Catholic rite, were raised as Catholics, or have/had parents that are/were Catholics. How-

groups during different periods, see also Vidal (2016) (for the first decades of the 20th century); Blanco (2014) (for the second half of the 20th century); Morán Faúndes (2015) on pro-life and conservative activism during the last three decades. For some references to popular Catholicism, see also Giorgis (2004).



ever, today, at least half of them do not identify themselves as Catholics. For them, “religion” is, generally, a concept that has lost much of its value, in opposition to “spirituality” which is evaluated positively. The diverse narratives on de-conversion, unbelief, (dis)identification or inter-religious migration contain ideas of self-awareness, freedom, personal needs and desires, autonomy, spiritual quest, or self-imposed spiritual or religious routines. To former Catholics, religious institutions and the Catholic Church in particular are mostly dissociated from those positive categories. A middle-class Ses female college student who was raised a Catholic but identifies herself as «a believer without religion» said:

Religion is something that is regulated, there are institutions that mediate and they tell you what you *have to do*, and what you *cannot do* in accordance with that religion. Spirituality is something freer, more internalised and personal (None, middle-class Ses).

The path to dis-identification as Catholics in most of the narratives in the sample is paved with tensions between conceptions of the Catholic Church as a strongly regulated institution which leaves no space for quests of self-directed spirituality, and, on the other hand, as something extremely vague, ample where rituals have no connection with profound religious or spiritual motivations. Sometimes both of these conceptions, held by those who are now “outsiders”, combine with anti-clerical attitudes, rooted in the historical tradition of Argentinean anti-clericalism (Di Stefano, Zanca, 2013). Sometimes, they also include narratives regarding negative personal experiences with religious leaders or their former religious community.

Attempts to construct an autonomous register of one’s own spiritual and religious experiences are common features of the narratives provided by the sample group from Córdoba, including those who still identify themselves as Catholics, a point this study shares with other studies (Fernandes, 2009; Ammerman, 2014). For those who do not identify themselves currently as Catholics, the experience most indicative of autonomy is the decision to leave the Catholic Church. This decision, as some of our interviewees declared, is often the consequence of a process that is not penalised by the institution or the community itself, except in cases of people who have been part of a fundamentalist movement. Giménez Beliveau (2013) called these cases “unaffiliated



Catholics” meaning people who prefer to remain on the margins of the institution even when their narratives are not easily associated with “exiting religion”. Voas (2009) proposed the term «fuzzy fidelities» to describe those who assign a minor role to religion in their lives, who are believers whose involvement is residual and whose identification with the Christian tradition is casual.

Questioning theism and religion are relevant elements of some of the narratives regarding the development of a non-religious identity, as exemplified by the testimony of a lower-class Ses musician who found religious beliefs “inexplicable” and “delirious”. In other cases, the process led to a reinterpretation of their own Faith, a personal quest for deeper roots and expressions of spirituality, where freedom and self-desires might find a place in their lives. It may be noticed that these processes were promoted sometimes by different agents of Catholic religious socialisation. For example, an unaffiliated woman who worships Energy and Nature, and is interested in esoteric Christian readings, believes that her own personal «free and mature quest for spirituality» was achieved by means of the Jesuit spiritual exercises and Catholic missions she used to take part in. She also refers to some Jesuit priests as her “spiritual guides”.

Other interviewees also decided to deepen their religious practices and develop a personal relationship with the transcendent through a process of inter-religious migration. A former Catholic, now a practicing Buddhist found internal peace and personal spiritual balance by doing *daimoku* and *gongyo* every morning instead of praying to God or going to Church. In some of these cases, the Catholic Church is conceived as a lax and uncommitted institution, and Catholic rites are perceived as habits devoid of deep religious or spiritual content. A young lower-class Ses former Catholic mother who now claims being an Evangelical criticised her parents calling them «nonsensical structured Catholics» who attend Mass every Sunday but «don’t recall anything of what the priest says. They just *must* go there (to Church) as if they had to fill in a blank».

Because of the predominant presence of Catholicism in local history and culture, the Catholic Church is constantly referred to by almost all our interviewees. Rites and practices of other religions or the spiritual narratives of unaffiliated believers are compared to those of Catholicism. The Catholic Church is also a frequent point of reference for



those accounts regarding the general conception of “religion”, mostly from a critical or negative perspective. According to Berger (2014), as a consequence of pluralism, the historical predominance of the Catholic Church seems to «percolate upward into the consciousness of individuals, from the level of certainty to the level of opinion» (Berger, 2014: 29). Catholicism is increasingly subjected to opinion, like most of the religious and spiritual elements present in the narratives of our interviewees.

4. To be a Catholic and to live as a Catholic

The attempts to construct an autonomous register of one’s own spiritual and religious experiences is also frequent in the narratives concerning Catholic self-identification. In the words of our Catholic interviewees, “being a Catholic” is a concept charged with multiple implications. It is conceived as a way of practising religion, self-inscription in a tradition or a community, adherence to a system of beliefs or values and principles, or even a way of life that dictates how to behave in different contexts, at home or in the workplace, with others. Sometimes these conceptions intertwine; on other occasions, they seem to compete.

At first glance, in most of the narratives, different elements seem to lead to a hierarchical cognitive construct that constitutes a conception of being an ideal Catholic, as in the notion of prototype proposed by Socio-cognitive Psychology (Fehr, 2005). This architectural cognitive construct helps our interviewees to identify themselves as being closely (or not) “true” or “authentic” Catholics, or something beyond the prototype. Nevertheless, the prototype is frequently contested.

The central categories of the prototype denote doubts, discernment, disagreement and/or self-directed practices as peripheral elements, adding pressure to self-identification as Catholics. In these cases, “being a Catholic” is associated with virtue, frequent practice and attendance and a robust faith. This conception seems almost superimposed upon that of orthodoxy, and constitutes a benchmark by which to judge one’s own and other’s “failings”. As noticed by some of the Catholic interviewees, it is almost impossible to meet all the conditions required to be an “ideal” Catholic. The role models, in these cases, are Saints (such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta) or exceptional religious persons, but not



ordinary people. By way of contrast, most of the Catholics from Córdoba distance themselves from orthodoxy and prioritise some elements from each conception over others, in an attempt to build an autonomous register of their own way of being a Catholic.

5. Practising Catholicism

For those who conceive being a Catholic as related to religious practice, attendance at Sunday Mass and fulfilment of all the rites of passage promoted by the institution (Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, etc.) are evoked as elements central to the prototype and are referred to as mandatory. Nevertheless, these practices are not as central as they are supposed to be in their lives. For example, Baptism is sometimes conceived of as a social ritual (a traditional family feast), and sometimes as an expression of superstition (to protect the newborn child). As Pérez-Agote (2007) pointed out with reference to Spain, baptism may be perceived as a social custom rather than a Catholic duty. A former Catholic, now a believer without religion, said:

I was baptised, I went to the Catholic Church, I took Communion and I received Confirmation, all the things that are required by the institution, but mostly because it is a social convention. It does not mean much to me (None, middle-class Ses).

By way of contrast, a 56-year-old middle-class Ses woman who recently became a grandmother insisted that her non-religious daughter baptise her grandson so that he would be protected. In the face of her daughter's refusal, she planned to carry out an improvised baptism, «making the sign of the cross with holy water on the forehead of my grandson [...] so that I could feel relieved».

Baptism also appears as a contradictory sacrament: autonomy is a highly positive value in our sample, but most of the narratives on baptism tend to be considered as the ultimate expression of heteronomy. Although most of the Catholic parents in the study said that they have baptised their children, they often made it clear that they prefer their children to choose their religion or beliefs freely.

Confession is another sacrament that is frequently the object of criticism. Most of the participants in the study, including those who wor-



ship every week, are against the idea of the mediation of the religious leader involved in the practice. The notions of sin and guilt related to confession also seem disputed. Many of the Catholics have expressed their preferences to «confess directly to God», «to beg God for forgiveness», or «to limit the confessions to one or two per year».

Attendance at Sunday Mass appears more relevant to those who consider themselves more involved in the Catholic Church. As in other Latin American contexts, attendance at Sunday Mass may be over-reported and seems not to be as central as other practices for many of our interviewees (Romero, 2017). However, references to autonomy, self-choice and freedom are present even in the narratives of frequent congregants, especially middle-class Ses Catholics. Some of our interviewees emphasise the idea that they *want* or feel a *personal need to go to Church*. For example, a Catholic doctor and college professor pointed out that he decides to go to Church every Sunday: «It's an every-Sunday decision». He even chooses where to attend considering how much he likes or dislikes the priest of this or that parish.

«I contact God in my own way», said a Catholic mother of two who works in a public office, but she considers that her beliefs are essentially linked to participation in the practices promoted by the Catholic Church:

There are people who communicate with God on their own terms, but do not want to adhere to any cult. In my case, I believe that the bread and wine are Jesus Christ's body and blood [...] and I adhere to the Catholic Church. I do adhere to the rite. It would be ridiculous if I said 'I'm an Apostolic Roman Catholic but I do not attend Sunday Mass and I do not believe... I do not want to receive communion', for example, because that would be a contradiction. [...] Even when I do not agree with the totality of the Catholic Church doctrine [...] I find it extremely contradictory when some people say 'I am a Catholic but I'm not practising my religion' (Catholic, middle-class Ses).

By way of contrast, a 49-year-old lower-class Ses domestic worker considers that there is no need to go to Church, even when she likes the «songs, emotions and celebration» of Sunday Mass. To her, being in the sanctuary constructed by her deceased husband in her own house «is like being in Church. Maybe you do not have to go to church all the time when you feel you have it in your own house».

The decision to get involved in Catholic rites and practices sometimes collides with the responsibilities of daily life, which is also per-



ceived as a limit to the orthodox prototype of “being a Catholic”. As a middle-class Ses mother of two noticed:

I *need* to go to Sunday Mass, to the Eucharist, to worship our Holy God, but I do not experience that as an obligation (...) Sometimes, my Sunday Mass involves staying home with my children and husband because he does not want me to go to Church (Catholic, middle-class Ses).

Other interviewees characterise attendance at Sunday Mass as an “exterior” practice, a way to display public support for the religious institution, but they tend to value the practices associated with a personal or intimate relationship with God, like praying at home and reading the Bible, in terms that are more positive. A 47-year-old Catholic said that he knows that God is listening to him when he prays: «It is not a prayer that I do by inertia like the inertia of people who always attend Sunday Mass (...) If I pray, I really do it from the bottom of my heart». A Catholic woman often participates in prayer chains with her neighbours via a WhatsApp group. Another participant, a lower-class Ses Catholic who works for a social organisation for the prevention of youth addiction, said that she reads the Bible in a non-systematic way; she has often found words that help her to go through the difficulties of everyday life.

In some cases, the conception of being a Catholic permits the inscription of practices and beliefs not promoted by the Catholic Church. This is especially relevant among lower-class Ses subjects, but is also present among some middle-class Ses Catholics. To be devoted to *Diffunta Correa* or *Gauchito Gil*, to meditate, to do yoga or reiki exercises, to do Tarot readings or to worship *Pachamama* (Mother Nature), for example, are practices that appear in multiple narratives of Catholics from Córdoba. In some cases, these practices are reinterpreted through a spiritual or religious lens that, in the words of the interviewees, does not clash with “being a Catholic”. Thus, the ideal of “being a Catholic” involves some expressions analysed by studies on «popular Catholicism» (Ameigeiras, 2010), re-appropriations and re-significations of elements associated with different religious traditions that become significant in people’s daily lives and diversify religious experiences.

These diversified experiences also include those spiritual and religious practices made available by cultural religious industries (Algranti, 2013; Ammerman, 2014). For example, some Catholics mentioned watching religious TV shows or telenovelas as religious prac-



tices. *Moises. The Ten Commandments* and *Miracles of Jesus*, two Brazilian telenovelas that are broadcast right now by an Argentine TV station, were related to a dynamic of admiration of God's power and the practice of reading the Bible. For example, a middle-class Ses Catholic woman said: «Right now, I am planning to read the Exodus because there's a telenovela called 'The Ten Commandments', and I want to figure out how accurate it is scripted».

6. Beliefs and values

Believing in God and in Jesus Christ as His Son is considered the cornerstone of the Catholic system of beliefs. For some, these beliefs are the pre-requisite for "being a Catholic", even more important than fulfilling the sacramental rites. Some interviewees pointed out that

[to be a Catholic] is not to attend every Sunday Mass, to beat one's breast during penitential rites. No. The most important thing is to feel the love of God in all of its versions: Child Jesus, the Sacred Heart of Jesus [...] in everyday life (Catholic woman, lower-class Ses).

However, the images of God are multiple and not innocuous, as has been studied in other contexts (Ammerman, 2014; Bader, Froese, 2005). In some narratives, God appears in «the traditional image of the Catholic Church», in the words of an interviewee, «as an almighty old man with a beard». One young middle-class Ses Catholic thinks that this is an «old image of God that the Catholic Church used to teach». To him, God is an entity which transcends the materiality of our lives: «I feel Him as a very intimate and personal expression of Creation».

God is sometimes perceived as a vengeful judge, but most times, He is conceived of as a paternal figure or an entity related to love, positive energy, and creation. «When I close my eyes», said one Catholic man, «I often get the image of the Holy Cross and Jesus, but God [...] God is a superior being [...] maybe He is energy, something that is above all of us, watching us». The idea of God as energy is recurrent. This conception provides different ways of entering into contact with the transcendent not confined to the spaces or practices traditionally fostered by the Catholic Church. Some of these ways are wonder at Nature and the Universe, the experience of music and dance as spiritual links with



others, feeling the presence of God in the workplace, or taking part in Family-Constellation practices, among others.

Catholics who do not attend Mass frequently often associate the image of God with themselves. God is perceived as an interior strength present in most – if not all – human beings. The link between an immanent conception of what is sacred and the Self that derives from frameworks promoted by New Age spirituality (Carozzi, 1999) has been analysed by Houtman and Aupers (2007) in terms of post-Christian spirituality. Thus, God is also ordinary evidence: «I see God in the homeless children in the street, in my own children, my husband», said a Catholic woman. Sometimes, that piece of evidence is not even questioned: «I do not need an image of God to think about God or to know He exists. I just know it», stated one male middle-class Ses Catholic.

Among lower-class Ses Catholics, God is someone who is always testing people. «He has a destiny for everyone», some interviewees claim. Even the problems, doubts, and negative experiences that people go through are perceived as different steps in a master plan that each believer should try to unveil. According to another interviewee, a former drug addict currently unemployed, «God is knowledge, because He helped me to open my eyes, and He showed me the way». He said that he came off drugs without professional help because of a promise he made to God and Our Lady of Lourdes during a period when his mother was very ill.

Even if some Catholics have shown unbelief in the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin Mary is also the object of frequent devotion. Lower-class Ses Catholics prefer Our Lady of Lourdes, probably because her sanctuary is closer to the poorest neighbourhoods of the city. On the other hand, Our Lady of Schoenstatt and Our Lady of Saint Nicholas (Argentina) are usually mentioned by middle- and upper-class Ses Catholics.

Devotion to Saints is very widespread. Saint Cajetan (Patron Saint of the unemployed and people seeking work) and Saint Expeditus (Patron Saint of emergencies and expeditious solutions) are the Saints most frequently mentioned «because they always respond», as one lower-class Ses Catholic woman noticed on the basis of her own experience. Popular Saints, like *Santa Muerte* and the *Gauchito Gil*, are mentioned in some cases. As some scholars have stated (Ameigeiras, 2010), these beliefs are inscribed as part of the daily religiosity of many



Argentiniens and permit them to extend the notion of “being a Catholic” to experiences of transcendence that are not promoted by the Catholic Church but which have symbolic efficacy. In other cases, it is frequent to consider the everyday world as a battleground featuring a fight between the forces good and evil. One lower-class Ses Catholic who used to be a catechist and would like to take part in parochial missions, narrates the following:

I started to feel something strange when I was on a mission and went into some houses. I suffered from headache. I felt ill [...] We prayed with the families and suddenly I felt sick [...] To me, it confirmed the fact that there are good and evil forces everywhere (Catholic, lower-class Ses).

Nevertheless, some Catholics object to the material aspects of recurrent devotion to Saints and the Virgin Mary. They consider it a “false” way to live one’s spirituality and link with God:

My mother believes in amulets and usually goes on processions. My sister lives in Salta and goes to [Our Lady of] Salta and Saint Nicholas. She supplicates the Virgin of Saint Nicholas that I may get a husband [...] but I do not like that. God is not a supermarket. He is not a God of amulets. Those are false images of God. I believe in a God that lives inside me, and that He is a kind of spirituality and that He is spread inside of me. [...] It seems to me that people sometimes only associates the Church with religion and a lot more than that. God is not the exclusive property of any religion (Catholic woman, middle-class Ses).

These cases tend to show that the more important aspect of “being a Catholic” is the value system invoked and promoted by the Catholic Church. Respect, solidarity, honesty, care, hard work, etc., are present in most of our Catholic subjects as important expressions of being socialised as such. Nevertheless, they often consider that these values are not an exclusive property of Catholicism. Furthermore, not every Catholic holds, promotes or lives according to these values, as some interviewees have remarked. Even to some former Catholics, values are a positive aspect of Catholic teaching and are present as remnants of their religious past, as expressions of the essential core of a diffused kind of religion (Cipriani, 2003).

There are some values promoted by the Church that I consider pretty good, like thou shalt not kill and you shalt not steal, which are general values that



make one a good member of society... There are more positive values, and perhaps the Catholic Church can provide them (None, middle-class Ses woman).

7. Being part of a tradition or a community

As has been pointed out continually above, Catholicism is often considered as a widespread social tradition. For several Catholics, to be baptised or to baptise their children, to take Communion, to be devoted to Saints or to marry through the Catholic rite are practices anchored in an inter-generational legacy, as a memory chain (Hervieu-Léger, 2005) and as socially effective rites of passage (Pérez-Agote, 2007). For most of the subjects, the notion of tradition implies a kind of self-inscription as a Catholic that involves only commitment to the transmission of some of these beliefs and rituals. It is possible to consider them as nominal Catholics or, as Voas (2009) defined them as fuzzily faithful Catholics. The idea central to this kind of identification is that social custom or the pressures of tradition make it mandatory to comply with some milestones along one's pathway of life. For them, it is not necessary to reflect on their own identification, beliefs or practices: traditions and rites exist; they are something to be observed, even if this does not imply mandatory self-identification as a Catholic. For example, a former construction worker, now retired, said:

My grandparents told me: «You have to be a Catholic, and go to Church». They told me: «You have to believe in Saints, souls, and in God» [...] I think that God may exist because everybody says so (Catholic, lower-class Ses).

Sometimes the idea of being part of a tradition is related to compulsory practices and beliefs perceived as devoid of spirituality, one of the recurrent critiques advanced by ex-Catholics. On other occasions, tradition is associated with mass popular religious experiences, which are not typical of the city of Córdoba. These public demonstrations of Faith are considered with admiration and nostalgia, but also with a degree of suspicion by other Catholics. For instance, one young Catholic woman from one of the north-western Argentinean provinces currently a university student in Córdoba holds that:



[In my hometown] the spiritual is present mainly in the mentality of the people through their traditions. When you take part in the celebrations of the Virgin of the Valley, Catamarca, it is full of pilgrims. The bishop and the priests are tired of saying in their homilies that she (the Virgin) is the mother of God and that we should pay attention to Jesus who is the core of our beliefs... but people want to see the Virgin, period. [...] It is not that it is good or bad. I do not know if it is their personal need to reconnect with something that may be inherited. [...] It is a tradition, a local and popular tradition (Catholic, middle-class Ses).

Other interviewees consider these kinds of public demonstrations as the truest and most genuine popular expression of Faith, which are also a way of expressing autonomous and unmediated forms of belief. A domestic worker raised in a northern province said that, when she came to Córdoba, she abandoned several religious practices because they had not the same religious intensity remembered from her native town:

[In Salta] the processions of Our Lord of Miracles and the novenas are fabulous. I used to love them; I participated with great emotion and pleasure because I felt it [...] But I did not take part of all the religious practices there, because I have my differences with priests [...] The priestly figure, to me, does not mean anything [...] [By way of contrast] Córdoba's religiosity is so cold, so hierarchical [...] People do things just because [...] I do not want to go to Church here (Catholic, lower-class Ses).

Another way of “being a Catholic” is to be or feel part of a community. As some interviewees suggested, the idea of community relates sometimes to the popular experiences of most people. However, in the majority of the narratives, community refers to groups where a number of Catholics have been able to develop religious or solidary practices. In comparison to other Latin American studies (Fernandes, 2009; Giménez Beliveau, 2013; Romero, 2017), the association between “being a Catholic” and the idea of community is one of the least present among our interviewees. This is probably due to the interest in differentiation of identity present among the founders of the communities (Giménez Beliveau, 2013). For those who are part of a group or movement, the members of their communities are perceived ambivalently: on some occasions, the community provides an important reason for “being a Catholic”, especially for extra-religious motives, but, on other occasions, the community can be sententious, hypocritical or overly controlling. One interviewee, for example, abandoned a conservative



movement to join a Jesuit missionary group she considers more open-minded and progressive. The experiences related in connection with membership member of the conservative group she spoke of were riddled with suffering, prejudice towards other people, the weight of guilt imposed by her colleagues, and obsession with perfection that led to serious health problems on her part. By way of contrast, another participant recalls her experience in a religious youth group as a «wonderful moment of social interaction. [...] It was a beautiful group. We prayed, we looked out for each other, we read the Bible». In that group, she met the person who is now her husband and the father of her children.

