Studies in World Christianity
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Editor: Alistair Kee
This journal is designed to meet the new challenges to Western dominated Christian theology and religious studies, challenges which now come from: re-emergent religious cultures of the Non-Western world; the more intense encounters of religions that now occur in so many cultures, requiring each and all to go beyond the assessment of other religions simply as 'God’s way of preparing others for my religion'; those social sciences and ideologies of the West which are themselves re-thinking the kind of ethos and view of reality too often imposed under their influence, sometimes to the detriment of essentially religious dimensions of cultures.

The journal aims to provide a truly international forum for a dialogue of equals, so that, by a common hearing of the voices of those who respond most positively to these challenges, each from his or her own place, the related disciplines of Christian theology and religious studies may advance.

OCCASIONAL ACCOMPANYING BOOKS
STUDIES IN WORLD CHRISTIANITY will be accompanied by occasional books on theology and religion with the same focus and kind of content as the journal. The first titles are Kwame Bediako’s *Christ and Africa* and Joseph O’Leary’s *Religions Pluralism and Christian Truth*. Inquiries to EUP; manuscripts to the editor of SWC.

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Building up Ancestors in Argentinian Popular Culture: The Cases of Santa Gilda and el Angel Rodrigo

Do not think I am going to leave you; / this is not my farewell
A pause in our lives; / a silence between you and me.
Remember me at every moment / because I am going to be with you;
Do not think I am going to leave you, / because you will be with me.
Gilda, 'No es mi Despedida'

I know that you will be in the stars / wandering around the Milky Way;
The angels now play the piano, / they do not want to play the harp.
A long way to heaven, / everybody crying and suffering.
Heroes are not real / but you ... are a model for life.
Rodrigo, 'Un Largo Camino al Cielo'

1. INTRODUCTION

Many people have serious difficulties understanding what constitute popular cultures, especially in relation to popular religiosity. It is thought that this religiosity arises from people who are not well educated, whose beliefs are superstitions. The next step is often to disqualify those people and their beliefs, that is to say, to remove all value from them, degrading the term popular in light of what is considered cult. This presumes that institutional religion exists as socially normative and thus popular religiosity does not fit.

However, when we look back to the origins of Christianity, we realize that the first Christians also faced a similar situation. Their belief in Jesus Christ, which came from popular sectors, caused them to be disqualified when compared with the philosophers and the leaders of the important religions of their time. Especially among the Romans, Christians were
considered an *uneducated* people and socially unacceptable. It is paradoxical that *institutionalized Christianity* has forgotten this part of its own history and continues to treat popular sectors today in a way similar to the treatment of the first Christians.

Presently there are an infinite number of popular religious productions, within Christianity and other religions. Many of these expressions are not given in contexts that are considered necessarily as *religious* by the institutionalized religion. It is in the midst of this context now that the people are raising ancestors up. This article seeks to contribute to the contesting of certain prejudices regarding popular cultures, especially popular religiosity in Argentina in relation to the Cumbia movement. I will do this by exploring the popular religious practices surrounding two singers of tropical music: Gilda and Rodrigo.

### 2. DEFINING ‘POPULAR’

Defining the term *popular* is not easy. The notions of *culture*, *popular sectors*, *popular religiosity*, and *popular culture* always challenge researchers to take into account different elements like economy, politics, and ethnicity, among others, in order to define them. In his studies about popular Catholicism, Orlando Espin explains to us the difference between the notions of *popular* and *popularity*:

> Within the relatively short history of the academic study of Latino popular religion, I also find quite unacceptable the apparently innocent attempt by some scholars to approach the people's religion from a definition of the category ‘popular’ that is identified with ‘popularity’... By approaching the Latino religious universe in this fashion, these authors not only choose to ignore decades of very serious research that directly contradicts their misuse of the category ‘popular’, but more importantly, they deprive this term of its existential, socio-analytic and historical roots in the *pueblo*... Popular religion is popular not because it is widespread but because its creators and practitioners are the people, and more concretely, marginalized people in society (i.e., those social sectors pushed against their will to the dispensable or disposable margins of society.)

The notion of *popular* associated to *people* [*populus*] carries out the division between *popular culture* and *illustrated culture*. Paula Belmes traces this division to J.G. Herder. She says,
[T]he first division of popular culture as opposed to illustrated culture is indebted to the German writer J.G. Herder, who also stated the idea that songs, plays, customs and ceremonies are part of a conjunct that expresses 'the spirit of the people' (Volksgeist). It is in the same German environment where the strong division between the notions of civilization and culture are produced ... While in this dichotomy civilization represents the material life [of a nation], culture [represents] the spiritual life ... But beyond the romantic reaffirmation of the products of popular culture, the latter is identified mainly as the barbaric to be fought by culture.4

In connection with this division pointed out by Belmes, Néstor García Canclini addresses the analysis of the term popular in the following manner:

Popular cultures (rather than the singular popular culture) are configured through a process of unequal sharing of the economic and cultural goods of a nation or ethnic group by its subordinate sectors, and also through the understanding, reproduction, and the real and symbolic transformation of the general conditions of life and work.5