8. Catholicism as an “open” or “closed” religion

As in the case of ex-Catholics, the tension between the Catholic Church and a heavily regulated, strictly organised Catholic community and the idea of Catholicism as something vague and open to personal decision, is also present in the narratives of currently practising Catholics. For example, one Catholic woman considers, in a positive light, that «being a Catholic implies adhering to all the precepts and religious practices regardless of whether you always observe them or not». She believes that «it is not possible to be half-Catholic». However, she thinks that «the Catholic and Apostolic tradition – and with this I want to mark the difference with pre-Conciliar Catholics [...] – is so free [...] If you want to leave the Church, you may, and nobody is going to say anything to you».

Therefore, most of the Catholics believe that there is not only one way of being a Catholic, and that the Catholic Church permits a multiplicity of experiences. The perception of an increasingly internal pluralisation of Catholicism does not necessarily clash with the traditional institution because a distinctive feature of Latin America is that its Catholicism has always encouraged internal diversity (Morello *et al.*, 2017).

However, some Catholics consider the institution as a closed space; they used expressions like «inside those walls» in relation to the Church, or the «priest coming from the street» as part of a surprising change in liturgical practice. By way of contrast, they tend to identify



Evangelicals as “being in the streets”, even when some of them criticised their leaders as “manipulative”.

For other interviewees, there is also a way of being “more relevant” and “aware” of each personal or social situation. One lower-class Ses Catholic woman who coordinates a young parochial group in one of the poorest districts of the city said: «we have to be more unstructured [...] Due to the difficult lives of these kids, we have to listen to them and speak to them about their problems [...] Religion comes eventually, but in a subtle way». In those cases, «to preach through example» is the preferred pathway to sowing the religious message.

To some of the most committed Catholics in our sample, the impossibility to fulfil the prototypal task of “being a Catholic” brings them to define themselves as Christians. To be a Christian means having to «follow the message of Jesus Christ in my everyday life». This self-identification associates them with other Christians, as part of a wider community reunited by Faith in Jesus Christ. Being a Christian is also referred to as a lifestyle that privileges the perceived centrality of God’s message: to be kind to others, and to spread love and harmony within the areas where they live, work, play and pray.

Sometimes, people from other religions, including ex-Catholics, make comparisons with the openness and vagueness of the Catholic Church. As one young Evangelical put it:

The Evangelical Church is more closed than the Catholic Church. Catholics live a common and typical life. They do not know much about the Bible, they just identify themselves as Catholics. Maybe they know the “Our Father”, the “Hail Mary”, and that is it. To be an Evangelical Christian is different: we really try to live by the Bible. That is the main reason why those who know the Bible are somewhat isolated from the rest of the world (Evangelical, middle-class Ses).

9. Living as a Catholic in a religiously diverse context

To most of the Catholics interviewed, there are many signs of an ongoing process of diversification and pluralisation of the religious landscape in their local society.

The first previously mentioned sign is how Catholicism has diversified. Numerous Catholic interviewees adhered to the idea that there are many different ways of “being a Catholic”. Even though not every “ex-



terior” practice or belief receives the same commonly shared assessment (for example, devotion to Holy Death or taking part in popular public demonstrations generate mixed attitudes), various attempts at incorporating an autonomous register of their spiritual and religious practices permits the inscription of heterogeneous ways of living as Catholics. This internal diversity seems to be one of the consequences of opposing processes of a growing individualisation of experiences of belief and the pluralisation of the spiritual and (non)religious options available in society (Mallimaci, 2013).

The second relevant sign of religious pluralisation emerges in many of our interviewees’ accounts of their daily interaction with people from other religions or with non-religious people. This interaction occurs with different degrees of intensity and in different places such as the workplace, meetings with friends or with a physician, at school or university. Most Catholics referred to at least one significant relationship with a person of another creed. An inter-faith inter-group contact appears as an asset for most of our interviewees. These relationships are characterised as meaningful, generating mutual learning, and as an opportunity to satisfy curiosity regarding other ways of believing and belonging. One middle-class Ses man raised as an Evangelical went to a Catholic school and he even attended Catholic services. Another Catholic, the owner of a laundry and father of a girl, said that an Evangelical colleague belonging to the local chamber of commerce has acted as a spiritual reference every time he has gone through a difficult period:

He is not a friend of mine, but we have a special relationship [...] We can talk about religious issues without any problem. [...] When my father passed away and when I was going through economic problems, he phoned me and simply said: «Let us pray together». It was a comforting moment (Catholic, middle-class Ses).

One Catholic woman told the story of her desire to know more about Judaism, due to her friendship with a Jewish couple:

One day I told them that I would love to witness a boy’s baptism. So they invited me and I went to the synagogue. My husband wore the kippah [...] Everything was wonderful, we had a great time. I witnessed the whole ceremony and was really surprised (Catholic, middle-class Ses).



In lower-class Ses neighbourhoods, religious institutions are presented as *safe places* because they are also considered as social and recreational spaces. Some Evangelicals practice sports in Catholic Church facilities, and some Catholics from those districts often attend services or take part in activities organised by Evangelical churches. A Catholic interviewee, for example, has travelled with Evangelical groups for recreational purposes. One woman, who also attended the Evangelical rite, noticed that the Catholic parish has recently incorporated festive music and dance into its Sunday Mass like those she used to enjoy in the other temple. Contrariwise, another Catholic woman recalls a different experience when she once attended an Evangelical service:

There are churches and churches, right? I went to one church (laughter), because they invited me [...] I went with two other missionaries, and we felt like three fools who came to perform 'miracles', you know? [...] I saw how they lied to people. So I left the temple because I did not like that game (Catholic, lower-class Ses).

Despite this situation, she has a brother who converted to Evangelism and whom she loves: «It made me very happy to know that my brother, who used to make fun of my religiosity, finally found God, even if it's in another church», she states.

The third sign of religious pluralisation is evident inside the homes of Catholic interviewees. The internal pluralisation in households is often related to the crisis of inter-generational transmission of Faith, but also to attempts at guaranteeing an extra degree of autonomy and self-expression to every family member. According to Hervieu-Léger (2005), this is related to the crisis of the traditional family, which has led to a dislocation in the continuity of memory, and which pertains to «the core of the modern religious crisis» (Hervieu-Léger, 2005: 216).

Catholics with descendants tend to favour the idea that their children be free to choose spiritual or religious beliefs on their own even if most of them have been previously baptised according to the Catholic rite. Additionally, most of the parents interviewed insist that it is important that their children develop their own personal spirituality or religiosity; but opting to become a non-believer is seen with suspicion or fear. These situations establish tension between autonomy and heteronomy which we found in the words of our interviewees. At the same time,



when the chain of belief is broken, some mothers (more than fathers) believe they have failed in their mission.

Roof (1999) warned that intra-family religious diversity is a central feature of the religious transformation faced by the generation of baby-boomers. In his view, those families adopted a series of negotiation strategies: they established a dominant family religion in open dialogue with others, trying to observe the practices of both religions rigorously or even adopting freewheeling multi-religious practices that enabled them to develop new traditions with a particular sense.

McCarthy (2007), on the other hand, identified three different strategies to deal with intra-family religious diversity in narratives by North Americans: respect for difference, which she calls deep tolerance; a flexible code-switching which, like the case of a bilingual person who establishes bridges between two different cultural frameworks; and a less prominent creative recombination of religious belief, practice and identity. For her, in the microcosm of inter-religious family cohabitation, it is possible to find ways of solving public problems generated by religious plurality in society.

However, in Córdoba, unlike experiences of other inter-religious or inter-group contacts that are usually appraised in positive terms, intra-family religious diversity is seen with anxiety (Berger, 2014). Some interviewees' narratives reveal a tension between respecting and accompanying a quest for autonomous Faith by a family member, and an increased perceived distance in terms of his/her new beliefs, practices or lifestyle. One converted Evangelical daughter of Catholic parents criticises her Catholic socialisation harshly («My parents didn't teach me values or anything»). She tries not to repeat the ways in which she was raised with her own children. «At home, we pray all the time, we thank God for everything», she said.

One 61-year-old Catholic woman who has a daughter and son that have converted to Evangelism, stated:

I accept and respect the decisions of each of my children. But I also demand that they respect mine [...] My daughter invited me to her temple, my son also invited me to go, and I said: 'No, no. I can go with you, I can go to your temple, but I'm not leaving my church' [...] I want to be a Catholic (Catholic, lower-class Ses).



While cohabitation with Evangelicals is prominent among lower-class Catholics, in the middle classes intergroup contact is often with atheists, the disaffiliated, with New Age or orientalist spiritualists. However, both groups share an unusual way of dealing with perceived religious differences within the home: they avoid talking about religion. As another Catholic woman noticed: «My daughters are atheists, maybe agnostics [...] They often questioned the Catholic Church. And I got really bad [...] so we reached a compromise: we don't talk about religion anymore at home». Sometimes, this “compromise” is perceived as a sign of tolerance, but in other cases, it appears as tension emerging between recognition of each person's autonomy and breach of a self-imposed mandate.

10. Conclusions

On the basis of a narrative *lived religion* approach (Ammerman, 2014), here we have tried to contribute to a better understanding of the implications of being a Catholic in Córdoba, Argentina, in a context characterised by great religious diversity.

In the words of our interviewees, it is possible to notice the perception that they inhabit a religious world that is undergoing a transformation, affected by processes of individualisation, subjectivisation and, above all, a growing diversification and pluralisation of religious and spiritual experiences (Heelas, Woodhead, 2005; Mallimacci, 2013; Mallimacci, Esquivel, 2015; Parker Gumucio, 2008). As stated by Berger (2014), the plurality of religious and extra-religious elements and discourses available within the social space, as well as people's aspiration to build an autonomous register of their own spiritual narratives, seem to strengthen the idea that religion, and particularly the Catholic Church itself, may become the object of debate.

Thus, religion appears as a concept that is devalued in relation to the wider, freer and more personal concept of spirituality, as has been observed in other contexts (Ammerman, 2014). In addition, the personal narratives of many Catholics and ex-Catholics from Córdoba reveal that there is room for experimentation (Fernandes, 2009), for personal syntheses of popular traditions that seem to be socially expanded and that have a particular symbolic efficacy (Ameigeiras, 2010; Parker Gumucio, 2008), for the adoption of certain elements that evoke a post-



Christian kind of spirituality (Houtman, Aupers, 2007), and for a particular resignification of Catholic practices and beliefs by social custom and other systems of meaning (Pérez-Agote, 2007; Romero, 2017). Even though this implies that several people remain within the fuzzy boundaries of the institution in which they inscribe themselves as Catholics (Giménez Beliveau, 2013; Voas, 2009) and that it is possible to notice in most Catholics that there is a manner of challenging and reconstructing an ideal prototype of “being a Catholic” from the inside and on the basis of multiple conceptions.

The conception of being a Catholic involves many diverse senses and elements, like ways of practising religion, adherence to a system of beliefs, self-inscription as part of a tradition or a community, and, above all, subtle inscription within a system of values that permeates everyday life. Therefore, people from Córdoba seem to confirm Cipriani’s thesis (2003, 2017) that at the heart of religion resides, above all, a set of values that orient people’s lives, which appear dull within the social spectrum and which are not exclusively identified with Catholicism. The thesis of a diffused religion seems to be reasonably compatible with Berger’s (2014) perspective of dual pluralism, at least within the context of societies whose predominant religious reference point has been the Catholic Church (Cipriani, 2003).

According to McCarthy (2007: 188), «pluralism is lived at places where different religious identities [...] intersect, or at least confront each other». In these terms, among the people from Córdoba interviewed it is possible to identify references to at least three different kinds of religious pluralism:

1) a marked diversity within Catholicism, which seems to have been promoted by the Catholic Church itself in the regional context (Morello *et al.*, 2017);

2) pluralism involving inter-religious encounters with friends, acquaintances, co-workers, which is positively valued for the most part, even desired or wanted by some interviewees;

3) religious and non-religious pluralism within families themselves.

Intra-family pluralism implies a tension between the value of autonomy and heteronomy, perceived as a requisite for the continuity of the memory chain (Hervieu-Léger, 2005). Thus, intra-family pluralism, more than other cases, is experienced with anxiety and resignation. Unlike what has been identified in other contexts (Roof, 1999;



McCarthy, 2007), the most frequent strategy used by Catholics from Córdoba in multi-religious families seems to be that of reaching a compromise solution that establishes a kind of cohabitational tolerance and diverse attempts at “non-contamination”.

This strategy is stronger when Catholics are faced with family members’ ways of believing that are perceived as devalued (popular cults, new spiritualities) or when there is pluralism of religious and non-religious experiences and discourse. As Levine (2005) points out, plurality does not necessarily imply pluralism. The internal diversity recognised in ways of “being a Catholic”, which create the idea that the Catholic Church is ample, lax and does not punish abandonment by believers, does not necessarily lead to acknowledgement of the diversity of family members’ spiritual and (non-) religious quests. Thus, both the tensions experienced by Catholics who admit inhabiting a diffused religiosity and societies with growing religious diversity, impose crucial challenges on future inquiries.

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3. Lived Roman Catholicism in Lima

*Catalina Romero**
*Rolando Pérez**
*Veronique Lecaros**

Abstracts

Lima is a city where religions flourish in a context of religious transformation. The Authors approached lived Catholicism from a qualitative perspective considering urban diversity and different lifestyles. Differences in lived religion were found in three local domains of everyday life: 1) the family, which paves the way for school and sacred spaces; 2) the parish, where individuals seek to live their religion; 3) civil society, including the workplace and social organisations.

Keywords: lived [Roman] Catholicism, family, church, society

Lima es una ciudad donde las religiones florecen en un contexto de transformación religiosa. Los Autores estudian el catolicismo vivido desde una perspectiva cualitativa, considerando la diversidad urbana y distintos estilos de vida. Encontramos diferencias en la religión vivida en tres espacios locales: 1) la familia, que lleva a la escuela y a lugares sagrados; 2) la parroquia, como institución donde individuos buscan vivir su religión; 3) la sociedad civil, incluyendo organizaciones sociales y de trabajo.

Palabras claves: catolicismo vivido, familia, iglesia y sociedad

Lima è una città in cui le religioni prosperano in un contesto di trasformazione religiosa. Gli Autori studiano da una prospettiva qualitativa la pratica del cattolicesimo, considerando la diversità urbana e i diversi stili di vita. Si riscontrano differenze nella religione vissuta in tre differenti spazi quotidiani di vita: 1) la famiglia, che introduce alla scuola e ai luoghi sacri; 2) la parrocchia, come istituzione in cui gli individui cercano di vivere la loro religione; 3) la società civile, che include le organizzazioni sociali e sindacali.

Parole chiave: cattolicesimo vissuto, famiglia, chiesa, società

* Pontificia universidad católica del Perú; e-mail: jromero@pucp.edu.pe; rperez@pucp.edu; vgauthier@pucp.pe.



Preamble

Lima is the Capital city of Peru overlooking the Pacific Ocean, with more than ten million inhabitants, most of them born outside Lima, the offspring of either first generation or recent internal migrants, and a small number of middle-class wanderers attracted by the apparent buoyancy of the country. This population lives in a sort of cultural kaleidoscope, analogous to any other modern cosmopolitan city, but different at the same time.

Religion is one of the constitutive dimensions of Lima's diversity (Romero 2016). The capital city of Peru has changed character over the last few decades: from being a Catholic¹ city known for its traditional baroque-style churches and the Catholic faith of its people, it has become a multi-religious area with Christian churches of different origins emerging everywhere. People with new creeds and traditions, all of them seeking to settle down and flourish, are well received in the former City of the Kings.

1. Moving toward religious diversity

Lima represents one-third of the Peruvian population, and the Catholic Church has four territorial jurisdictions (dioceses) in the metropolis. Three of them were created in 1996 following the city's rapid urbanisation around the old and modern residential areas of Lima: Carabayllo to the North, Chosica to the East, Lurín to the South, and Lima, the original archdiocese at the centre.

Catholicism played a key role from the 1950's on, during the initial process phase of urban growth that led to the original way in which urbanisation took place in Latin America: precarious neighbourhoods, like *favelas* in Brazil or *barriadas* in Lima, built by inland migrants looking for a job and a better life. The initial invasion of public and wasteland gave way to an organised distribution of land for future

¹ In the article the adjective "Roman" will be omitted for the sake of brevity.



homes, and since this imagined future included a place for a Catholic church, a police station, and a municipality, substantial allotments were assigned to each in a central location.

Foreign missionaries (i.e., priests and nuns) following the *Fidei Donum* convocation of Popes Pious XII and John XXIII arrived in Lima and other Latin American cities were invited by the new settlers to participate in building the new urban territories (Degregori, Blondet, Lynch, 1986) and share the same living conditions as their parishioners, starting from scratch. Working together as good neighbours, they built houses, organised themselves, and participated in the battles for public services, public transportation, electricity and water, schools, hospitals, and so on. Catholics were strengthened by their faith and church in their commitment to building a better life for the families and neighbours they served. At the same time, important events were taking place in Catholicism. The Second Vatican Council, the Medellín and Puebla meetings of the Latin American Conference of Bishops, and the strong commitment of the Peruvian church² reinforced their historical experience of living religion.

It was in this period that the option for the poor – both as a theological statement supported in the Gospel and as the praxis of Latin American Catholics, laypeople, clergy, and bishops – linked religion and spirituality as a way of life, based on involvement, solidarity, and friendship with others in need.

It was also a time for ecumenism, and many Protestant pastors and communities shared this experience with the Catholic majority in an active civil society. As Dafne Sabanes asserts,

Protestants and Catholics also worked together in defence of human rights in the church committee of Paraguay, the peace and justice service of Uruguay, and in the Sao Paulo archdiocese in Brazil. In Central America, the World Church Council human rights office carried out important work in protesting against violations of human rights ... The dialogue between Catholic and Protestant liberation theologians was intense during these years as an international movement of progressive theologians began to take shape (Sabanés, 2004: 21).

² Until 1980, the Catholic Church was the Peruvian Church, recognised by the State under a Patronage agreement with the Holy See. From 1980, a process of separation began with small changes in the former relationship, but important in terms of autonomy for the Catholic Church and for freedom of religion.



Today, in the twenty-first century, Lima is a mega city with challenges derived from new problems related to the organisation of housing, mobility, and services for a vast citizenry, among which a growing minority of Christian churches has settled. It is in this new urban and religious context that we carry out research on lived religion³, taking Catholicism as our central focus, considering former urban and religious research, both qualitative and quantitative.

In this article on lived Catholicism in Lima, we describe and analyse how religious beliefs are linked to everyday life in the family and neighbourhood (including local sacred spaces like churches, chapels, and places of devotion), examine the Church as an institution represented in the parish, parish priests and pastoral agents, and civil society.

The transformation of the religious domain, documented through census and survey data, reveals a slow but definitive growth of other religions in Peru and in Lima. According to data provided by the 2007 census, 81.3% of the Peruvian population claimed being Catholic, 12.5% Christian and Evangelical. The data of a recent survey, the *World Values Survey* (2012) tell us that the figures are now 73.4% Catholics, 10.8% Protestants and Pentecostals, 4.6% belonging to other religions, and 10.1% not belonging to any denomination. As Daniel Levine (2009) points out, the contemporary religious face is characterized by pluralism instead of monopoly, a plurality of voices. He describes the characteristics of this new religious face in the following terms:

The contrast with the traditional face of religion reflects a net of related changes. Where there was monopoly, there is now pluralism; where a limited number of spaces were once officially reserved for religious practice (with a

³ This research is part of a larger project, under the direction of Gustavo Morello from Boston College, and has been possible thanks to the financial support of the John Templeton Foundation. It was carried out in Lima-Peru, Cordoba-Argentina, and Montevideo-Uruguay, with Catalina Romero from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, as principal investigator (PI) in Lima, Hugo Rabbia, from the Catholic University of Córdoba, PI in Córdoba, Argentina, and Néstor Dacosta from the Catholic University of Uruguay, PI in Montevideo,. Rolando Pérez and Veronique Lecaros acted as associate researchers in the project in Lima, and Fiorella Arteta and ClisYépez were involved in different stages of the project, as well as Elizabeth Vallejos, who provided administrative support.



limited number of authorized practitioners), there is now a rich profusion of churches, chapels, and mass media programming, not to mention campaigns and crusades that carry the message to hitherto 'profane' spaces... Instead of a limited number of voices 'authorized' to speak in the name of religion, there is now a plurality of voices, not only from among distinct denominations, but within churches as well (Levine, 2009: 406).

Internal pluralism within religious confessions or denominations is not necessarily new. What is new is that pluralism within and among religions is affecting the political life and other public processes related to Latin American democratic transitions and the re-classification of civil society (Romero, 2009).

In the latest edition of the *World Values Survey*, the Peruvian team added two questions on 'the basic meaning of religion,' providing two alternative answers for each one: 'to follow norms and ceremonies' or 'to do good to other people,' and 'to make sense of life after death' or 'to make sense to life in this world'. The answers in Peru for 'to follow norms and ceremonies' scored 16.9%, as against 78.7% for 'to do good to other people'. The next alternative, 'to make sense of life after death' was chosen by 20% of the people interviewed, and 'to make sense of life in this world' by 75%.

Quantitative data analysis provides important signs and clues of changes in beliefs, values, and practices in general. Qualitative research looks for reasons which help comprehend why people do what they do, how they understand it, and how they link God and religion to other dimensions of their lives.

We shall focus on how Catholics in Lima live and experience the presence of God and religion in their lives. We shall use qualitative data from our research in Lima on the transformation lived religion in urban areas, following the perspective of a sociology of lived religion (Ammerman, 2014; Orsi, 1997; Mc Guire, 2008), considering other Authors (Ferrarotti, 1993; Cipriani, Losito, 2006; Levine, 2012; Wood, 2014)⁴.

Our methodology for the general project is guided by the theoretical sampling perspective, looking for the different ways in which people

⁴ Ammerman provided special guidance and advice, along with other colleagues. We would like to mention Peter Berger, Daniel H. Levine, José Casanova, Roberto Cipriani, Renée de La Torre, Silvia Fernández, Gisela Cánepa, Iziar Basterrechea and Verónica Roldán, among others, who contributed with their knowledge and advice to the general project.



live their religion not only inside church walls but how they integrate beliefs and values in different situations in everyday life.

From the general number of cases including Evangelicals and Pentecostals, those who practice other religions, non-believers or the indifferent, we have selected forty-five Catholics, to account for internal diversity within Catholicism, divided into nine groups of five persons each to represent different types of communities and spiritualities, considering those who attend parish services and participate in parish life (including communities that emerge in the parish), and those who belong to Catholic movements created for lay people or by religious orders for lay people. We have chosen four main personal stories from diverse social milieus as types that represent different forms of living religion. The stories are those of two men and two women who embody different ways of living their faith among Catholics in Lima: Roberto, Ruby, Isabel, and Pancho.

Roberto is a middle-aged man who lives in one of the new districts undergoing urbanisation in the southern area of Lima. He is a social leader in his neighbourhood and knows the parish priest because he works with him to improve essential urban services such as water, electricity, transportation, and security in their area. He is not a church person, but he is Catholic, believes in God, and attends services on special occasions and for particular celebrations.

Ruby is a middle-aged woman born into a very poor family in a small town in the north of Peru. She did not finish school and started working in her teens. Her religious devotion helps her to face severe problems in her life. She currently lives with her husband in his family's home, and is a housewife.

Isabel is a middle-aged woman. She was involved in church activities in a small chapel that provides religious services to a new middle-class housing project. She is an engineer and works monitoring industrial and agricultural water management.

Pancho is a lawyer in his late fifties. He is divorced and therefore he is not involved in parish life. He is a loyal devotee of St. Jude Thaddeus and is a Mason.



2. Exploring lived religion in families, church, and civil society

It is well known that families are places «entral to social life and to the development of local culture where future practices are built on those previously established and safeguard participants from external demands» (Fine, 2010: 366).

According to 71.33% of the people surveyed⁵, families are the first reference for religious formation. However, the second most influential institution were considered the schools and parishes.

But how is religion transmitted by families?

What do we know about family religious culture at this moment of religious transformation?

How do they relate to other local and intermediate religious groups and places to express their ideas, concerns, and questions about how the religious context is changing?

Most of all, how do they live religion today?

Doing research in lived religion aims at understanding how people live religion in three local spheres: 1) the family, which will extend to the neighbourhood and the school as important contexts that appear in their stories;

2) the church, starting from the local parish and religious communities of reference as concrete meeting places for individuals and families, and permitting contact with the religious institution that identifies them as Catholic;

3) civil society, which involves other regular commitments in everyday life, such as work, involvement in civic and political associations and cultural groups, and leisure activities.

2.1. Lived religion in families, neighbourhoods, and schools

Roberto lives in Villa María del Triunfo, a district created in the 1960's after a group of families occupied public land and started a pre-

⁵ Catalina Romero PI, 2006 survey on Catholic society in Peru. Institute for Public Opinion, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. Financed by Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, Rímac, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.



carious human settlement. He talks about his father with admiration as a man of values, and remembers him for always being there for him and his siblings.

We always had something to eat; he never left us to our own devices⁶. And he was an honest man; he never had problems with the law or with his neighbours, never. He was a good father, and did not abandon us.

However, Roberto's life was not easy. He was involved in a local youth gang, where he consumed drugs and alcohol and got involved in fights and other acts of violence,

I was not only a member of the group. I was the leader. And there was a moment when they all would follow me. Then, I did not accept abuse, and at critical moments I had the reaction that we shouldn't rob, and we should not be excessively violent.

He now thinks that he had values that helped him to draw a line for himself and for the group. Later, he recalls how some of them were able to abandon illegality, while others who were not able that were caught and imprisoned. But they had help from a group of neighbours who understood their risk-laden situation and created a social club for the young people there.

Forty years later, we invited him to participate in this project as a respected leader in his neighbourhood. The most important element of Roberto's childhood was neither his nuclear family life nor the school he attended, where he was not a good student: it was the neighbourhood. It was there that he grew up and displayed his bent for leadership and met friends, both men and women, who helped him to put his life back on track to become the person he is now.

He thinks that a turning point in his life was when his girlfriend asked him to join her on a journey to visit Our Lord of Muruhuay, whose Sanctuary is three hours east of Lima. He had never heard of Him, but he thought she wanted to touch something spiritual in him. It was very hard for Roberto to accept that she wanted to end the relationship they had. He remembers that a few weeks later he felt the need to go back to visit Our Lord of Muruhuay, this time by himself, and only

⁶ In urban areas of Perú, 28% of families are in the care of a single female parent.



after that visit was it possible for him to look forward to a different way of life.

Roberto recalls how difficult it was to come out from the complicated arrangement he had built in his youth:

Sometimes it's not that easy to come out of that world just like that, from one moment to the next, without any professional help, you know? It is about constantly going and talking with God, right? [It's about] asking Him to help you (sic).

Later, when he started dating an Evangelical Christian friend, he was able to start changing his life with her help. Now they are married and have children and he tells us :

I think that things don't happen just by chance. It is God who, one way or another, like when we were children, extends His hand to you, and it doesn't matter whether you hold it or not: one has to take the opportunity and never let it go.

His wife is an active Christian at Agua Viva, but she respects his faith, while her cousin, who is a pastor at another Christian Church (World Mission Movement, Wmm) tries to convert him.

He tells me to put myself in the hands of God, that in any moment something might happen to me and I will go to hell. And I answer: No. God knows that I still have so many things to do and He is not going to take me; don't worry. Then, I am always in contact with God, asking him to help me to go forward, because I get very sensitive when I see little kids in the street; I get angry and worried, and I ask, 'Why is this happening? How much longer will this last?'

Since he married an Evangelical Christian, he describes himself more often as Catholic, and is trying to get to know his religion better. Their children join them at their religious services and church activities, and ask them questions about how to interpret the Bible and how to understand the rituals of both churches. Their children have not been baptised because they want them to be free to choose their religion and Church as adults.

When we move to analyse lived religion at church and in society, we find that his relationship with the local parish in Villa María del Triunfo is not only a personal issue, but that it also relates to private and



public issues in his life. When asked where he made his religious acquaintance, he says,

I have attended two Catholic retreats; they were not spiritual, but [designed] for the laity. They offered an analysis of the social reality. I have been there. And since then I am a good friend of the pastor of my wife's church. Now he talks to me though he is not trying to convert me. But the best relationship [I have] is with father Juan, who invited me to the retreat. When I went to the retreat, I had not brought a Bible with me, which was required. Then I couldn't follow the readings, but I started to talk to God, and ask Him to help my family and me. [...] What happens is that I am not a member of the parish: I only participate in special celebrations, or when a relative goes, like for Christmas or a funeral. But I pray not only to ask God to give me something, but also for guidance to do the right things. And I am a friend of the priest; he invites me to courses, like the one for leaders in 'Bartolo'⁷.

In society, we find Roberto to be a well-known person: a leader in his district and in the southern suburbs of Lima. He is proud of what he is doing to improve the urban condition of the district. In his own words

I am a neighbourhood leader, but I am also a politician, and we have plans to participate in the next elections. Our politics are good; we work from the base to grow from there upwards. Of course, we are considering our beliefs in this work. Without ethic, you don't have values.

If, in his original nuclear family, he did not participate in church services and sacraments, in his adult nuclear family he lives religion trying to defend his individual autonomy and his children's autonomy in the religious field. This leads him to live religion in his nuclear and extended family, in civil society and in the church as social spaces in which to live religion.

Moving to a second experience of lived religion, centred in the family and the home, we have Ruby, a Catholic housewife who believes in the Virgin of the Nativity and in Saint Rose of Lima, because she was told that she was unable to have children and when she prayed to both,

⁷ Bartolo is the short name people use to refer to the Bartolomé de Las Casas Institute, in Rímac. He mentions the Hugo Echegaray School for Leaders, which provides general education courses lasting two weeks to leaders coming from all over the country sent by their local parishes.



they helped her. Now she has children the hospital was wrong, she says, meaning that she knows it was not a miracle.

But I had already gone to pray to the Virgin and to Saint Rose, and I told them that I wanted to have a baby and the Virgin granted me my wish, and therefore I have faith in her.

Thus, she starts living religion in her family. As Manuel Marzal says:

Many popular Catholics live in the wonderful world of the miracle. For the popular Catholic a miracle transcends the real chances of the devotee. The low level of education they receive, the poor conditions in which the health services operate, and structural poverty in Latin America does not permit poor people to respond to unexpected situations (Marzal, 2002: 375).

It is not that miracles transcend natural laws and scientific possibilities.

It is the relationship established between the devotee and the Saint, the Virgin or Christ that produce the miracle. Because they supported their faith and hope, this helped them insist and achieve what they aimed at. And this relationship is what they are grateful for, therefore they fulfil their promise to visit their shrines, to pray or to organize a Novena as Ruby did.

Devotion to the Virgin Mary under different names has been part of her life since she was a child. She remembers when she saw the Virgin of Mercy crying in a procession. She was ten years old then, and she felt that «the Virgin was telling me that my life was going to be tears and sadness, because my life has always been like that. I've always had many problems». She encountered problems of abuse and mistreatment when she was sent to work as a maid when she was thirteen years old⁸.

She lives religion at home

I teach my children to believe in God always because He helps us in one way or another. To me, it is very important that they believe in God. I don't want them to believe in other things that will take them down a bad path. The

⁸ She was sent to work by her family when she was 13 years old, and suffered abuse and mistreatment from the family that employed her as a maid.



only thing I tell them is to pray to God, to ask Him [for] everything, and that He will help them. That is the only thing I tell them.

She also lives religion in church. Ruby explains that going to church is also very important to her, «because you go there to talk to God», and she talks to the Lord on the Cross. She attends Mass, listens to the priest's sermon, and then she can teach all that to her children. Her lived religion also extends to the neighbourhood, because she promised the Virgin of the Nativity that she would organise a Novena for her every year, to thank her for having borne children. For 15 years now, she has invited her neighbours to participate for one week, and one of them is asked to be a steward for the Virgin and to oversee organising the prayer, the food, and everything. Now there are different families involved in the Novena, taking turns to receive the Virgin in their homes and sharing food with each other.

When her husband cannot find work, she prays to the Virgin of the Nativity.

Please, sometimes we haven't got money, as sometimes my husband has no work. Please help him, I pray, and she will listen to me, and my husband finds a job.

Ruby communicates directly with the other world.

I don't know if this is a personal belief, but since my husband's uncle died I started asking him. I have a picture of him and I trust him, because when my husband hasn't got a job I also ask him, and he listens to me and my husband gets a job.

She asks him for help because he is already close to God.

As a housewife, Ruby considered it very important to be respected by her husband, so she decided to leave him once, with her mother's consent, because she felt he did not respect her. She did not want to talk about this, because now they are back together. On that occasion, she went to church to talk to the Lord on the Cross, because she lived alone in Lima.

As a mother, she says that even though she did not complete her education, she tells her children that they must go on and be someone in life. She believes they «must build their future in this life», and she always helps them to do their homework and study. Her eldest son «has



very good marks at school and he is already going to secondary school». Everyone asks her how she manages to do this if she herself was unable to obtain an education, but she answers that she can make them read and review their notes to learn more.

Like Roberto, Ruby has experienced living near relatives with different religious beliefs. She mentions her brother-in-law, who tells her that she should only believe in God, and when she brings the image of the Virgin home, he leaves the house and does not join the Novena because he says, «it's only a plaster image», and his behaviour confuses her. What she likes most is to help people when they are in need: that connects her to God, and she does it because she has learned to do that, even when she does not have to,

because there are people who have and don't give; I haven't much, but I give all I have. And God is watching me, and He is sending me blessings, because I like to share with all those who are also in need.

Loving thy neighbour and love of God appear to be related in her daily life. This is what Ammerman refers to as the Golden rule in religion: to do good to those in need and this is what Ruby does even when she does not have to.

Roberto and Ruby have not an easy life. Roberto had a direct and active experience with urban violence as member of a social tribe in his youth, but he learned the importance of leadership. His contact with religion was occasional as a child, but he is more actively searching for the meaning of faith today, due to the permanent conversation he has established with his wife. He is interested in knowing more about the Gospel and the Bible, always in relation to the social reality, and this connection is what he finds in the Catholic Church.

Ruby was abused and mistreated at a very young age, but she was able move forward with the help of her family, God, the Virgin, and the Saints. Her experience of loneliness and social abandonment contrasts with her energy and determination to advance in life and her hope for her children's future.

There are some important things to say about how these two people live religion in the church and society. Roberto works very closely with the parish in his district. He invites the priest to public meetings, where the priest can learn about local problems and listen to different alternate solutions that neighbours propose to solve them. This way Roberto con-



tributes to a better relationship between the parish and the residents based on awareness of their everyday problems. He has incorporated the parish as a neighbourhood organisation, legitimating it as a civil institution. On the other hand, he is engaged in interreligious dialogue through his family's relations with other faiths. He crosses the borders between church and society, and he works to link religion to everyday life.

Ruby, as an anonymous parishioner, goes to Mass and listens to the priest's sermon. The church as a sacred space is very important for her. It is a place for prayer, to talk to God, and for meditation. For her it may be a private place to enjoy a moment of confidence. Nevertheless, she lives religion in her family interacting with her children and relatives, and in her neighbourhood, where she organises an annual Novena for the Virgin of the Nativity. She has attenuated the borders between her home and her neighbourhood (Ammerman, 2014) by connecting her private faith, to that of her neighbours, all participating in the annual public procession she organises.

2.2. Lived religion in the church and in civil society

The next two stories are those of Isabel and Pancho, two professionals with different degrees of commitment to the Catholic Church. They tell us how they live religion in church, and in society in a middle-class social context, as well as family references.

Isabel is an adult woman, a geographer-engineer. According to her, she comes from a Catholic home where her dad and mom not necessarily went to church.

Well, we didn't go to church often, and the parish church was across the street.

However, her parents were the ones who opened the doors for Isabel and for one of her brothers so that they got in contact with a religious



pastoral group⁹ that involved them in a process of religious education, soon becoming members of the group, as catechists, and as pastoral agents, and her father acted as an example to her.

Continuing with the question on how she lived religion with her family, she refers to values:

The issue of honesty is an example from my family, and the issue of solidarity comes from my family, as well. Every year, in December, they would knock on the door and bring chickens, baby goats, and rabbits for him. And he would come home and ask, 'who brought all these?' and then he would take back every piece to the student who did that. And that has been very important to me. I remember it... I remember.

And she adds,

When we lived under the curfew¹⁰ when I was a child, in the 1990's, my parents used to take my grandparents to the bus station, and when they found people still there, they invited them to come home, because they couldn't stay there or in the street during the curfew. I remember that because I was very impressed by it. And now I argue with my mother for her frugality. We have lived, six persons, on the salary of a teacher, but now we are doing well; why is she so concerned with not spending money? Because: 'God wants those who receive more to share more'.

How does Isabel live religion in the church? By coming close to people and communicating with them. Since she and her group started working in a precarious chapel and aimed at having a church built, they had the opportunity to receive different priests who work with them. One of the priests was very enthusiastic and accepted her proposal to express more joy, to use more music and to perform the liturgy better. Isabel and some of her neighbours created a group called the 'Pilgrims of San Borja' and they organised activities for the neighbours: They created a choir under Isabel's direction, a 'pilgrim rosary', inviting the nearby residents to unite them in different buildings, and a

⁹ Pastoral work means a call to all Christians to announce Jesus Christ, to help Christian communities to grow in faith and actions, and to promote the values of the Gospel in everyday life.

¹⁰ Isabel refers to the early 1990's, when the Shining Path was active in the city of Lima and curfew was frequent at nighttime.



group called the 'pilgrim Virgin', that got involved in local problems of environmental pollution.

After a parish was established and the church institutionalised all services, Isabel and the pastoral group which had built a community together, started another pilgrimage around their neighbourhood looking for a parish that would accept them to live religion in the church. Isabel has been accepted at the choir of a nearby parish, and she lives religion there. And she proposes taking processions onto the street, to recite the rosary in the park, «because that attracts people and they will come».

Isabel is happy with Pope Francis, because he brings up issues that the church had not been willing to discuss before, like wealth and bogus poverty within the church. For her this is an important and sensitive topic after so many years celebrating Mass in a hut made of cane. It may be a problem for some traditionalists, but «we need a faith that doesn't close, but, rather opens up to others».

They need an outgoing church. Isabel considers herself a person that has faith in God.

He exists because He moves me to do things that make me happy and that may make others happy. I am a believer because I have had the opportunity to develop my spiritual life, and that concentrates on what the Lord is in my life: what God is in my life.

For Isabel, to live religion in society is to do her job. She is an environmental engineer, and her career is where she develops her individuality. Living religion in her job means to have God with her always, and to try to see how she develops as a human person in her professional career. For Isabel,

Being honest, minimising conflicts at work, faith doesn't mean standing on a chair and becoming a prophet. No. It means using humble language, [both] reflective and quick to respond even with statements that will be different from those of others.

At her job, she can deal with environmental problems, like overseeing industrial and domestic water.

What I don't like is that my spirituality at the end is often reduced to honesty, because I live under pressure. But I remember my family, where I learned honesty and solidarity.



Life trajectories relate religion to different challenges in personal stories. Coming from a Catholic family not related to parish life, Isabel had the opportunity to do so when they moved to a new housing development and started building a religious community.

For Isabel and her neighbours, it was also an invitation to live religion as individuals, creating, in the process, a community to live religion: to learn more about how God is present in their lives, explore other forms by which to express their faith, through music, theatre and cultural events and to relate faith to everyday social problems. This experience was possible while the local church depended on the neighbours' commitment to religious agency. The church contributed with them by sending pastoral agents – clergy and laypeople from other parishes – to organise the celebration of Mass, the preparation for other sacraments, and other initiatives related to lived religion in the neighbourhood. This situation changed once the parish became established. As Isabel narrates, her workplace has now become the centre where she can live her religion.

Pancho is the fourth of the participants that represent different approaches to lived religion. He is a middle-aged Catholic lawyer. He is associated with three different communities that influence his everyday life, and he makes them interact in a 'coherent' way. When he was a boy, he accompanied his mother to the church of Saint Francis in downtown Lima to visit St. Jude Thaddeus. His mother had promised the Saint that she would go once a year to take part in the saint's procession, and Pancho, as a child, joined her every year. When she emigrated to the United States, she left him the task of fulfilling her promise, and so he became a member of the Fraternity and goes at least once a month, on Thursdays, to greet St. Jude, and once a year to the procession.

Pancho acclaims having a very intimate relationship with St. Jude. He prays to him every day in what he calls The Trilogy: The Lord's Prayer, a Hail Mary, and a Glory before leaving home and every time he feels inspired to do so. He prays at home, first to God, and then to St. Jude, and he does the same when he visits the big church of St. Francis, where the statue of Jude is. He enters the church, kneels facing the altar where God is and prays and recites the Trinitarian formula three times, and then he turns to the right, where 'old Jude' is, and greets him



in the same way. He talks to Jude, asks him to prevent him from being anxious, he asks him to give him peace, and help him be calm. He asks him to guide him and illuminate him with ideas. And St. Jude helps him, a man who lives with great uncertainty, since he is a lawyer and his job depends on the cases he can solve and on the clients who bring their problems to him. He relates to Jude as he does with a friend.

Pancho, says that he goes to Mass every Sunday at churches near his home, but he is not involved in parish life because he is divorced, and prefers not to be censored or rejected by the parish priest or the community.

He also explains that he repeats the formula and the sign of the cross three times, because it is a symbolic number of Freemasonry.

How does he juggle his association with the freemasons, his Catholicism, and his devotion to St. Jude? He says that in Peru, Masonry is Roman Catholic.

For instance, Masonry was the first place where I practiced virtues. Why? Because when you go 'to work' – as we call it, for instance, when we talk about ethics or justice – we start talking about virtues. Then we talk about things that are not present in religion.

Nevertheless, he always associated them with religion. For Pancho, Catholicism and Freemasonry are complementary, and ethical issues and concerns are closer to his experience with Masonry than with the church.

It is in his friendship with St. Jude that he lives religion. His image is in his home, and he starts the day by praying to God and to Jude to obtain their help, good ideas, peace, work and he finishes the day by praying to thank first God and then St. Jude for what he got that day. He asks St. Jude:

Help me to be a better person and to live in this life the best I can get. And if he can help me to think, I ask him to illuminate me to solve my problems and other people's problems'.

This because he has to assist his family and friends in the Fraternity of St. Jude who are in need as well as his individual employers, since he is a lawyer.



His lived religion combines an active involvement in popular religiosity in the Fraternity of Saint Jude with a timid participation in parish rituals, and his personal free membership of the Masonry.

3. Conclusions

In a context of religious transformation, where religious diversity is already present, and there is a growing minority of Christian churches – with Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal movements – the perspective of lived religion displays a variety of situations where individuals are keeping traditions on one side, and on the other, innovating their religious practices that are not limited to the church space and performance.

Roberto lives religion in his neighbourhood, as a local leader with a public position in the municipal administration, where he tries to help his neighbours to have a better life. He lives religion in the Church with great autonomy participating in special religious activities, and having a friendly relationship with the parish priest since he is learning about his self-declared Catholic identity. At home, he lives faith as an interreligious experience with his family. He talks about God, and about Our Lord of Muruhuay with his wife who is an active Christian in an Evangelical church, and they respect each other's beliefs, share values and actions.

Ruby lives religion at home with her family and takes her religion to the neighbourhood. She has experienced a miracle. As Marzal says:

Most popular Catholics live in the wonderful world of the miracle. For the popular Catholic a miracle transcends the real chances of the devotee, very limited because they are not educated, experience health services that work in very bad conditions,. Structural poverty in Latin America doesn't permit them to respond to unforeseen circumstances (Marzal, 2002: 375).

From his mother Pancho inherited the mission of continuing her promise to Saint Jude, but now he has his own reasons for being a devotee. As well as that, he has reasons for being a member of the Great Masonic Lodge, because they work on virtues and ethics, and because 'in Peru Masonry is Roman Catholic'. Renée de la Torre (2012) in her article on Popular religion refers to «an 'in-between' institutional religion and individual spirituality



[that] helps to understand this modern mix of popular religion with other beliefs systems», not all of them religious.

Isabel, an engineer and geographer, is now professionally involved in environmental issues, where she is afraid to reduce her spirituality to the sole function of being honest, a value she acquired in her family. As a pastoral agent, she was committed to taking the church to the neighbourhood. Following her vocation, she lives religion in her personal and collective action in favour of her neighbours, the people who need a clean environment and by doing so she articulates values and spirituality.

Families constitute an important topos of mediation and a key source of identification with traditional Catholic beliefs, values, symbols, and images. Participants in the project refer to their family homes as important places where they learned about God, Christ, the Virgin and their family's Saints. They link the private with the public in many senses through their devotions, or living it in both ambits. They may add pictures of family members who have already passed away, and who they remember for their good works and now see as mediators. Families also constitute a factor of legitimation of traditional beliefs, which «justify certain ways of believing and acting and hence operate as a matrix for living in the present» (Sakaranaho, 2011: 145). Hence, in the context of family, traditional beliefs and rituals are constituted as references both to legitimate religious identity and to maintain the continuity of a religious community (Sakaranaho, 2011), which may start in the family, continue in the neighbourhood or workplace, and which may be associated with the local parish.

Within the family, and in the neighbourhood, in the workplace and even in the church environment, religious rituals are reconstructed and given new meaning, making it a place where secular and sacred experiences interact fluidly. It is important to notice that, in this context, «location, action, and time are important components in the construction of meaning and suggest the effects the sacred may have in the social worlds of ordinary people» (Williams, 2010: 772). Location allows believers to connect not only with God or the transcendence, but also with their personal and family stories. In this way, as Ammerman asserts, religious and spiritual understanding operates across the many domains of daily life experience, eliminating borders in some cases and building new ones in others.



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4. Individuos, instituciones y espacios de fe. El caso de los católicos en Uruguay

Valentina Pereira Arena*
Camila Brusoni*

Abstracts

The Authors discuss the relationship that Catholic believers maintain with the religious institution through their own notions of spaces where faith and transcendence are lived. For both Catholics who are far from the institution and those who still have a link with it, the spaces for living religion are manifold and varied.

Keywords: Catholics, institutions, space, practices, Uruguay.

Las Autoras analizan la relación que mantienen los creyentes católicos con la institución religiosa mediante sus propias nociones de los espacios en dónde la trascendencia es vivida. Tanto para el caso de los católicos alejados de la institución como para aquellos que aún mantienen un vínculo, los espacios de vivencia de lo religioso se presentan múltiples y variados.

Palabras clave: católicos, instituciones, espacios, prácticas, Uruguay

Le Autrici analizzano la relazione che i credenti cattolici mantengono con l'istituzione religiosa attraverso la nozione di spazio in cui vivono la trascendenza. Gli spazi di religiosità appaiono molteplici e variegati tanto per i cattolici lontani dall'istituzione quanto per quelli che mantengono ancora un legame.

Parole chiave: cattolici, istituzioni, spazi, pratiche, Uruguay

Introducción

La relación de los creyentes con las instituciones religiosas de las que forman parte ha variado significativamente en los últimos años. Según Davie y Hervieu-Léger (1996), estas variaciones han llevado en muchos casos al mantenimiento de las creencias pero prescindiendo de

* Universidad católica del Uruguay, Montevideo; e-mail: valentina.pear@gmail.com; camila.brusoni@gmail.com.



los ámbitos institucionales a los cuales el sujeto adscribe dichas creencias.

Este ensayo ha explorado la relación que los individuos mantienen con su fe, sus nociones de trascendencia y sus prácticas cotidianas en el marco de la religiosidad vivida. En este contexto, el análisis se ha concentrado en observar, a partir de las historias personales, cómo los sujetos interactúan con las instituciones a las cuales adscriben, tomando una posición de acercamiento o distanciamiento respecto a éstas.

En lo específico, este estudio se focalizará en los espacios de la vida cotidiana en donde las personas experimentan un sentido de trascendencia; es decir en el espacio doméstico, en el trabajo, en la calle, en su visión/relación con la naturaleza e incluso en un “no-espacio” que llamaremos “desterritorializado”.

En lo que respecta la decisión de este enfoque, es necesario hacer algunas aclaraciones previas.

En primer lugar, el hecho de desplazar la atención del ámbito institucional de las prácticas religiosas no implica sugerir que los sujetos se hayan distanciado totalmente de las instituciones o las prácticas comunitarias asociadas a ellas. El propósito es más bien, intentar poner luz sobre otro tipo de espacios de vivencia de lo trascendente según la perspectiva y experiencia de los sujetos mismos.

En segundo lugar, se releva que las narraciones sobre estos espacios no siempre son historias espirituales desde el principio al fin. En efecto, lo mundano y lo inmanente aparecen tanto – o aun más – en las historias que hablan específicamente de experiencias con lo trascendente. La selección de estos últimos casos tiene el objetivo de relevar otras formas de vivir lo religioso más allá de lo evidente.

En tercer lugar, en este trabajo se ha dejado fuera del análisis algunos espacios considerados también fundamentales donde vivir lo religioso para muchos de los entrevistados, como ser el espacio cibernético o de las nuevas tecnologías. No forman parte de la presente reflexión ya que las lógicas que operan en estos espacios son bien diferentes al resto. Esta temática podrá ser desarrollada en un futuro próximo.

Por último, también cabe aclarar que muchas prácticas realizadas en ámbitos públicos (en la calle o el trabajo), como por ejemplo dialogar con Dios o ver su mano en todas las cosas, son realizadas íntimamente, lo que implica que no son siempre evidentes para el resto de las



personas con las que se comparte ese espacio. Otras prácticas, como el persignarse al pasar por un templo o leer la Biblia en el transporte público son interpretadas al mismo tiempo privadas y públicas.

A este fin, se discutirá el estado del arte y algunas nociones referidas a lo religioso y al espacio de lo religioso; se introducirá el enfoque teórico-metodológico; se presentará el panorama religioso en Uruguay y por último, se analizarán algunos de los modos con que los católicos en Montevideo experimentan lo trascendente en la propia vida cotidiana. En este punto, tomaremos como principales puntos de comparación los trabajos de Nancy Ammerman (2014) y Roman Williams (2010), quienes han trabajado los espacios utilizando el mismo enfoque teórico-metodológico.

1. Sobre los individuos, las instituciones y los espacios de fe

El vínculo existente entre las instituciones y los fieles ha cambiado conforme ha avanzado la modernidad. José María Mardones (1996) plantea que son cuatro las tendencias de transformación del mapa religioso:

a) están relacionadas con una cierta des-institucionalización y flexibilidad en el dogma, si bien la creencia y la práctica siguen vigentes, más a un nivel interno y entremezclado con valores democráticos y de aceptación de otras creencias;

b) se produce una reacción dogmatizadora ante este fenómeno;

c) un misticismo difuso más conocido como Nueva era;

d) una especie de reencantamiento o religiosidad secular. En este sentido, Mallimaci y Giménez Béliveau (2007) también plantean la configuración de una religiosidad difusa, poco obediente de las directivas institucionales. En cuanto al mundo católico sus símbolos son reutilizados por diferentes actores sociales.

En la era moderna y post-moderna, estos procesos de des-institucionalización estarían en parte ligados a la complejidad de la identidad. Si bien ésta ha sido siempre un asunto complejo, hoy se encuentra frente a una variedad de opciones de roles y comunidades que el individuo contemporáneo puede asumir (Ammerman, 2003). Esta desinstitucionalización ha llevado a pensar que lo religioso se ha recludo especialmente a la esfera de lo privado, pero esta es una



noción que la actual sociología de la religión comienza a superar. Como señala Ammerman (2014), a partir del enfoque de la religiosidad vivida se puede observar que los límites institucionales son porosos, las personas llevan sus expectativas y marcos interpretativos de la realidad de una esfera de la vida a la otra, haciendo que la noción de la separación de lo público y lo privado se vea desafiada, y en este sentido, la acción no puede ser interpretada únicamente mediante lógicas institucionales ya que las prácticas y los momentos de trascendencia pueden suceder muchas veces en varios lugares y en diferentes momentos. Pensar entonces las prácticas religiosas limitadas únicamente a espacios de lo «propriadamente religioso» (McGuire, 2007) – como por ejemplo las iglesias, templos o sinagogas – limita el análisis porque no permite comprender la variedad de prácticas espirituales y religiosas que los individuos realizan en su totalidad.

En efecto, observar las prácticas permite relevar los medios por los cuales las nociones espirituales tienen un vínculo con la vida cotidiana para las personas en términos pragmáticos, por ejemplo el impacto que estas tienen sobre la salud, la fertilidad, la protección y en la obtención de bienes materiales (McGuire, 2007).

Esta perspectiva implica tomar distancia de las miradas dominantes de Europa y el continente americano que se han centrado en lo religioso privilegiando la creencia sobre la práctica, y significa incluso desplazarse de las miradas que han denigrado ciertas prácticas religiosas por fuera de las enseñanzas institucionales marcándolas de impuras, supersticiosas o marginales (McGuire, 2007).

A partir de los datos recogidos en nuestro trabajo de campo, se ha puesto la atención en los espacios donde lo religioso y lo espiritual pueden emerger – o no – es decir, en los lugares que son propios para la vivencia de lo sagrado y aquellos que no lo son. En términos de Williams (2010), la modernidad se había propuesto estructurar la religión fuera del sistema social, e incluso Durkheim (1912) describió lo sagrado como una fuerza que anima la vida en ciertos tiempos y en lugares específicos, distinguiendo así lo sagrado de lo ordinario, de lo profano, de la vida cotidiana. Sin embargo en la actualidad se observa que las personas continúan haciendo espacio para lo religioso en su vida diaria y esto sucede según Williams (Ídem) porque los entendimientos y las creencias de las personas viajan con ellas a donde



quiera que vayan, y son estos entendimientos los que pueden encantar los lugares.

2. Enfoque teórico-metodológico

Como se ha mencionado anteriormente, este ensayo parte del enfoque de la religiosidad vivida, propuesto por Robert Orsi (2002) y David Hall (1997) y utiliza los aportes de Nancy Ammerman en los estudios sobre la *Lived religion* según la cual ha habido dos tradiciones teóricas dominantes en términos de pensar la religión: una que enfatizaba la imposibilidad de sobrevivencia de la religión frente a las ideas modernas, y otra que planteaba la religión como un esfuerzo humano universal por negociar bienes no disponibles en este mundo (Ammerman 2014). Sin embargo, ninguna de estas teorías fueron suficientes para entender qué estaba sucediendo en el campo religioso: la primera de ellas, cayó ante la continua prevalencia de movimientos religiosos vigorosos, y la segunda, simplemente porque ofrecía una visión estrecha que sólo permitía unir ítems dentro de una encuesta (Ídem). Colocarse en la perspectiva de la religiosidad vivida es devolverle el protagonismo a los sujetos religiosos, es recuperar sus voces y sus historias mediante el análisis de las narrativas espirituales que los individuos construyen en los distintos ámbitos de la vida cotidiana. Implica no centrarse en cuántas veces los sujetos asisten a los servicios religiosos pero sí focalizarse en las prácticas y conexiones que suceden en la vida diaria, en la mirada y la ética trascendente de los individuos en las cuestiones aparentemente más ordinarias de la vida.

En este sentido, la propuesta metodológica de Ammerman (2014) tiene que ver con individuar las narrativas espirituales en las historias que las personas describen sobre sus vidas cotidianas. Desde esta lógica, se realizaron entrevistas a creyentes católicos, evangélicos, adherentes a cultos afro; también a personas que se declaran creyentes pero “sin iglesia” y ateos. El trabajo que aquí se presenta está centrado en los católicos.

En Montevideo durante los años 2015 y 2016 se recolectaron 32 historias de vida realizadas a personas que se consideraron católicas, de 18 a 76 años, de ambos géneros, que residen en zonas urbanas. El nivel socio económico de los entrevistados para este trabajo fue separado en



dos categorías: nivel medio-alto y bajo. A continuación la Tabla 1 muestra los entrevistados católicos según género y nivel socio-económico.

Tabla 1 - Católicos entrevistados según nivel socio económico y género

| | <i>Mujeres</i> | <i>Varones</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Nivel medio-alto</i> | 10 | 4 | 14 |
| <i>Nivel bajo</i> | 8 | 10 | 18 |
| Total | 18 | 14 | 32 |

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Con cada uno de los entrevistados se realizaron dos encuentros en donde se les preguntó acerca de su historia y de cómo lo religioso o espiritual ha estado presente o no. Se les preguntó además acerca de sus rutinas cotidianas en su hogar, su trabajo, en su tiempo libre; en la relación con su familia y los amigos.

Respecto a la noción de espacio que estamos utilizando para este texto, nos interesa destacar el concepto de «espacio vivido» de Lefebvre (1976), ya que nos abre la posibilidad a pensarlo también como un espacio “apropiado”, siendo el espacio vivido aquel plagado de símbolos que están ligados a una dimensión subterránea de la vida social, sugiriendo reestructuraciones alternativas de las representaciones institucionalizadas del espacio (Shields, 1988). A la luz de las historias de vida recogidas, se releva que al “encantar” los diferentes lugares y desafiando las nociones tradicionales e institucionalizadas, el espacio en el que los sujetos desarrollan estas prácticas trascendentes y subterráneas se está configurando en términos de espacio vivido.

Asimismo, Williams (2010) ha utilizado recientemente el concepto de espacios para Dios como un intento deliberado de moldear y estructurar la conversación sobre la incidencia de lo sagrado en la vida cotidiana. Para el Autor, los espacios para Dios constituyen la abreviatura de lugares, ocasiones y acciones a los que las personas atribuyen significados espirituales o religiosos (Williams, 2010: 264). Para este trabajo, hemos decidido ampliar este concepto y hablar en su lugar de espacios de fe, con la intención de dar lugar a historias que involucran otros seres considerados como trascendentes por los sujetos,



como vírgenes, santos y ángeles. Lo que nos interesa retomar entonces es esta idea de que el espacio vivido puede ser dotado de significados que van más allá de lo mundano, transformándose así en lugares donde vivir la fe.

Pensar en los espacios resulta fundamental a la hora de pensar en las conexiones que hacen las personas con lo trascendente. Como señala Ammerman (2014), la mayoría de las historias sobre prácticas espirituales son enmarcadas principalmente en términos de una relación privada entre una persona y una deidad en tanto que una conversación se lleva a cabo en la mente y el espíritu de la persona. Pero incluso estas conversaciones tienen dimensiones materiales y son llevadas a cabo en lugares físicos (Ammerman 2014: 82); y la elección de estos lugares físicos no es un elemento casual. Comprender el por qué de los lugares nos lleva a una mejor comprensión de la experiencia de lo religioso.

3. Panorama religioso en Uruguay

Considerando el contexto cultural e histórico, cabe destacar que desde el tiempo de la conquista española, el territorio uruguayo – originalmente llamado Banda Oriental – no ofreció a los conquistadores, los mismos atractivos de otros territorios del continente. Por esta razón la Iglesia, que se instaló tardíamente, no tuvo las mismas características que el resto de las sedes coloniales como Lima y Cartagena, careciendo al mismo tiempo de patronato virreinal y obispos españoles. Este diferencial y tardío interés en la población de la Banda Oriental no fue una cuestión menor, ya que marcó desde un comienzo un tinte distinto de presencia católica respecto al resto de América Latina. Ésta, según Rodé (2007) tiene un tono más individualista, una concepción moralista y un acento mayor en el ideal de mantener al menos un mínimo de vida religiosa. Como parte del mismo proceso y del poco peso que tuvo la Iglesia católica desde sus inicios, Uruguay atravesó un temprano proceso de laicización, desarrollado desde la segunda mitad del siglo XIX y que contó, en 1919, con un mojón central como fue la estricta separación entre Iglesia y Estado, desplazando de esta manera lo religioso de la esfera pública a la privada.



En cuanto a los espacios, Caetano (2006) sostiene que entre las últimas décadas del siglo XIX y las primeras del siglo XX, las esferas privada y pública llevaron a la creación de un modelo de ciudadanía específico, especialmente porque el llamado espacio público tendió a configurarse en relación casi monopólica y estrecha con el Estado; relación que cumplió la doble función de generar una construcción política del orden social y ser, a la vez, un símbolo para la identificación de la «unidad social». Dicho modelo de ciudadanía se caracterizaba tanto por el abandono de las identidades previas – ya sean estas religiosas, étnicas, culturales – como base para la integración social y política; como por la adhesión general a una determinada forma de concebir la política en la que las identidades particulares se subliman en un “nosotros” neutralizado y legalizado, en busca de una integración social uniforme. De acuerdo a Caetano, es dentro de ese discurso que la laicidad se convierte en sinónimo de neutralidad y es llevada al punto de un silencio público en relación a la fe religiosa de cada individuo.

Asimismo, en los últimos 30 años el campo religioso se ha ido pluralizando y según Da Costa (2003) esto puede irse vislumbrando también con la aparición e implantación de cultos afrobrasileños y cultos pentecostales y neo-pentecostales. Esta pérdida progresiva del prejuicio anti-religioso va admitiendo entonces una mayor presencia de lo religioso en lo público, y resulta visible también en la Iglesia católica. Un ejemplo emblemático es la visibilidad del arzobispo de Montevideo monseñor Daniel Sturla, el cual contaba ya con un particular estilo y que desde su asunción se presenta públicamente enviando mensajes constantes al conjunto de la sociedad a través de su aparición en los medios de comunicación.

En la actualidad y en particular en el marco de América Latina, el panorama religioso en Uruguay difiere significativamente del resto de los Países de la región.



Tabla 2 - Porcentaje (%) de católicos por País en América Latina

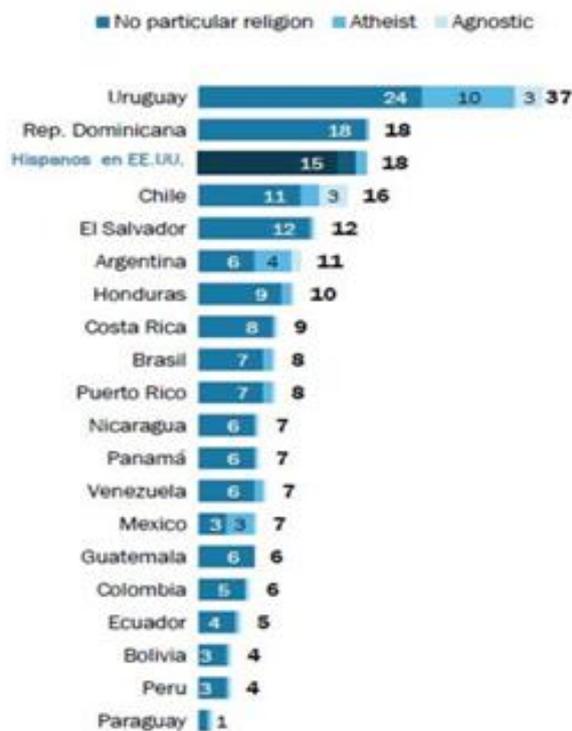
| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Paraguay | 89% |
| México | 81% |
| Colombia | 79% |
| Ecuador | 79% |
| Bolivia | 77% |
| Perú | 76% |
| Venezuela | 73% |
| Argentina | 71% |
| Panamá | 70% |
| Chile | 64% |
| Costa Rica | 62% |
| Brasil | 61% |
| República Dominicana | 57% |
| Puerto Rico | 56% |
| Hispanos en Estados Unidos | 55% |
| Nicaragua | 50% |
| El Salvador | 50% |
| Guatemala | 50% |
| Honduras | 46% |
| Uruguay | 42% |

Fuente: Elaboración de las Autoras en base a los datos de Pew Research Center (2014).

Según los últimos datos disponibles (ver Tabla 2) sobre afiliación religiosa (Pew, 2014), Uruguay es el País con menor porcentaje de creyentes católicos de todo el subcontinente, siendo sólo un 42% de la población uruguaya la que se identifica como católica.



Gráfico 1 - Porcentaje (%) de no afiliados por País en América Latina



Fuente: Elaboración de las Autoras en base a los datos de Pew Research Center (2014).

Esta cifra ha variado significativamente en los últimos tiempos, ya que según el informe del Latinobarómetro (2013) Uruguay pasó de ser un País mayoritariamente católico en 1996 (con un 60%) a un País que vio la disminución de su población católica, descendiendo casi 20 puntos porcentuales en menos de dos décadas. Asimismo, un 24% de la población en Uruguay se define como creyentes pero no afiliados, el 10% como ateos y un 3% como agnósticos. La suma de estas tres categorías (37%) otorga una peculiaridad a Uruguay porque en el resto de los Países de América Latina los creyentes sin iglesia encuestados por la Pew Foundation (2014) no llegan en ningún País siquiera cerca del 20% de la población (ver Gráfico 1).



En cuanto a las prácticas, el informe del Latinobarómetro (2013) muestra que, entre los años 1995 y 2013, Uruguay cuenta con un porcentaje de 33% de población que se considera a sí misma muy practicante, ubicándose así entre los Países con menor porcentaje de práctica y en segundo lugar después de Chile. También es uno de los Países que presenta una menor confianza en la Iglesia, siendo el segundo País latinoamericano que menos confía en esta institución, con un 48%.

Como se podrá observar a continuación, en la vida cotidiana de los sujetos, lo público y lo privado se encuentra en disputa; los límites son porosos, y los espacios de la fe y la vivencia de lo trascendente son variados, y muchas veces, al mismo tiempo privados y públicos.

4. La religiosidad vivida de los católicos en Uruguay

Hablar de catolicismos o de católicos es hablar de diversidad y pluralidad, no sólo en un plano institucional sino también en el plano de la identidad grupal e individual de los sujetos. En las historias de vida recolectadas se ha podido relevar dicha pluralidad, siendo el grupo de los católicos uno de los más diversos. Se observa además una gran variedad en las nociones de la vida, la fe, las prácticas y la identidad, aunque también, se encuentran algunos puntos en común.

La declaración de autonomía relacionada a sus prácticas, aún en las que se podrían considerar más institucionalizadas y realizadas en una base regular, fue un punto visible en las historias de los católicos a través de los distintos géneros, edades y niveles socio-económicos considerados en este estudio. Éstas pueden verse en los discursos de una búsqueda de alejamiento a lo impuesto y a lo rutinario, cuando la práctica – afirman los entrevistados – es realizada por voluntad y deseo propio, y no porque es percibido como un deber impuesto. Ha sido a través de la búsqueda de una mayor autonomía que algunos católicos declaran haberse alejado de la institución religiosa, aunque esto no implique un alejamiento de su identidad católica.

La vivencia íntima y personal fue otro elemento que apareció recurrentemente en las narrativas de los entrevistados. Al contrario de lo que sucedía con los relatos enmarcados en el espacio del templo o contenidos dentro de ámbitos institucionales – en donde la idea y



valoración de la comunidad aparecía fuertemente – se observa en diversas oportunidades una búsqueda por parte de los sujetos de un espacio íntimo con el fin de tener un momento religioso para sí mismos. Estos espacios que exploraremos a continuación pueden ser pensados también como espacios de autonomía para los sujetos, donde las prácticas se desarrollan de manera más espontánea, entremezclada con la vida misma y en la mayoría de los casos, por propia iniciativa de los sujetos.

4.1. El espacio doméstico

Pensar la religiosidad en el día a día es pensarla, en gran medida, relacionada con lo que sucede en el espacio doméstico. Según Ammerman (2014), si queremos entender el grado en que lo religioso tiene lugar en lo cotidiano, el hogar es el punto de partida para hacerlo. El espacio doméstico como espacio para el desarrollo de lo trascendente, aparece en la mayoría de los entrevistados, a pesar de ser llevado a cabo de diferente forma según cada caso.

Uno de los criterios con los que se puede distinguir la experiencia de lo trascendente en el hogar es observar si se lleva a cabo en modo individual o junto con otras personas, como por ejemplo con la propia familia. En efecto, hay quienes se plantean el hogar – y por ende la propia familia – como sinónimo de espacio de desarrollo de la fe. Aquí nos encontramos con historias sobre agradecer los alimentos alrededor de la mesa, tener momentos de oración entre padres e hijos, o simplemente, encontrar en la familia un motivo por el cual tener fe y agradecer a Dios.

Por otro lado, están quienes observan el hogar como uno de los espacios en donde llevan a cabo prácticas personales individuales de comunicación con Dios. De hecho, en varias entrevistas es considerado un valor el poder tener un espacio personal de transcendencia alejado de los demás. Varios entrevistados rezan antes de acostarse o al levantarse. Es en la intimidad de su hogar que encuentran el lugar para detenerse y reflexionar, estar en comunión con Dios sobre los aspectos vinculados a la propia vida.

Existe, al mismo tiempo, otra dimensión de este análisis; se trata de un segundo nivel de espacios dentro del hogar en el que se llevan a cabo las prácticas religiosas: la mesa del almuerzo, el dormitorio e incluso el baño



o la cocina son lugares que se mencionan como espacio de la experiencia con lo trascendente. Como plantea Fernández Christlieb (2004) dentro del hogar también hay zonas públicas y privadas, zonas que están abiertas al paso de los otros, como las salas de estar o los comedores, y otras más privadas como los dormitorios.

Sobre la división de los espacios dentro del propio espacio doméstico se han podido individuar variaciones en el tipo de actividades que se realizan en unos y otros lugares. Cuando se menciona el momento de la mesa, por ejemplo, las personas se refieren a situaciones de tipo colectivas, como es bendecir los alimentos antes de las comidas. Por otro lado, el dormitorio es mencionado como un espacio personal en el que se llevan a cabo momentos de comunicación con Dios a través de oraciones e incluso conversaciones más “desestructuradas”. Resulta interesante observar, además, algunos casos en donde el baño es considerado como lugar en el que, en determinadas ocasiones, se encuentra una conexión con Dios por ser un espacio donde uno puede detenerse del frenesí cotidiano y reflexionar, siendo el baño un lugar solitario al que nadie nos puede seguir. Este lugar en particular se presenta como uno de los varios espacios individuales tanto en el hogar como en el trabajo que sirven para “desconectarse” de la rutina y “conectarse” consigo mismo.

La vida doméstica además, tiene que ver con rutinas, no sólo con espacios sino también con momentos. La noche es un momento de la jornada en que entrevistados declaran disponer de tiempo para el encuentro con los demás o momentos de soledad y quietud para sí mismos. Las prácticas como orar y pedir suelen darse en este momento del día. Las mañanas y los mediodías, por otro lado, son momentos mayormente vinculados a prácticas de agradecimiento: cada mañana por un nuevo día o por los alimentos cotidianos recibidos.

Además de las rutinas, los espacios y los momentos, la vida doméstica también está relacionada con las personas con las que se convive. Ammerman (2014) también encontró que el elemento relacional era fundamental para comprender la vivencia de lo religioso en el ámbito doméstico, porque afecta desde la elección de la pareja – algunos entrevistados manifestaron que la religión de su pareja fue un determinante para la elección – hasta la crianza de los hijos y la transmisión de los valores y las prácticas religiosas. En el caso de nuestros entrevistados católicos, el elemento que mas apareció relacionado a la familia fue el



sentir la presencia de Dios por la sola existencia de los seres queridos, ver como Dios se manifestaba en ellos.

Parte de la materialidad del espacio doméstico está relacionada también con los objetos. Se ha podido observar en las distintas historias, que hay objetos sagrados que salen de la casa, como las estampitas de Santos o Vírgenes llevadas, por ejemplo, en las billeteras. Otros objetos, sin embargo, no pueden salir del hogar por el valor que poseen para la persona; éstos cumplen diversas funciones, la más destacada es la de la protección. Por ejemplo para Germán, un joven de nivel socioeconómico bajo que vive con su esposa, los objetos forman parte de la materialidad de su fe, algunos de ellos “salen” y otros “se quedan” en casa, como la estampita que conserva en su mesa de luz.

Soy devoto de San Cristóbal y San Expedito. Y a San Expedito lo tengo en la mesa de luz, como para cuidar la casa cuando no estoy ¿viste? Como algo protector (Germán, católico, nivel socio-económico bajo).

Además de la protección, los objetos también evocan la memoria, los recuerdos, su origen y su historia, y brindan muchas veces sensaciones que ayudan a las personas a relacionarse con Dios.

Como se afirmaba anteriormente, las historias que las personas cuentan sobre sus hogares son muchas veces “mundanas”. Pero al mismo tiempo estas actividades cotidianas aparecen en algunas oportunidades dotadas de sentido trascendente. Existen además otras historias dotadas de intencionalidad, porque en definitiva, aquellas personas que buscan seguir una vida espiritual también lo hacen en el espacio de su hogar.

4.2. El espacio del trabajo

Entre la noción del trabajo considerado como un mecanismo que lleva el sujeto a la alienación, según Marx (1867), y entre la concepción del “llamado” divino que los protestantes encontraban para realizar su trabajo, según Weber (1905), Ammerman (2014) plantea en un punto intermedio en lo que sucede en el mundo del trabajo en tanto espacio que por un lado podría pensarse como uno de los más secularizados pero que también puede ser un lugar en donde la fe de los creyentes cobra sentido e influencia la acción.



En efecto, en las entrevistas surgen dos grandes aspectos de lo religioso en el espacio laboral. Por un lado, se pueden individuar quienes declaran una fe presente en todo momento y que es interpretada como marco de creencias en las que se basa la persona para desarrollar su trabajo y actuar socialmente. Esta dimensión no siempre es exteriorizada por el sujeto, si no que es vivida en un plano interno, y llevada a cabo en el ámbito del trabajo y en la relación con los demás: sus jefes, con quiénes trabaja o con sus clientes. En este sentido, el actor social lleva a su trabajo lo que Ammerman (2014) denomina la «*Golden Rule*»; es decir, el ser católicos se traduce en gran medida en la manera en que se relaciona con los demás. Este tipo de historias son las que aparecen mayormente cuando se describe el ámbito del trabajo, incluso para algunos de los entrevistados la relación entre su fe y su trabajo en estos términos es fundamental.

Para Susana, una católica de clase media que trabaja en un hospital, el trabajo y el aspecto religioso de su vida se encuentran íntimamente ligados:

Yo tengo un trabajo que es una elección personal, que es trabajar en la salud y trabajar en la salud pública y brindar el mejor servicio que puedo, y trabajo por opción propia... podría estar trabajando en una mutualista de alto nivel adquisitivo, que era donde trabajaba antes de quedarme solo con el hospital X y decidí quedarme con el hospital X [...] porque donde, donde uno puede prestar los mejores servicios es donde están los desposeídos, y si a una la catalogan como 'ah pero vos sos muy buena' bueno entonces mejor, dos veces tengo que ir a donde están los más desposeídos, hay que ir a donde están los desposeídos. Mi ritual es, llevar a cabo mi trabajo, ¿ves? Yo junto mucho lo religioso con mi trabajo, o sea porque yo no sería una buena católica si yo fuera mala persona en mi trabajo (Susana, católica, nivel socio-económico medio).

No sólo su trabajo es una manera de ser buena católica, también considera que la vocación de servicio que tiene en su trabajo está vinculada a su sentir religioso. El trabajar en el ámbito de la salud también tiene una connotación particular, porque el encuentro con las personas enfermas también son vistas desde la fe.

Lo religioso también puede estar presente como apoyo a la hora de tomar decisiones, como lo es para Mario, un católico de nivel socioeconómico bajo que siente que sus creencias le acompañan siempre, de consecuencia trata de aplicarlas también en su trabajo:



Ya en mi forma de pensar las cosas las veo de una forma religiosa, de una forma que a la hora de valorizar una parte de las tareas que hago en el trabajo y del trato con las personas, con los compañeros, siempre trato en la vida de compartir el mensaje de Dios, no directamente pero tenerlo siempre presente y adoptarlo como una forma de vida mía (Mario, católico, nivel socio-económico bajo).

Estas vivencias de la fe no son necesariamente explicitadas o reflexionadas con los demás, sino que son la base de las acciones que se desarrollan en espacios tan seculares como el trabajo, y son fundamento de las convicciones que los católicos en este caso describen como religiosas. Estas formas de actuar relacionadas para los individuos con sus convicciones religiosas son privadas a la vez que públicas en el sentido que lo plantea Williams (2010), en tanto que la práctica sagrada que han elegido puede considerarse "privada", pero el objeto de su práctica – como hacen su trabajo – es muy pública.

Por otro lado, el trabajo también es considerado como un espacio de diálogo o debate sobre lo religioso. Estos diálogos muchas veces aparecen como cuestionamientos por parte de compañeros de trabajo que no comparten las mismas creencias. En otras ocasiones, los entrevistados han hecho referencia al sarcasmo y/o humorismo con que los otros toman su fe. Las reacciones pueden ir desde el acompañar el sentido del humor o sentir molestia.

En síntesis, se puede relevar ya sea desde lo vocacional, el apoyo en la fe o el diálogo sobre las creencias religiosas propias, que lo trascendente está presente también en el mundo del trabajo. Las narrativas espirituales que han aparecido en este espacio se relevan en las diversas clases sociales y en los trabajos más variados, desde empleados en el servicio hasta personas que se desempeñan en el Estado. Cabe destacar que estas historias han sido, en general, vividas internamente, historias que se han hecho públicas en ocasiones en que el entorno fue sentido como un espacio seguro y ameno.

4.3. El espacio urbano

El espacio de la calle, de lo transitado, del transporte público e incluso los momentos que conectan un punto de partida con un punto de llegada, también son lugares en donde las narrativas religiosas hacen su aparición. Estos momentos intermedios o de tránsito resultan en gran



medida momentos pasibles de ser vividos como una oportunidad de comunicación con lo trascendente porque en la vida moderna, el tiempo es escaso. Encontramos en estos relatos, al igual que Williams (2010: 275), que el factor del tiempo resulta fundamental y que incorporar a Dios en la vida cotidiana se convierte en un acto que requiere disciplina y creatividad. Es el caso Lucía, una mujer católica de nivel socioeconómico medio-alto, que reza todos los días regularmente y la mayor parte de las veces encuentra en el transporte público el momento oportuno para hacerlo. También lo es para Enrique, un hombre adulto de nivel socioeconómico bajo que de camino al trabajo se toma «dos o tres minutos» en los que hace «cuatro o cinco oraciones», porque de no ser así, no tendría otro momento para hacerlo.

Mediante esta disciplina y creatividad, están entonces quienes viven diariamente, en el transporte o en la calle, algún tipo de experiencia relacionada con lo religioso, con Dios. Esto puede ser provocado también por el hecho de pasar frente a una Iglesia y persignarse o simplemente ir en el transporte público o en la calle orando, la mayoría de las veces, para sí mismos.

Además de la oración estructurada y de utilizar de manera planeada el tiempo para conectarse con Dios, están también quienes acuden a esta comunicación constante con Dios en todo momento, manteniendo un diálogo de tipo personal:

Muchas veces voy por la calle rezando, no el Padrenuestro o el Avemaría, sino que voy pidiéndole a Dios protección y hablando. Ya te dije que trato de hablar más que de usar las oraciones convencionales, pero eso no solamente lo hago en mi casa al levantarme y acostarme sino en diferentes momentos. Estoy haciendo las cosas y me surge rezar, o voy por la calle o en el ómnibus y me surge también (Carla, católica, nivel socio-económico medio)

Muchos de estos momentos entonces no son predefinidos, no aparecen como algo programado si no que para algunos es algo que emergen espontáneamente. La religiosidad aparece en estos casos como difusa entre el espacio público y lo privado y es vivida como un espacio de desarrollo de la espiritualidad personal.



4.4. El espacio de la naturaleza

El espacio de la naturaleza hace referencia a lugares variados. Según la concepción de cada sujeto, suele estar ligado a lógicas distintas a otros espacios, especialmente porque la naturaleza se constituye a sí misma para muchos de los entrevistados como un lugar de contemplación, e incluso como un lugar sagrado en sí mismo por ser la creación de Dios. Williams (2010) también lo encontró en su estudio, en tanto que la belleza del mundo natural sea vista como un don divino, experimentar la belleza natural es experimentar a Dios, y por tanto, experimentar esta belleza y cambio de ritmo permite una narración de que Dios está en control, trabajando detrás de las escenas

La naturaleza también ayuda a desconectarse de la rutina práctica que el entorno urbano muchas veces les dificulta. También lo encontró Ammerman (2003) en su trabajo, en tanto la naturaleza como objeto de belleza para las personas resultaba algo espiritual cuando les evocaba admiración, cuando le pedía a la persona que parara, que saliera del curso ordinario de la vida por un momento. El silencio en este sentido también aparece como un elemento fundamental para relacionarse con lo sagrado. Por ejemplo, para Camilo, caminar por la playa resulta algo que facilita su relación con Dios:

Yo que soy religioso, por ejemplo el silencio como que me ayuda a conectarme con Dios, la naturaleza, el entorno, como decías tú, es como que facilita todo eso, para mí (Camilo, católico, nivel socio-económico medio).

Esta necesidad o búsqueda de estar solos como requisito para fomentar la propia religiosidad suele ser mencionado frecuentemente respecto a los espacios naturales.

Las historias sobre estar y contemplar la naturaleza, además, suelen estar cargadas de emociones, de experiencias sensoriales y de colores. El amanecer, el silencio y la belleza ayudan a sentirse cercano a Dios.

Dios, para mí, lo encontrás en las otras personas, en lo que tenés enfrente. Dios está ahí. Y a mí me gusta mucho, yo que sé, de repente sentir [...] antes me levantaba más temprano sólo para mirar el amanecer. Y esos espacios así parecía que estaba más cerca de Dios. Pero como que esos momentos de silencio como que te hacen más cerca, silencio y belleza, ¿no? Es lindo también. O el atardecer en el mar, me encanta. La hora, los colores, el silencio



[...] Creo que eso te da cierta motivación para pensar en Él. O sentirte más espiritual (Creo que va por ahí. Enrique, católico, nivel socioeconómico bajo).

La naturaleza brinda así otro mundo de sentidos y de experiencias. La reflexión y la tranquilidad suelen ser consideradas en los relatos, también como un canal de conexión con algo más allá.

4.5. *El espacio desterritorializado*

Al hablar de espacio desterritorializado, tomamos del antropólogo Marc Augé (1992) la noción de «no lugar». El Autor plantea que los lugares están cargados de identidades propias de referencias históricas y relacionales en las comunidades, mientras que los no lugares son espacios, generados en las sociedades contemporáneas, ausentes de esos componentes históricos y relacionales (Augé, 1992: 44). Ejemplos concretos pueden ser espacios de tránsito de muchas personas propios de las grandes ciudades contemporáneas: aeropuertos, rutas, centros comerciales, etc. Asimismo el Autor recalca que la distinción entre lugar y no lugar la mayoría de las veces no es tan sólida, existen límites porosos entre ambos espacios (Augé, 1992: 45, 46).

En varias ocasiones, las personas entrevistadas para este trabajo relatan que no necesitan de espacios específicos, de lugares en términos de Augé, para llevar a cabo sus prácticas trascendentes, sino que encuentran el momento de conexión con la divinidad en cualquier espacio, que normalmente refiere a estos lugares de tránsito. Asimismo, las prácticas llevadas a cabo «en cualquier lugar» y «en cualquier momento» tienen en general una suerte de surgimiento espontáneo, es decir, en un momento no planeado o de inspiración. Una joven católica de nivel socioeconómico medio nos contaba en este sentido:

Me comunico con Dios varias veces a la semana [...] Pero en ningún lugar en particular... En esto de entender y de ver atractivo el crecer en una espiritualidad [...] me pasa que de repente estoy en la calle, pensando cosas, viendo cosas y tengo sentimientos como de lucidez [...] y ahí siento a Dios [...] No hay como un lugar concreto [...] No, como que yo sienta que voy y me comunico con Dios solo ahí, no. (Juana, católica, nivel socioeconómico medio).



Esa idea de que «el cual el lugar no importa» los entrevistados la asocian con la creencia de que Dios está en todos lados, lo cual nos lleva a que los lugares históricamente significados para llevar a cabo prácticas trascendentes pierden su hegemonía. Pasan a ser estos no lugares los nuevos espacios en la que la conexión con lo trascendental surge espontáneamente, de forma individual, y no está dada previamente por ese espacio.

Para otros católicos que se encuentran alejados de la institución, y de los lugares asociados a esta, el resto de los espacios también aparecen también como no lugares en donde pueden vivir su relación con Dios. Es el caso Camilo, un joven que hace unos años se alejó de su parroquia local por diferencias con la comunidad de jóvenes, al hablar cómo y cuándo se relaciona con Dios, comenta:

En esos momentos que yo por ejemplo me siento en armonía, con el día, no importa que sea en un lugar, una playa, un bosque, mi casa, lo que sea, yo a veces siento como esa armonía con el día, con lo que me rodea, entonces, ahí si siento como una conexión, ahí si siento como que está presente, entonces no tengo como la necesidad de tener que ir a una iglesia, y ponerme a rezar y decir creo, yo pienso que esas cosas no son necesarias como para tener una buena relación o una buena conexión con Dios (Camilo, católico, nivel socio-económico medio).

En este sentido esta idea de los no lugares puede involucrar distintos espacios y pueden darse continuidades, prácticas que empiezan en casa y se suceden en la calle son sólo experiencias que se dan y surgen también en cualquier momento. Esto también tiene que ver, tomando la teoría desarrollada por Augé (1992), con que los ritmos de las sociedades contemporáneas nos llevan a construir estos nuevos espacios como nuevas formas de vínculos y lo religioso, lo trascendente, no quedan por fuera de ello.

En resumidas cuentas, los católicos entrevistados han hablado muchas veces de los lugares y también de los “no lugares”, especialmente cuando surge en modo espontáneo la necesidad de vivir alguna experiencia con lo trascendente. Estas nociones no se contradicen, más bien se complementan para dotar de sentido religioso la vida de las personas dentro y fuera de sus rutinas cotidianas.



5. Conclusiones

Para concluir se puede afirmar que desde las historias de los católicos uruguayos, no hay espacios determinados para lo sagrado, sino que los actores tienen la habilidad de crear sus propios espacios sagrados (Ammerman, 2014). A este propósito cabe preguntarse si esta creación de espacios sagrados propios está completamente desinstitucionalizada o si las lógicas institucionales pueden prevalecer aún en estos “otros” espacios. Actos como persignarse en el transporte público, rezar un Padre Nuestro ante un momento difícil en el trabajo, o leer la Biblia bajo la sombra de un árbol, nos insisten con esta pregunta.

Asimismo, este trabajo no pretende ni puede quitar el lugar y la importancia que las instituciones religiosas y sus congregaciones tienen para el desarrollo de la fe del individuo. Las congregaciones religiosas siguen siendo espacios fundamentales de vivencia de lo religioso. Como señala Martí, una de las razones por las que las congregaciones siguen siendo sobresalientes para la religión contemporánea es porque son lugares que unen una rica variedad de relaciones sociales involucradas en la priorización, acomodación, subordinación y exclusión de ideas y prácticas (Martí, 2015). Las congregaciones legitiman principios religiosos y ayudan a los adherentes individuales a estabilizar y mantener convicciones personales (Martí, 2005; 2008; 2010; Martí y Ganiel, 2014).

En cuanto a las nociones de separación dicotómica de lo público y lo privado – distinción propia de la modernidad – como de ámbitos en el que se desarrollan las prácticas religiosas, esas no concuerdan con lo que surge del relato de los entrevistados. No se manifiesta un desplazamiento de lo público a lo privado, o viceversa, en esos términos, si no que hace alusión a la apropiación de determinados espacios en donde esta distinción, así como la distinción entre individuo e institución, transita – tal como manifiesta Ammerman (2014) – por límites porosos. Los entrevistados en espacios considerados públicos llevan a cabo prácticas que si nos parásemos desde esta dicotomía deberían ser consideradas como privadas. La relación entre la intimidad del hogar y algunas prácticas institucionalizadas se presentan íntimamente relacionadas así como lo que es considerado personal transgrede el espacio privado y se desarrolla en espacios como playas, plazas y el transporte público. Por último, un elemento que cabe resaltar es cómo efectivamente los individuos refieren estos espacios desde un relato de



lo cotidiano, en donde lo trascendente está absolutamente imbricado con la vivencia del día a día.

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5. Roman Catholicism in Rome midst religion and religiosity

Cecilia Costa*

Abstracts

The Author discusses the *lived religion* of 29 Roman Catholics resident in Rome. The analysis is based on binomials like *individual/institution*, *spirituality/religion*, *autonomy/membership of a religious community*, and focuses, in particular, on the interviewees' perceptions of God, good-evil, faith and suffering and the figures of various Pontiffs.

Keywords: religiosity, spirituality, Roman Catholicism, Rome

La Autora discute la *religion vivida* de 29 católicos romanos residentes en Roma. El análisis se basa en los binomios *individuo/institución*, *espiritualidad/religión*, *autonomía/pertenencia a una comunidad religiosa* y en particular se centra en las percepciones de los entrevistados sobre Dios, el bien-mal, la fe, el sufrimiento y las figuras de los diversos pontífices.

Palabras clave: religiosidad, espiritualidad, catolicismo, Roma

L'Autrice discute la *religiosità praticata* da 29 cattolici residenti a Roma. L'analisi si basa su alcuni binomi quali *individuo/istituzione*, *spiritualità/religione*, *autonomia/appartenenza ad una comunità religiosa* e si focalizza in particolare sulle percezioni degli intervistati riferite a Dio, al bene-male, alla fede, alla sofferenza e alle figure di alcuni pontefici.

Parole chiave: religiosità, spiritualità, cattolicesimo, Roma

Premise

For classical sociologists, religion – transversal to all social phenomena – was one of the principal guarantees of the regulation, cohesion and order of collective life, as well as the inspiration of people's deepest values and convictions. Furthermore, for the fathers of sociology, religion was the only factor capable of endowing the reality found

* Università degli studi di Roma Tre (Italy); e-mail: ceciliaromana.costa@libero.it.



within the “disorder” and anomie of modernity, with equilibrium, trust in the future and truth (Sciolla, 2002; Simmel, 1994; Habermas, 2015; Gallino, 1993; Rosati, 2002; Belardinelli, Allodi, 2006; Durkheim, 2013). At present, these considerations are being questioned due to processes caused by the radicalisation of reason, of the “horizontality” and “interchangeableness” of transcendence, of the expansion of the “religion of the individual” and the retreat of moral dogmatism, the latter replaced by ethical self-referentiality, by criteria of efficiency and pure practical action (Huber, 2008; Horkheimer, 1962; Sciolla, 2002; Rovati, 2011; Boudon, 2003). It is no coincidence, therefore, that recent sociological studies report a number of formal and substantial changes in the traditional social functions of religion and an individual sensitivity less inclined than in the past to metabolise faith in incontestable and indisputable terms.

Despite the fact that religion in general, and Roman Catholicism in particular, are being undermined as regards consensus and their doctrines revoked by systematic doubt, there is also denial of the simplistic thesis of the irreversible transition from “revelation to pure reason” and of the worn-out theorem whereby rationality equals disenchantment (Taylor, 2015; Habermas, Ratzinger 2005; Prandi, 2014). Furthermore, secularisation, assumed as an explicit category of the contemporary religious scenario, is viewed with growing scepticism, as the concept is unable to theoretically sum up the present-day *Weltanschauung* which does not expend itself in mere transition from a metaphysical *forma mentis* to one which is, today, post-ideological and technical-scientific (Habermas, 1987; Berger, 2010; Pace, 2008). The rapid changes taking place – which have shattered the grand narratives, utopias and ideals –, have actually only subverted people’s “mobile needs”, those most susceptible to the “spirit of the times”, while the reasons of belief, though less solid, remain a constant upon the public-private horizon (Casanova, 2000). In actual fact, the cultural transformations taking place denote, rather than an *eclipse*, a *reflux* of the “problem” of God and some of the structures of plausibility that are impermeable to any kind of innovation (Berzano, 2014; Rovati, 2011). The scientific mind-set has not obscured the universe of the sacred which still represents one – though not the only one – of the many possible anchorages of meaning (Taylor, 2009).



All told, the strength and weakness of this post-modern world, in terms of religion too, reside in the climate of vagueness, incongruity and multiplication of general antithetical views of the world. In this sense, in today's fragmented, pluralistic cultural milieu, people manifest contradictory attractions which may range indifferently – depending on circumstances and personal inclinations – from centres of traditional symbolic belief to vague forms of spirituality, from secular “liturgies” to esoteric suggestions, from miracles to myths (Terrin, 2007; Cipriani, 1997; Horkheimer e Adorno, 1966; Beck, 2009; Maffesoli, 2005). This sort of “ambivalence” between the sacred and the profane (which emerges also from between the lines of some of the interviews obtained during the survey entitled *Lived religion in Rome* examined here), above all within the ambit of Roman Catholicism, seems to have triggered – rather than a definitive breach with institutional structures – a private, contingent kind of religiosity unpermeated by a specific theological education (Beck, 2009; Hervieu-Léger, 1996).

People's readiness to believe or not, – which is, above all, the outcome of a certain historical period because, as Taylor sustains (2009: 26) «one thing is to believe in God in 1500, another is to believe in Him in 2000» – is due mostly to individual “reflection” and to the cognitive, emotive experiences of single subjects (Donati, 2010; Donolo, 2007; Berger, 2005; Garelli, 2011; Castegnaro, 2008). In brief, we have moved from an ascribing-binding to an acquisitive-voluntary model of religiosity, no longer subject to “social pressure” or mere custom, but the result, on the contrary, of subjective decision. Today's *acquisitive* modality of individual sentimentally-oriented religiosity (Cipriani, Losito, 2008), – which, to some extent, designs that «personal and active adherence to the faith», *The Gaudium et spes, Pastoral Constitution* of 1966 (Documenti del Concilio Vaticano II, 1966: 175) – presents itself as an open system, where dogmatic instances are admitted or abandoned having first been re-elaborated subjectively within the ambit of an intimate and personal dialectic between rationalisation of beliefs and fideistic emotionality; between “selective” religiosity (not completely freed from the Church-institution) and a «spirituality without borders», between norms and freedom (Rovati, 2011; Garelli, 2011; Hervieu-Léger, 2003).



1. The theoretical-methodological approach to the lived religion in Rome survey

To try to understand the overt and latent aspects of the complex "crisis" of traditional religion, some of the teachings of the classical sociologists may be useful, because their theses offer, first of all, a solid theoretical basis from which to depart. Secondly, their formulations may provide an *ideal-typical* kind of knowledge of the phenomenon to be investigated and, therefore, direct us as we seek to understand which aspects of its dynamics "disappear" and "which remain". Thirdly, by combining theirs with more recent sociological criteria, we are enabled to calibrate better the interpretative pathways that, in the specific case dealt with here, concern the area of belief, which, incidentally, is currently characterised by an unprecedented phase of liminality or of alternation between a perennial "becoming" and a continuous "return" of some of its symbolic traits.

On the premise of the usefulness of turning nowadays to the early sociologists, above all, in view of present-day individualisation of religious sentiment, – where fideistic tension is synthesised within the microcosm of the single subject –, the *lived religion* survey was inspired by a "classic" like Simmel, because he placed the free individual, creator of religious and cultural values, in an emergent position compared to that of doctrinaire-institutional apparatuses. Moreover, Simmel laid the foundations for in-depth investigation of the topic of belief, in that he highlighted not only its functional and substantial aspects, but its manifold declinations at the intersection between various dimensions, which coagulate feelings and experiences concerning the different "worlds of life", of the public and private spheres; of action and the system; of the individual and the institutional; of the subjective, the objective and the ideal (Rovati, 2011; Castegnaro, 2008; Simmel, 1994).

Extraneous to the normative-structural paradigm and the Comtian scientist myth (Dal Lago, 1994; Joas, 2014) of the period, Simmel's speculative approach highlighted two fundamental sociological features: the ways in which subjects interact and how, as a consequence of the mutual interweaving of relations this entails, processes of institutionalisation are determined; the relationship between *life* that flows and the subsequent production of *forms* that express, crystallise and "solidify" this flow (Simmel, 1994; Formaggio, Petrucchi, 1976; Janké-



lévitch, 1988; Jankélévitch, 2013; Jedlowski, 2003). Within the sphere of belief, this theoretical approach considers *life* – therefore *religiosity* – a flow that precedes and activates institutional forms of religion, the «simplest and most complex» kind of social interaction (Simmel, 1994; Martelli, 1991; Marchisio, 2002). For Simmel *religiosity* – which does not identify itself in a stable substance, but is an «original quality of the soul», by means of which everyone "colours" his/her relations and his rapport with God (Simmel, 1984; 2006; Joas, 2010; Simmel, 1994) –, broadens individuals' ranges of action and enhances their personalities. In short, *religiosity* – which is an expression of the fluidity, emotionality, creativity and *vital* impulse of subjects – constitutes the «reunifying principle of the whole of human existence», internal and external, public and private.

When all comes to all, by shifting scholarly attention from the institutional to the private aspect of *religiosity*, Simmel placed the intimate character of religion within the canon of empirical knowledge, inaugurating the "subjectivist" interpretative model. It is no accident that in this specific investigation of *lived religion in Rome*, religion was not observed on the basis of a general norm, but on that of a "humanist" paradigm which included subjective meanings leading to action, with no inclination towards an impersonal study of reality or the ambition to glean statistical evidence. At the same time, its theoretical background did not overlook Weberian thinking, starting from the concept of *religiously motivated action* (that is, action with feeling). Like Simmel, Weber took no interest in religion as such, but was concerned with the impact it might have on people's lives and on the whole texture of society (Colozzi, 2016).

In short, on the basis of the teachings of Simmel and Weber, as well as a number of more recent sociological perspectives like that of Ammerman, for example, a qualitative methodology was chosen (Corbetta, 2003), which took into consideration – as objective data regarding the religiosity of Roman Catholics residing in Rome –, “human material”, subjective feelings regarding faith, the conditions and possible outcomes of the religious sentiment and action of individuals (Cipriani, 1987; Weber, 1980; Guala, 2000). Besides, even the positivist Durkheim, – who refused the concept of the supernatural (Colozzi, 2016) and emphasised only *social fact* from a sociological point of view –, examined the individual-faith issue with some interest (Durkheim, 2013); in



almost “unconscious” syntony with Simmel whom he criticised severely for the distinction he made between *life* and *form* (Frisby, 1986), Durkheim wrote in his *Elementary forms of religious life* that «the believer who has communicated with his god is not merely a man who sees new truths [...] he is a man who is *stronger*. He feels within him more force, either to endure the trials of existence, or to conquer them» (Durkheim, 2013: 416).

2. Religion as lived by Roman Catholics living in Rome

Although the overall number of people interviewed during the 2016 *lived religion in Rome* survey was 80 (30 Roman Catholics, 10 Protestants, 11 Moslems, 10 Orthodox Christians, 10 Jews, 9 agnostics/atheists), we focused on the stories of the Roman Catholic interviewees only. It is important to point out that, as far as the narrations of the Roman Catholics are concerned, we highlight only a limited number of the “sensitising concepts” contained in them, such as *images of God; relations between faith and good-evil; faith and suffering*. Furthermore, attention was paid to the impact of the teaching and charismatic-communicative styles of the last three popes: John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. These points were foregrounded because characteristic of the entire experience of belief and because, in some ways, they manage to account for «mutations in religion» (Prandi, 2014).

2.1. Images of God

In general, despite the impact of modernisation, the descriptions of God provided by almost all the Roman Catholic interviewees are neither abstract nor distant but refer to a personal God, to a “familiar”, merciful father and friend, with whom it is possible to engage on an intimate footing. From some of the interviews, besides, it emerges how strongly this concept of a God the Father proves functional to the re-configuration of family identity and relationships. Besides, this kind of paternal representation of God, who does not judge but supports emotionally, were noted by a number of national surveys, like that led by Franco Garelli (2011).



The majority of those interviewed in Rome emphasise the merciful God the Father who guides and comforts. One 25-year-old bachelor, an engineer by profession, underlined the fact that his conception of God was «paternal authority combined with the closeness of brotherhood and friendship».

Another interviewee, a 35-year-old graduate, father and scriptwriter, attributed a «manipulative» nature to God who exploits human – though in a positive sense –, when he said that

God the Father has a plan, he knows each one's gifts and uses people, though the great changes are made by God, who intervenes in history.

Yet, there are also some who, like the 33-year-old single, female graduate who works in development, attribute a «woman's voice» to God, providing, therefore, a dual image of the divinity as both father and mother.

Other descriptions of God are *creator of the universe; superior entity; constant presence*, also in *nature*. A 74-year-old interviewee, a father with a university degree, retired from Ibm sees God as «light, the origin of faith and the essence of life» and considers excessive devotion to saints a form of idolatry, because he does not find it correct that some believers who enter a church are inclined «to greet Padre Pio first and God who is the Host (Christ in the tabernacle) afterwards».

The interviewees see God also in terms of their own life experience. One woman, aged 28, married to a Moslem, has an open view of other religious-cultural realities and declares that «there is only one God, although revealed diversely to different peoples; He appears similar in Christianity and Islam».

On a different plane, a law student, a 19-year-old Peruvian girl, close to the *Confraternita del signore dei miracoli* in Rome [the city's Peruvian immigrant confraternity] described God as «present in me [...] He left a fragment of Himself inside of everyone» and on the basis of this conviction, she feels His help even when building up her identity.

2.2. *The relationship between faith and good-evil*

The interviewees' concepts of good and evil reveal a kind of bipolarity of thought. If, on the one hand, most of them consider their actions



the outcome of subjective choice because they refuse to accept ethical-dogmatic dictates unconditionally; on the other, also due to the religious socialisation they received within their families, they refer to «a transcendent criterion» when discerning between good and evil, as anchorage and as a normative idea.

We need to foreground the volatility of the moral parameter and of the relativistic criterion adopted by some of the interviewees when making choices regarding good and evil which tend, as underlined by a vast quantity of sociological literature, to opt for a «strategy of caution», a co-presence of different values (Maffesoli, 2005: 62), rather than for a systematic view, opposed to traditional codes (Dahrendorf, 1980; Rovati 2011) and to the «laws of God». Generally speaking, from a number of different answers there emerges a certain distance from codified rules in favour of a lesser degree of ethical imperativeness. There is also a prevalence of the ability to perceive sin and guilt clearly. It is no accident, according to sociological literature regarding the religious phenomenon, that feelings of sin and guilt are fading more and more and, as a result, there is a drop in recourse to confession which, at present, regards only 42% of a total of 86% of Italians who are Roman Catholics (Garelli, 2011).

Some of the interviewees hold that a sense of guilt is not necessarily correlated to sin, because it is more the result of people's ethical-cultural experience and the educational paradigm which favours its interiorisation from childhood.

Other interviewees, instead, sustain that good and evil are relative and that sin and guilt are useful to external forces so that they can «manipulate» people. In this regard, a 34-year-old married female graduate claims that

sin is defined on the basis of laws drawn up by others, therefore by the powers that be, by a religious authority acting as spokesperson, mediator. Therefore, someone else has the power to decide whether there is sin or not, guilt or not.

Another single 33-year-old female graduate denies the existence of a net distinction between good and evil and says

I think that good and evil do not exist in reality. At times what for some may be good for others may be evil; sometimes it is more a matter of the meaning we attribute to people's actions on the basis of an ethos and a moral reference,



which, however, can change depending on the culture to which one belongs, no? Therefore, I do not think it is appropriate to divide the world into good and evil, into black and white, as if a clear line could be drawn between them.

Others still, rather than reflect on good and evil, try to establish a difference between sin, often considered involuntary, and guilt, which is the disquiet caused by awareness of sin.

One 48-year-old married man, a graduate and a researcher in a public organisation, dwells on the concept of guilt declaring that

guilt is a sense of irreversibility. Guilt is Judas, meaning a state of affairs we imagine cannot be remedied.

Finally, another position argues that the real problem is not so much guilt as sin itself which winds its way into everyday life. This is the idea of a 60-year-old family man, a graduate in philosophy and a member of Opus Dei,

sin is separation from God. The greatest sin is estrangement from God.

2.3. Faith and suffering

At this precise turning point in history, if, on the one hand, one witnesses a drop in membership and a tendency to seek answers to the issues of existence within the scientific-technical ambit and within the sphere of rationality, on the other, as emerges from the interviews, religious concepts, especially at times of “fracture” and/or crisis, continue to compensate for and act as anchors of meaning (Elias, 1985; Belardinelli, 2006; Colozzi, 2016; Garelli, 2011; Joas, 2013; Joas, 2010; Crespi; Garelli, 2006). In particular, when it comes to the issue of painful events, we find in many of the considerations expressed by the interviewees, a refusal of scientific solutions alone, of “affective neutrality”, of the idea of the objective perfection of the world and of what Simmel (1903) called «hypertrophy of the intellect». On the contrary, according to the views expressed by these Roman Catholics residing in Rome it appears as if the processes of modernisation and of technological innovation favour religion, more than foreseen, because rationality has nei-



ther simplified nor reduced «the degree of existence's problematic nature» (Garelli, 2006) nor has it rendered recourse to God anachronistic.

For many of the interviewees, in actual fact, faith and trust in God help people to overcome suffering and life's difficult moments. Some of them claim to perceive God's mercy in suffering itself, to such an extent that recovery from an illness is considered a miracle, the effect of divine intervention. A number of the interviewees claim that negative events have actually provided them with the *opportunity* to convert, because they produced a kind of «emotional resonance», a greater, in-depth investigation of their faith, a reconfiguration of the meaning of life and of the significance of existence.

By way of example, one 45-year-old married male interviewee, with a diploma in accountancy, employed in the administrative department of one of Rome's universities, states that

faith passes through suffering, through sacrifice. The example is Christ.

On the same wavelength a 54-year-old woman, separated from her husband and mother of three children, claims that

illness and death can be lived with faith. I know many people who in illness, even serious illness, turned quietly to the Lord, so that they experienced it serenely and in tranquillity.

The perception of illness and old age may be read in terms of faith; this is the case of a 35-year-old graduate and a father who claims that

God can turn illness into something good and beautiful. Faith can improve old age, make it something grander.

2.4. The figures of the Pontiffs

The comments of the Roman Catholics interviewed here regarding the three most Popes brought to light a phenomenon noted and documented by other research projects, that is, that within the sphere of religion, as in other areas of society, the sense of involvement felt by be-



lievers and non-believers towards charismatic personalities¹ is noteworthy. In actual fact, over the last few decades, also thanks to the mediatic impact of images (Terrin, 2011), beginning, in particular, with John Paul II, the Popes have proven particularly attractive from a symbolic-emotional point of view due to their continuous exposition and «event-presence» (Rusconi 2017) on the media. This has made them, a fideistic-existential reference (Costa, 2017; Cipriani 2003), to some extent, greater than that proposed by the institutional Church. It is no accident, therefore, that the words of the Roman Catholic interviewees – though also in those of the Protestants, Moslems, Orthodox Christians and agnostics interviewed- convey the strength of the impact made by the last three popes, starting from Pope Francis.

A 48-year-old interviewee, a married man with a degree, who frequented the *I giovani verso Assisi* [The young towards Assisi] movement, holds that Pope Francis is modernising the Church, although – despite his positive opinion – he would prefer,

the fathers of the theology of liberation to him.

The same interviewee claims that, due to the scandals and *Vatileaks* during the Ratzinger pontificate, mostly young people were estranged from the Church. He is also negative in his judgement of John Paul II – even though he stood for six hours in line to pay homage to his mortal remains – because, in his opinion, «his interreligious dialogue was a bluff».

Another interviewee aged 35, a husband and university graduate advocates a detailed analysis of the last two pontificates, that of Pope Francis, who is

the right Pope for these difficult times of encounters with other religions» and that of Benedict XVI, because «his religious writing and teaching

¹ One of the most recent Italian national surveys regarding the phenomenon of religion contains many significant data regarding how the Popes fascinate people. The popularity of John Paul II, even after his death, remained high, so much so that the Italian page of *Facebook*, dedicated to him had registered [at the time of the survey] 470.000 likes, far more than those for TV personalities like compere Maria De Filippi, who [at the time] totalled 158.000. See Garelli (2011).



has been fundamental. He adds that

Pope Benedict attributed importance to truth, while Pope Francis has shifted the emphasis onto mercy

yet, he considers John Paul II the Pope of his life, because the 2000 Jubilee taught him to undertake the mission of bearing witness to the love of God.

One of the older interviewees, a 74-year-old man, married and a graduate, considers Pope Francis better than the previous Popes, because, in his opinion,

he pays attention to human things and is the first Pope to speak out against the death sentence and torture. Francis is open to dialogue between the Christian faiths and with him the spirit of Vatican Council II, brought to a standstill by Pope Benedict XVI and John Paul II, has been set in motion again.

3. Conclusions

On the whole, from the interviews administered to the Roman Catholics residing in Rome there emerge a number of recurring data found in other surveys conducted at national level and with statistically representative sample groups. Among these data we find the importance of Catholicism to cultural orientation, for the construction of individual identity and an understanding of the deeper meanings of life.

In Italy, in fact, the inclination to believe in God appears to be more widespread than in the past seeing that over 80% of the Italians declare believing in His presence to some extent (Garelli, 2011). Membership of a religious institution, as far as the majority of the Roman Catholics interviewed in Rome is concerned, takes the form of commitment in the parish or enrolment in an ecclesial movement or in what Ammerman (2014) calls a «spiritual tribe». From this survey regarding religion as it is lived in Rome, one relevant datum emerges in perfect symmetry with the national trend for religion, is the so-called «post-materialistic» symbolic picture (Sciolla, 2004) where the prevalent values are the family, friendship, love, solidarity, relationships, respect for human dignity, social equality and authenticity.



In particular, in the light of the topics examined : the image of God, the rapport between faith, good-evil and suffering, as well as opinions regarding the three most recent Popes – together with the guide lines of this survey, the analytical binomials of *individual/institution*, *spirituality/religion*, *autonomy/membership of a religious community* – it is possible to note, by way of initial hypothesis, three “container” categories regarding the different “lived religiosity” modes emerging from the interviews granted by the Roman Catholics interviewed. These categories would profit by further development and successive interpretation.

The three categories are: first, Roman Catholics corresponding to the *church-religion* model, though they possess some degree of autonomy with respect to their experience within the community.

The second category, on the contrary, comprises those who remain attached to the institutional Roman Catholic religion, but who reveal evident signs of the subjectivisation of belief and tend to remain distant from ecclesiastic demands: a model of *diffused religion* «not Churchless», but «having little Church» (Hervieu-Léger, 2003; Castegnaro, 2014).

The last and third category includes those who, inclined towards doubt, though proclaiming themselves Roman Catholics like the interviewees belonging to the other two categories, are attracted by various forms of the sacred and multifarious religious solicitations, even those of a syncretic nature. One might say that in this instance we are dealing with *open spirituality*, undecided in its sense of belonging and free from doctrine. In brief, this last category is a plastic manifestation of the changes taking place within the reality of belief and of the «multiplicity of types of spirituality, that number almost as many as there are individuals» (Berzano, 2014: 8-11), even within the milieu of Roman Catholicism. So as not to underestimate the socio-cultural environment, especially with regard to the third model (though it holds for the other two too), it is useful to refer to the concept of *lifestyle* (Berzano, Genova, 2011) which sums up the present-day quest by individuals for a definition all their own of the situation, also within the sphere of belief, because single subjects need to find collocations favouring the chance to concretise their own sensitivity and experience new forms of religious belonging and identity.



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6. The lived religion of Rome's Roman Catholics

Monica Simeoni*

Abstracts

The Author reflects on a segment of the complex and multifaceted experience of Italian Catholicism provided by the analysis of the life stories of 29 Roman Catholics from Rome, gathered during the year 2016. Socialisation appears to be the fundamental mode of transmission of religious values, together with a personalization and re-elaboration of religious beliefs.

Keywords: Catholicism, Rome, culture, socialisation, family

La Autora reflexiona sobre un fragmento del complejo y multifacético catolicismo italiano a partir del análisis de 29 historias de vida de católicos romanos recogidas durante el 2016. La socialización aparece como el modo fundamental de transmisión de los valores religiosos, junto a una interiorización y reelaboración personal de las creencias religiosas.

Palabras clave: catolicismo, Roma, cultura, socialización, familia

L'Autrice riflette su un frammento del complesso e poliedrico mondo del cattolicesimo italiano a partire dall'analisi di 29 interviste a cattolici romani, raccolte nel 2016. La socializzazione si conferma modalità fondamentale nella trasmissione dei valori religiosi accanto, però, ad una interiorizzazione e rielaborazione personale del credo religioso.

Parole chiave: cattolicesimo, Roma, cultura, socializzazione, famiglia

Introduction

Many sociological studies of religion have been conducted, particularly in recent years, focusing on religious pluralism, modernity, the concept of *lifestyles*, models of action and relations characterising the ways of life of social groups and actors. The analyses carried out, including research and in-depth investigations of the Italian reality, pro-

* Università del Sannio, Benevento (Italy); e-mail: monica.simeoni@unisannio.it.



vide a vision of a Roman Catholic world in evolution, while continuing to provide the country's social and cultural life with a "solid hard core".

The 29 interviews administered in Rome in 2016 and commented on here, describe a variegated religious reality which cannot, of course, claim to represent the complex reality of Italy's or Rome's Roman Catholic world, but, rather, «open a window» upon a number of different interwoven, interlinked life experiences and situations (Ammerman, 2014: 9). These religious narrations and stories concern people in whom the sacred and the profane coexist in a «spiritual reality» (Ivi: 9) which cannot be easily interpreted in terms of univocal categories referring to religious or "secular" ambits.

In his latest essay *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age* (2014) [translated into Italian as *Sugli altari della modernità* and published in 2017] the recently deceased Austrian sociologist Peter L. Berger confirmed the new paradigm by which to interpret the religious reality existing beyond secularisation (a term now going out of use), as a "pluralist" set of beliefs and ethical values which coexist and interact reciprocally. This view is shared by Luigi Berzano, who has pointed out how, in this *post-secular* epoch, religion has not vanished but undergone a transformation (Berzano, 2017: 20-21), a discontinuity mode within the historical, traditional religions featuring a differentiation and plurality of religious practices.

Furthermore, the pluralism of the RC religious experience, its relationship with the worlds of Islam, Judaism and Protestantism which emerged from the interviews, reveals issues and observations about Italian society where many spheres of society and the environment interlock in terms of Parsons's concept of «interpenetration» (Vespasiano, 2015: 142); here the case discussed is that of religion, where different references, including those of a personal and cultural nature, are taken into consideration.

In some of the lifestories narrated by the Roman Catholics living in Rome interviewed here, the religious experience, the lived religion described was the outcome of a religion-related cultural *habitus*: a personal reality, which later assumed community, parish and, in many cases, association and church-movement proportions. One's *habitus*, as sociologist Bourdieu pointed out, produces forms and attitudes that be-



come stories: lifestyles originating from socialisation processes leading to integration (Berzano, Genoa, 2017).

Almost all of the interviewees (27 out of 29) confirmed that family and home socialisation (parents and grandparent who were believers) acted as a significant source of educational preparation for adherence to the Roman Catholic belief, though they later elaborated on it within the ambit of their new family set-up or within that of their future institutional relational (work) and leisure-time networks (volunteer activity). This form of sharing with friends and, in some cases, with fellow workers, may also contain the concept of «diffused religion», a category analysed and studied by Italian sociologist Roberto Cipriani, beginning as long ago as the late 1980's; a concept surpassing American scholar Robert N. Bellah's concept of «civil religion» (Cipriani, 1988: 71-72).

The rapport with the institutions does not involve static but porous environments and is based on a logic of individual and shared experiences which merge to transform communities and life habitats in areas where the Roman Catholic experience is at work. The concept of secularisation, the word «which has become ambiguous and is used ambiguously» (Luhmann, 1991: 217), no longer represents the correct way of interpreting the world of Italian Roman Catholics and that of our 29 interviewees. The sociologist Berzano, with his *post-secularity* concept, identifies a «new spiritual availability that living in secularity generates» (Berzano, 2017: 20-21), a diversity of behaviour patterns and lifestyles produced by secularization. Our interviews confirmed this thesis.

One is inclined, besides, to agree with the scholar Marco Rizzi who, in an essay published in 2016, while confirming the existence of a secularised Europe, observes that religion is still a significant mode of western social life which maintains a «political and social legitimacy of its own» (Rizzi, 2016: 46). A number of Italian sociologists unanimously emphasise the «pluralism» of contemporary representations of the religious paradigm in this country; some of their analyses though different are nonetheless complementary (Berzano, 2017; Cartocci, 2011; Diotallevi, 2017; Garelli, 2006; 2016; Pace, 2016).

Dealing with the sociology of religion means, therefore, having to take a broad view of the situation, beginning with socialisation within the family which, in most cases, determines the belief of Roman Catholics during adulthood though it also produces openness towards other religions (Pace, 2016). Some of the interviews reveal that ecumenism



and a relationship with Islam are experienced in positive terms, above all by young members of church movements (Focolarini¹, Neocatecumenali² and Meic³). Getting to know members of other religious persuasions directly, in some cases due to mixed marriages, can help defeat prejudice and “ignorance”, (meaning «not knowing») regarding those who follow a different religion so that they may no longer be perceived as an obstacle to the Roman Catholic faith.

Immigration is perceived by our interviewees as a problem or as a reason for fear (of terrorism and of Isis), yet, once again, direct knowledge (adoption of foreign children or experiences at school) deflates prejudice and xenophobia. The reality of immigrant labour along with the steady rise in the contribution made by foreign enterprise to increases in Italy’s Gdp, might well help lessen fear and ignorance (Boeri, 2017; Lazzari, 2015).

The faith of Rome’s Roman Catholics also finds comfort, support and corroboration in a number of social networks, the Internet and *Radio Maria*, an Italian RC radio station into which many of our interviewees tune regularly. Of particular interest is the case of a person who, with reference to Pope Francis, downloaded from the web a text which was extremely critical of the present pontiff to the extent of actually calling him the Antichrist. The new media confirm their role as important and significant socialising agencies for Roman Catholic believers: the appropriate education and preparation of people might help regulate news, which too often pose problems of authenticity and interpretation (Sloman, Fernach, 2017). Pope Francis is greatly appreciated by the 29 Roman Catholics from Rome who were interviewed during our survey, especially for the simplicity of his language and the immediacy of his message; positive views were also expressed in relation to previous Pontiffs, especially Pope John Paul II. One interviewee criticized the latter for his (alleged) right-wing political positions. The

¹ *The Focolare Movement*, an international organization based on ideals of unity and universal brotherhood, founded in Trent, Italy, in 1943 by Chiara Lubich as a Roman Catholic movement which remains largely such though it has strong links with other Christian and non-Christian denominations as well as with non-believers.

² The *Neocatechumenal Way*, or, simply *The Way*, is a charismatic movement operating within the Roman Catholic Church, set up in 1964 by Kiko Arguella and Carmen Hernandez.

³ *Movimento ecclesiale di impegno culturale* [Ecclesial Movement For Cultural Commitment] set up in 1932 by a group of Italian RC intellectuals and still active today.



length of his pontificate, especially for the more elderly interviewees, made of him a "lifelong companion" of great significance to Catholics.

Below we shall examine the topics outlined above, mentioning a number of keywords which corroborate the findings of previous reports. In addition, prayer and attendance at mass are modes of conduct that characterise the Roman Catholics interviewed, as do, of course, belief in the dogmas of Roman Catholicism like the Holy Trinity. In some cases we came across a certain degree of confusion regarding concepts like incarnation and reincarnation as well as non-belief in the virginity of Mary.

1. Religious socialisation

Socialisation is confirmed as one of the most significant means by which the social identity of people is built up (Dubar, 2004). An analysis of people's religious experiences cannot but take into consideration the cultural as well as the functional element in the Luhmanian sense of the term, which requires that functionality be interpreted through the constitutive processes of meaning. A system cannot be understood without reference to the environment to which a person belongs and which determines lifestyles, a set comprising «status, power structures and religious ethics» (Berzano, Genova, 2017: 26).

The words of one interviewee – aged 48, married, once a member of the girl guides – seem to echo this important consideration. According to her, «her cultural background was fundamental» to her membership of the Roman Catholic church, «had I been born in a Moslem culture I imagine that I would have become a Moslem». This appears to confirm that fact that the «cultural history» of a country, cannot be «denaturalised», for example, by the presence of «great mosques» because, «Italy is a Roman Catholic country». Religion cannot be instrumentalised «to trample on the freedom of others». This same interviewee also points out how it is possible to kill in the name of religion, referring, obviously to the special brands of terrorism and religious wars which avail themselves of Islam as their «fundament».

A 45-year-old man, who, like the majority of the interviewees consulted, was born into a Roman Catholic family, recalls that all the members of his family «adhered to the precepts of Catholicism, also



because accustomed by our grandparents to attend mass. I even used to call my grandmother mamma». Two significant points emerge from these words – as well as from those of other interviews – the importance of socialisation and the significance to socialisation of women, mothers and grandmothers, as transmitters of religious values. The death of these female figures was, in the case of the aforementioned interviewee, followed by «an estrangement from, a sort of refusal» of religion, although, later on, «upon seeing a priest engaged in social activities with children and young people, not the usual bigots, I began to question myself».

Over and over again the observations regarding their life courses reveal how important to the 29 Roman Catholic interviewees their cultural *habitus* had been. Alongside the female «transmitters» of religious values we find “others”, including priests, who had a significant impact upon the personal interiorisation of the interviewees’ life stories.

The survey confirms the analysis presented by Berger and Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), published in Italian as *La realtà come costruzione sociale* (1969). The living world in which we are immersed is a symbolic, cultural universe which, however, each person elaborates, making it his/her own. Thus, each one’s experience is individual and irreparable. Furthermore, the construction of personal identity involves a fundamental kind of ambiguity: «it is, at once, singular and plural; it feeds on interiorised values intended also as objects of desire» (Lazzari, 2015: 45-47).

When elaborating personal faith as the basis of «social action» one tries to understand reasons that make «social commitment satisfactory». «I lacked a reason for helping others», continued the 45-year-old interviewee, «Helping other people or providing them with care is not the same as loving them; to help and to love are different. Help without love is different: we need strong motivations to drive our actions, even when providing voluntary service». Again, according to the same interviewee, faith and religious experience can provide a motive, «the Christian is a follower of Christ and, in this regard I feel no different from a Protestant. What interests me is to follow and try to imitate Christ».

The individualisation of one’s religious pathway, as discussed by Ulrich Beck in *A God of One’s own* (Italian translation, *Il Dio personale*, Beck, 2009: 109), does not seem to lead to a «privatisation of relig-



ion» but to a «reflexive modernisation», meaning that the values and rules handed down become an individual and personal «communicative rationalisation», something highlighted also by Habermas (2009: 82). Recognition of other religions means acceptance of the existence of different modernities (*Ivi*: 88).

This is confirmed by the words of a 28-year-old married woman, belonging to the Focolare Movement who, although she came from a family of believers, at 17 took «a sabbatical year» from her Catholic *habitus*, to «understand whether my faith had been imposed by the family or whether it was a personal choice. That was an important time in my life because it brought me into contact with my spiritual part». So, her relationship with other religions, as a multicultural expression of contemporary reality, did not pose an obstacle, but became an enrichment of her pathway of life, enhanced also by her experience in India, a country where many religions are separated, in some places even divided, according to membership but nonetheless in communication with one another: «There exists, however, a reciprocal relationship between the different neighbourhoods, each one collaborating and contributing to economic, personal, relational growth».

2. The values of Italy's and Rome's Roman Catholics

The trends emerging from the latest survey regarding values in Europe carried out in 2008-2009 in the 27 Eu member states and in a further 20 neighbouring countries (Rovati, 2011), are borne out by the lifestories of our interviewees and appear to corroborate the notion that values change more slowly than opinions, in many cases coinciding with cultural judgements expressed by the people interviewed. Values also become principles which forge individual *lifestyles*, in a process of socialisation which, in the present era of «weak ideologies» becomes central to personal and collective pathways (including religious ones) (Berzano, Genoa, 2017: 57).

Work continues to be a central issue for Italians, young and old alike, even more so at a time of crisis like the present. The words of the Roman Catholics interviewed by us underline how, in many cases, religious faith can be experienced, lived coherently, as commitment in the



work place, a space shared for several hours a day with others representing different beliefs, even unbelief.

For a 42-year-old bachelor, member of a Catholic association, the Ecclesial Movement for Cultural Commitment (Meic), the work place may be one of “mission” where one may bear witness, a place where the *Beruf* (vocation) indicated and examined by Max Weber can express itself and should characterise the life experience of each person. Work, even the most technical of professions, «may serve the truth of facts». According to the interviewee in question, however, it may often prove difficult to respect the norms and the high economic costs of health and safety legislation. The qualitative aspect of work depends on a set of various factors; and «serving the truth» with colleagues is part of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. This conviction is also reflected in the experience of an upper-class 50-year-old woman, one of the two Roman Catholics from Rome who received no direct religious socialisation from her family (her father was an atheist), even if one female figure, her grandmother emerges, along with two priests, who later contributed considerably to her religious education. Rationality played a significant role in her choice to believe, underlined by enrolment in the *Comunione e liberazione* [Communion and Liberation] movement. In the practice of her profession as a chartered accountant she asserts that «taxes must always be paid because there is a moral obligation to do so. Money cannot be more important than God». Even at times when her work imposed difficult choices, this interviewee sought coherence between faith and life, which, in her opinion, cannot be experienced as something disjointed from religious meaning. «One of the major faults, even of Catholics, is the strong sense of individualism of contemporary society». Morality informs one's actions, one's reward comes from «doing things well».

In the life stories of the Roman Catholics interviewed, the importance of the family as a foremost values emerges, for young and old alike, meaning both the family into which one is born (parents) and that which one sets up (through marriage). This is confirmed also by the survey on European values (Rovati, 2011) supported by both quantitative and qualitative data and referring to family as both life experience and as a value. The values of honesty and brotherhood, as one 48-year-old interviewee put it, are associated with «empathy, justice and social equity».



Those interviewed in Rome insisted on coherence between faith and the values professed by a person. They belong to «that heritage and those values which one must adhere to within the spheres of work and friendship» sustains one 49-year-old bachelor of modest social extraction. If one goes to mass on Sunday morning one cannot behave badly: «otherwise it would be like wearing a fake suit».

Love for others, emergence from oneself and living «in a social way» is an important value for Cristina, as well as for several other interviewees; «the idea that another world may exist». This love goes hand in hand with freedom, but also with accountability for one's own choices: another important point underlined by those interviewed. This can be put into practice, again in the work place, as in the case of one 56-year-old woman, a teacher in a Salesian school, who follows the teachings of Don Bosco.

Our qualitative analysis, although the survey was administered to a number that cannot certainly represent the universe of Roman Catholics living in Rome and in Italy, agrees nevertheless, even with the *survey* on the values of Italians carried out some time ago (Rovati, 2011). Commitment, social responsibility, sharing «strong values» which continue to be such (family, friendship, work, and to a those still significant though to a lesser extent like ecumenism), are all related to the Roman Catholic faith, above all, to that of believers belonging to church associations and movements. Multiculturalism and accepting reception of foreigners is still a value, though they suffer, above all in the case of those who have no experience of them, from the fear and the acts of terrorism (also of Islamic origin), which, for some year now, have been affecting Europe. They also harbour the idea that welfare favours foreigners «rather than» Italians who are more entitled to it or, as a 65-year-old married woman from a modest social background puts it, «we risk providing reverse care. There is a silent invasion that is frightening. There are areas of Rome where the vast majority of the residents are Muslim, Pakistani, Indian, as are the shops». One should also remember, however, that the increasing number of «enterprises owned by 'new Italians', even during the years of crisis from 2008 to 2015», have made an important contribution to the country's wealth (Lazzari, 2016: 155-156). This represents a mode of integration, associated with work, useful in the battle against social deviance and exclusion (Boeri, 2017).



3. The lived religion of Rome's Roman Catholics

The Roman Catholic religiosity and experience of faith of the interviewees are characterised by prayer, a mode expressed constantly by all those interviewed; the same holds for attendance at mass, frequently on weekdays too. The sacraments most frequently mentioned are Baptism, the Eucharist and Matrimony (for those who are married, of course): Confession is absent from almost all the answers.

For the male president of one parochial branch of *Azione cattolica* [literally Catholic Action] a 42-year-old unmarried engineer, «the religious dimension of life, which means meeting Christ, is the only reason for living and of self-identity». Good and evil are not at loggerheads, but are the result of Roman Catholic membership which renders our awareness of Christian teaching responsible. For another interviewee, aged 48, «the conscience of man is the law of God therefore man is not separate from God». In many of the interviews we came across sin and guilt, the outcome of man's wrongdoing and free will, his personal responsibility. Furthermore, many saw evil as estrangement from God not considered as a judge, but, in many cases, as our close companion during life, even in times of suffering and pain.

For the previously mentioned female interviewee, the ex-member of the Girl Guides, for example «God looks into the soul of each one of us and in his boundless mercy he will pardon everyone. There will probably be a form of justice quite unlike our worldly kind». Heaven, Purgatory and Hell are part of the «living experience» of Roman Catholics. In the words of another previously mentioned, male interviewee, however «not in allegorical terms, but as a dimension which we feel close to us».

In some of the interviews, health and illness, two inevitable conditions of life, are not considered either «divine blessings or maledictions». One young male interviewee, aged 25, holds that «at times, rather, the opposite is true because whatever our physical condition in life may be we should endeavour to live our faith». Faith helps and bestows deep inner serenity.

A sense of guilt is a modality which is not accepted because experienced «as an imposition not to do this or that». It is refused because it



is not the outcome of the elaboration of responsibly experienced personal choice, belonging to a faith which is also rationality.

The survey also revealed that the election of Pope Francis was welcomed by Rome's Roman Catholics who compare him favourably to previous popes, especially to John Paul II who is remembered above all for the World Youth Day. Besides, Pope Francis's Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy was experienced «with naturalness» claims a 28-year-old neocatechumenal woman married to a practicing Indian Moslem.

In this matrimony between people of different religions, based on reciprocal respect, this young woman has tried, when educating her two daughters, to find points of contact between the Roman Catholic and Islamic faiths, for example «we agree on the need to pay attention to poverty. What Pope Francis says and does is in keeping with the principles of Christianity and with what a pope should do. Francis delivers what the Catholic world needs». This interviewee also foregrounds an aspect of this papacy that is so unlike previous ones (though in continuity with them), that is, the risk that what Francis says may become the object of «instrumental political exploitation». This and other elements of the present pontificate are the object of in-depth scrutiny by many (Bova, 2016). Sociologist, Marco Marzano states that Pope Francis «is held in many cases to be the successor and not the betrayer, as many mistakenly claim, of the heredity of his Polish and German predecessors» (Marzano, 2016: 661). For one 53-year-old female interviewee «Francis seems to be a Pope who wishes to bring the Church back to care for the least of our brethren». This self-same idea is expressed by Roberto Cipriani when he writes about «attention to those who have been discarded by society and live on the margins, in poverty» (Cipriani, 2017: 330).

4. Conclusions

Concluding this examination of 29 Roman Catholics resident in Rome, it is possible to agree that religion «has reacquired space within the public sphere» (Stagi, 2017: 83), even in Italy. It may be considered a religion «in and of daily living» (Diotallevi, 2017: 29). The life stories presented in the survey confirm this. We witness, in Italy too, a drop in the numbers of older and younger people who practice a relig-



ion, though the category of the non-believers, another of society's «hard cores» is varied and complex (Garelli, 2016: 8-9), something that is confirmed by the studies of sociologists of religion like those quoted by Manuel Franzmann who claims that «each form of life-conduct rests on belief. Secularization does not resolve belief. It only transforms the *contents* of belief. That is why I proposed to use the notion of secular or secularized belief (or *faith*) instead of *unbelief*» (Franzmann, 2016: 2).

The Roman Catholicity revealed by the interviews conducted here is plural and polyhedral in all its nuances; it presents aspects that continue, though they also differ from the past ecclesiastic tradition which can no longer be proposed. In this instance too, it is possible to agree with Franzmann that we are dealing with «a puzzle of *secularity*» (Franzmann, 2016: 3), something already noticed by Weber and Berger. One needs to recall that Weber himself considered secularisation a process of «disenchantment, razionalization, and intellectualization» (Franzmann, 2016: 4), which leads us from a sociological point of view, to the interesting questions of a Catholicism which, for example, seems, in our country, to have broken off its direct relationship with politics. This hypothesis seems to have found confirmation among the subjects interviewed in our survey

Only two of the Roman Catholics interviewed by us considered politics in a positive light, while two others spoke of their negative experiences in that context, like the 48-year-old man who had become a card-holder of the Italian *Partito democratico* [Democratic Party] «with great joy» but is no longer a member today. For the young woman belonging to the Focolare Movement and who had provided help during the election campaign to her father a candidate for membership of the municipal authority and who failed by a single vote to be elected, political commitment «is a right and a duty». The experience proved negative, due, perhaps, to her honesty and rectitude.

The observations in this regard of one 48-year-old man are interesting. He speaks of «social policy» and considers it «correct when it promotes Christian ideas of life». His reference is to abortion and euthanasia, positions of vital importance when choosing the party to vote. These few references to the political ideas of the interviewees reveal differences within their positions which reflect the choices of Italians in general. Roman Catholics no longer sway political choices in



Italy, though, in one case, Christian values were said to be the element that caused the interviewee to vote for or against a party.

A recent Demos-coop survey carried out by sociologist and political scientist Ilvo Diamanti to examine perspectives and assess words and values which Italians cherish particularly, seems to agree with the opinions expressed by our interviewees. Work and voluntary service top the list of positive elements shared by most people in the Demos-coop survey along with the opinion that «despite everything, Pope Francis, is the only figure, the only person capable of arousing passion and hope» (la Repubblica, 2017: 1-3). The words which, however, again according to Diamanti, provoke the greatest contrast and division among Italian citizens are the Euro and the European Union (la Repubblica, 2017). It is significant that none of the 29 Roman Catholics interviewed by us mentioned either the Euro or the Eu, a datum significant because of its absence.

We live in a historical period where democracy is struggling, *disfigured* (Urbinati, 2014), is associated with a radical transformation of the great traditional political parties into post-ideological political movements (beyond right and left) and which fail to staunch the unstoppable decline in the legitimacy of politics. This reality is confirmed by the Roman Catholics studied here, who are not all that different from the rest of the general Italian population.

Globalisation, accepted but also criticized by citizens who feel oppressed and who often hold it responsible for economic recession and unemployment, has also encouraged Catholics to favour the «circulation and contamination of beliefs» (Pace, 2016: 219). The 29 interviews reveal, in fact, that even those who are members of ecclesial associations and movements also refer too to significant figures from other religions like Gandhi, or to oriental life experiences (yoga) belonging to different «living worlds». The relationship between food and religion underlined in some of the interviews is also interesting; a reality which identifies a religious system with the environment (Pace, 2016: 287).

The contemporary religious panorama, as Hervieu-Léger affirms can, therefore, be represented as «a scene in movement»; the centre around which individuals subjectively rework their religious experiences to find within themselves that mystical charisma already analysed by Weber (Hervieu-Léger, 2003: 125-126). The «pluralisms of collective systems of belief» have thus been strengthened (Hervieu-Léger, 2003: 146).



The survey carried out in Rome confirms and, therefore, adds further analytical elements to research which has already studied and examined the complex world of Italian Catholicism. It confirms the «social dimension» of Catholicism, how it transmits values through the family; it also foregrounds the existence of elements of «contamination» by other religious and cultural realities. The lack of reference to a project for Europe, increasingly in a state of crisis, suggests that the Eu and a united Europe no longer act as political references for Italian Catholics, thus posing questions to which, at the moment, it is difficult to provide adequate answers.

Might this not be one of the issues of a social nature to be undertaken by «the outgoing church» to which Pope Francis often refers (Theobald, 2016, 19)?

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Abstract

Introduction. Lived religion in Latin America and Europe. Roman Catholics and their practices, by *Gustavo Morello*

Scholars in Latin America tend to agree that the religious landscape of the region is undergoing transformation. Yet, there are on-going discussions about the causes, depth, and direction of this change. There is evidence that the Catholic Church no longer holds a religious monopoly, but not much research on how Roman Catholicism is practiced today has been carried out. The Author introduces a series of papers that presents a broader qualitative, comparative study that investigates the lived religion of Latin Americans in a wider cultural context which accounts for the influences of Spain and Italy in South America.

Keywords: pluralisation, religious practices, personal religiosity, religious authority, individualization

Roman Catholicism lived in Latin America and in Rome. The methodology employed, by *Verónica Roldán*

The Author presents the constituent milestones of the methodological cycle of an international research survey called *The transformation of lived religion in urban Latin America: a study of the contemporary Latin Americans' experience of the transcendent (in comparison with Southern Europe)*, carried out and which involved the collaboration, in a comparative study, of six universities from six different countries of which three Latin American (Argentina, Peru, Uruguay), two European (Italy, Spain) and one North American (Usa). In particular, the aim of the qualitative method used here was an understanding of *the subjective sense and the point of view* of social actors with the intension of bringing to light the "sociological views".

Keywords: qualitative methodology, comparative research, [Roman] Catholicism, lived religion



Being a Roman Catholic in a context of religious diversity. An exploration of lived religion among Catholics in Córdoba, Argentina, by *Hugo H. Rabbia* and *Lucas Gatica*

From a *lived religion* approach, the Authors explore how Catholics and ex-Catholics from Córdoba, Argentina, conceive “being Catholics”, and how they react to the plurality of religious options in their everyday lives. The conceptions are diverse and contested. Inter-religious practices are multiple, but when diversity is present within their own homes (inter-religious families) they prefer to avoid speaking of religion.

Keywords: lived religion, being a Catholic, religious pluralism, religious practices, spiritual narratives

Lived Roman Catholicism in Lima, by *Catalina Romero*, *Rolando Pérez* and *Veronique Lecaros*

Lima is a city where religions flourish in a context of religious transformation. The Authors approached lived Catholicism from a qualitative perspective considering urban diversity and different lifestyles. Differences in lived religion were found in three local domains of everyday life: 1) the family, which paves the way for school and sacred spaces; 2) the parish, where individuals seek to live their religion; 3) civil society, including the workplace and social organisations.

Keywords: lived [Roman] Catholicism, family, church, society

Individuals, institutions and spaces of faith. The case of Catholics in Uruguay, by *Valentina Pereira Arena* and *Camila Brusoni*

The Authors discuss the relationship that Catholic believers maintain with the religious institution through their own notions of spaces where faith and transcendence are lived. For both Catholics who are far from the institution and those who still have a link with it, the spaces for living religion are manifold and varied.

Keywords: Catholics, institutions, space, practices, Uruguay.



Roman Catholicism in Rome midst religion and religiosity, by *Cecilia Costa*

The Author discusses the *lived religion* of 29 Roman Catholics resident in Rome. The analysis is based on binomials like *individual/institution*, *spirituality/religion*, *autonomy/membership of a religious community*, and focuses, in particular, on the interviewees' perceptions of God, good-evil, faith and suffering and the figures of various Pontiffs.

Keywords: religiosity, spirituality, Roman Catholicism, Rome

The lived religion of Rome's Roman Catholics, by *Monica Simeoni*

The Author reflects on a segment of the complex and multifaceted experience of Italian Catholicism provided by the analysis of the life stories of 29 Roman Catholics from Rome, gathered during the year 2016. Socialisation appears to be the fundamental mode of transmission of religious values, together with a personalization and re-elaboration of religious beliefs.

Keywords: Catholicism, Rome, culture, socialisation, family



Resumen

Introducción. La religión vivida en América Latina y Europa. Los católicos y sus prácticas, por *Gustavo Morello*

Los académicos en América Latina tienden a estar de acuerdo en que el panorama religioso de la región está en transformación, aunque no hay acuerdo en torno a las causas, la profundidad y la dirección del cambio. Hay evidencia de que la iglesia católica ya no tiene un monopolio religioso, pero no hay mucha investigación sobre cómo se practica el catolicismo en la actualidad. El Autor presenta una amplia investigación cualitativa y comparativa sobre la religión vivida de los latinoamericanos en un contexto cultural que explica las influencias de España e Italia en América del Sur.

Palabras clave: pluralización, prácticas religiosas, religiosidad individual, autoridad religiosa, individualización

Catolicismo vivido en América Latina y Roma. La metodología de la investigación, por *Verónica Roldán*

La presente nota introductoria tiene el objetivo de presentar las etapas constitutivas del ciclo metodológico de la investigación internacional *La transformación de la religión vivida en América Latina: un estudio de la experiencia de lo trascendente de los latinoamericanos contemporáneos (en comparación con el Sur de Europa)*, en donde han colaborado, en un estudio comparativo, seis universidades de diferentes Países: tres latinoamericanos (Argentina, Perú, Uruguay), dos europeos (Italia, España) y uno norteamericano (Usa). El objetivo ha sido *comprender*, a través del método cualitativo, *el significado subjetivo* y el *punto de vista* del actor sobre los diferentes aspectos de su vida religiosa.

Palabras claves: religión vivida, catolicismo, América Latina, Roma, metodología cualitativa



Ser católico en un contexto de diversidad religiosa. Una exploración de la religión vivida entre los católicos de Córdoba, Argentina, por *Hugo H. Rabbia y Lucas Gatica*

Desde un enfoque de la *religión vivida (lived religion)*, los Autores exploran cómo los católicos y ex católicos de Córdoba, Argentina, conciben el “ser católico” y cómo actúan o reaccionan ante la pluralidad de opciones religiosas presentes en su vida cotidiana. Las concepciones son diversas y se presentan como disputadas. Las prácticas interreligiosas son múltiples, pero cuando la diversidad se encuentra en la propia casa (familias interreligiosas), se evita hablar de religión.

Palabras clave: religión vivida, ser católico, pluralismo religioso, prácticas religiosas, narrativas espirituales

Catolicismo vivido en Lima, por *Catalina Romero, Rolando Pérez y Veronique Lecaros*

Lima es una ciudad donde las religiones florecen en un contexto de transformación religiosa. Los Autores estudian el catolicismo vivido desde una perspectiva cualitativa, considerando la diversidad urbana y distintos estilos de vida. Encontramos diferencias en la religión vivida en tres espacios locales: 1) la familia, que lleva a la escuela y a lugares sagrados; 2) la parroquia, como institución donde individuos buscan vivir su religión; 3) la sociedad civil, incluyendo organizaciones sociales y de trabajo.

Palabras claves: catolicismo vivido, familia, iglesia y sociedad

Individuos, instituciones y espacios de fe. El caso de los católicos en Uruguay, por *Valentina Pereira Arena y Camila Brusoni*

Las Autoras analizan la relación que mantienen los creyentes católicos con la institución religiosa mediante sus propias nociones de los espacios en dónde la trascendencia es vivida. Tanto para el caso de los católicos alejados de la institución como para aquellos que aún



mantienen un vínculo, los espacios de vivencia de lo religioso se presentan múltiples y variados.

Palabras clave: católicos, instituciones, espacios, prácticas, Uruguay

El catolicismo en Roma, entre religión y religiosidad, por *Cecilia Costa*

La Autora discute la *religion vivida* de 29 católicos romanos residentes en Roma. El análisis se basa en los binomios *individuo/institución*, *espiritualidad/religión*, *autonomía/pertenencia a una comunidad religiosa* y en particular se centra en las percepciones de los entrevistados sobre Dios, el bien-mal, la fe, el sufrimiento y las figuras de los diversos pontífices.

Palabras clave: religiosidad, espiritualidad, catolicismo, Roma

La religión vivida de los católicos romanos, por *Monica Simeoni*

La Autora reflexiona sobre un fragmento del complejo y multifacético catolicismo italiano a partir del análisis de 29 historias de vida de católicos romanos recogidas durante el 2016. La socialización aparece como el modo fundamental de transmisión de los valores religiosos, junto a una interiorización y reelaboración personal de las creencias religiosas.

Palabras clave: catolicismo, Roma, cultura, socialización, familia



Sintesi

Introduzione. Vivere la religione in America Latina e in Europa. I cattolici e le loro pratiche, di Gustavo Morello

Gli studiosi tendono a concordare sul fatto che il panorama religioso della regione latinoamericana sia in trasformazione, ma per contro discutono ampiamente sulle cause, la profondità e la direzione di tale cambiamento. Vi sono evidenze che la chiesa cattolica non detenga più il monopolio religioso, ma al contempo non vi sono molte ricerche su come il cattolicesimo venga oggi praticato. L'Autore presenta un'articolata ricerca qualitativa e comparativa che cerca di dire come la religione sia vissuta dai latinoamericani in un contesto culturale che risente delle influenze della Spagna e dell'Italia.

Parole chiave: pluralizzazione, pratiche religiose, la religiosità individuale, l'autorità religiosa, individualizzazione

Cattolicesimo vissuto in America Latina e Roma. La metodologia della ricerca, di Verónica Roldán

L'Autrice presenta le tappe costitutive del ciclo metodologico della ricerca internazionale *The transformation of lived religion in urban Latin America: a study of contemporary Latin Americans' experience of the transcendent (in comparison with Southern Europe)*, che ha visto collaborare, in uno studio comparativo, sei università di sei differenti Paesi: tre latinoamericani (Argentina, Perù, Uruguay), due europei (Italia, Spagna) e uno nordamericano (Usa). L'obiettivo è stato quello di *comprendere*, attraverso il metodo qualitativo, *il senso soggettivo* e *il punto di vista* dell'attore circa i diversi aspetti del suo vissuto religioso.

Parole chiave: *lived religion*, cattolicesimo, America Latina, Roma, metodologia qualitativa



Essere cattolici in un contesto di diversità religiosa. Un'esplorazione della "religione vissuta" tra i cattolici di Córdoba, in Argentina, di *Hugo H. Rabbia e Lucas Gatica*

Partendo da un approccio di *religione vissuta*, gli Autori esplorano come i cattolici e gli ex cattolici di Córdoba, Argentina, concepiscono "l'essere cattolico" e come agiscono o reagiscono alla pluralità delle opzioni religiose presenti nella loro vita quotidiana. Le posizioni sono diverse e sono presentate come controverse. Le pratiche interreligiose sono molteplici ma, quando la diversità è presente in casa (famiglie interrelate), si evita di parlare di religione.

Parole chiave: religione vissuta, essere cattolici, pluralismo religioso, pratiche religiose, narrazioni spirituali

Il cattolicesimo vissuto a Lima, di *Catalina Romero, Rolando Pérez e Veronique Lecaros*

Lima è una città in cui le religioni prosperano in un contesto di trasformazione religiosa. Gli Autori studiano la pratica del cattolicesimo da una prospettiva qualitativa, considerando la diversità urbana e i diversi stili di vita. Si riscontrano differenze nella religione vissuta in tre spazi quotidiani di vita: 1) la famiglia, che introduce alla scuola e ai luoghi sacri; 2) la parrocchia, come istituzione in cui gli individui cercano di vivere la loro religione; 3) la società civile, che include le organizzazioni sociali e sindacali.

Parole chiave: cattolicesimo vissuto, famiglia, chiesa, società

Individui, istituzioni e spazi di fede. Il caso dei cattolici in Uruguay, di *Valentina Pereira Arena e Camila Brusoni*

Le Autrici analizzano la relazione che i credenti cattolici mantengono con l'istituzione religiosa attraverso la nozione di spazio in cui vivono la trascendenza. Gli spazi di religiosità appaiono molteplici e variegati tanto per i cattolici lontani dall'istituzione quanto per quelli che mantengono ancora un legame.

Parole chiave: cattolici, istituzioni, spazi, pratiche, Uruguay



Cattolicesimo a Roma tra religione e religiosità, di Cecilia Costa

L'Autrice discute la religiosità praticata da 29 cattolici residenti a Roma. L'analisi si basa su alcuni binomi quali *individuo/istituzione*, *spiritualità/religione*, *autonomia/appartenenza ad una comunità religiosa* e si focalizza in particolare sulle percezioni degli intervistati riferite a Dio, al bene-male, alla fede, alla sofferenza e alle figure di alcuni pontefici.

Parole chiave: religiosità, spiritualità, cattolicesimo, Roma

La religione vissuta dei cattolici romani, di Monica Simeoni

L'Autrice riflette su un frammento del complesso e poliedrico mondo del cattolicesimo italiano a partire dall'analisi di 29 interviste a cattolici romani, raccolte nel 2016. La socializzazione si conferma modalità fondamentale nella trasmissione dei valori religiosi accanto, però, ad una interiorizzazione e rielaborazione personale del credo religioso.

Parole chiave: cattolicesimo, Roma, cultura, socializzazione, famiglia