In following this notion in this paper I will identify popular culture and people as terms related to those sectors of society that do not possess the economic and political power of a nation. On the other hand, I will identify upper classes as those sectors of society who do possess the economic and political power of a nation, even when that possession would be, because of the globalization of Neoliberalism,6 a symbolic one.7

Important figures like Gilda or Rodrigo appeal to a life in connection with the deep mythical foundation of a culture. This mythical foundation has an intimate relation with the religious world:

What is popular goes together with that condition of stability and penetration. Consequently, popular culture is religious in its more intimate core, and is loaded with inexhaustible symbolism. Beyond the superficial (or even deep!) catechization, the people's own religiosity remains, perhaps diffuse, but none the less deep-rooted. The example of the poets or the popular singers is eloquent: although they may not be believers in a doctrinal sense, they need to use a symbolism that celebrates the sacredness and the depth of the being of the people.8
In this sense, what defines the popular is not the rite, but the relationality of those elements with the daily life of people. Espin defines it clearly:

In summary, Latino popular religion is a network: a particular resulting configuration of relationships between/among beliefs, ethical expectations, rites and experiences. This configuration/network posits as plausible the operative, daily-life understanding of 'God', 'life', etc. ... The rituals, devotions, and objects of popular religion, are, therefore, not the issue, the defining factors, or much less the question in the study of Latino popular religion. The rituals, devotions, and objects, however, have been historically shown to be capable of acting as significant means of social empowerment, as well as challenges to previously plausible perceptions and understandings of reality and of experiencia. In this view, the ritual, devotions, and objects cannot be easily dismissed or treated as epistemologically insignificant.9

In this way, the emergence of the popular saints, like Santa Gilda or el Angel Rodrigo, through ritual practices and use of cultic objects, appeals to human experience, especially the experience of death. Popular songs often deal with feelings and situations that human beings have lived. Many times we find that the strongest criticism of popular music centres on the content of its message.10 It seems that popular cultures would be expected to act according to what intellectuals think, which means having a critical analysis of reality and seeking to overcome the mechanisms that impoverish popular sectors. That is an expectation rarely fulfilled even by the upper classes. Popular cultures, especially popular religiosity, produce their own resistance to deal with daily life situations. But this resistance uses a coded symbolism in its messages in songs and folklore that intellectuals or upper classes are not always able to decipher. Acting in this way, popular cultures constitute a concealed and concrete protest, but in a way that does not always follow the expectations of the other sectors of society. This power game produces misinterpretations and misunderstandings, which are mostly hidden by the disqualification of popular sectors.11

The analysis of socio-economic issues as well as the denunciation of unjust structures in society are part of an analysis made by intellectuals that is not necessarily absent from productions of popular culture. It is the way in which popular cultures do those analyses that is different. Human beings have many other concerns: not only do they love, dream, trust each other, or enjoy life, but they also get disappointed, abandoned, deceived,
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and defrauded. Even more, they seek to understand death, and they wonder about the meaning of life. All this is important, and it is related to daily life and to society, but in a different way. In many cases, this is the subject matter of popular songs.

Famous people speaking of everyday situations in their songs are taken as paradigms for daily life in popular cultures, beyond the critiques of those who do not want to dive into the popular mentality in search of hints to understand these phenomena. They represent for people archetypes, that is to say, models of being human. Those archetypes, because they emerge from popular sectors, are able to provide with their lives or productions important critiques of the ways societies are organized. Jorge Rivero, in comparing the end of the twentieth century with the nineteenth century, affirms that popular religious expressions are the synthesis of collective experiences that need to be configured into models of heroes and antiheros who embody the flow of social dynamics. In this way, these heroes and antiheros still express some deep values of the human and social condition, such as the spirit of rebellion, the respect for certain basic loyalties or the common resource to a sentimentalism that was mistaken by many... for pure stereotyped and tearful melodramatics, when in fact it expressed, as an existential attitude, a deep determination to impose over the individual and collective misfortune some compensatory and, at the same time overcoming, device.

The fact that the construction of these popular heroes and antiheroes entailed an authentic display of qualities, such as courage, stoicism, loyalty, inventiveness, nerve in front of adversity, or the expression of solidarity, demonstrates the perception, sometimes diffuse, of a typical feature in such a context: if a space of cohesion exists, through the exaltation of certain compatible and achievable values, it is because one senses, at the same time, a feasible horizon of mobility and collective fulfilment.12

From this point on, we need only go one more step to arrive at popular religiosity. God acts in the midst of these situations. People need divine intervention in difficult life situations: hunger, unemployment, solitude, and individualism. This is a fact that intellectuals or upper classes are not all the time able to understand.13
3. CUMBIA AND TANGO AS A CONTEXT OF POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

3.1. The Cumbia Movement

Gilda and Rodrigo are part of a phenomenon that was taken into account by the media starting in 1989. It coincided with the economic depression that occurred during the presidencies of Raúl Alfonsín and Carlos Saúl Menem. La Cumbia is one of the musical movements that succeeded the *rumba*, a very popular form of music in the 1940s and 50s, which was most successful in Buenos Aires' *boites.* In the 1970s and 80s bands like Los Mirlos from Peru and *El Quinteto Imperial* entertained the parties of many working-class families. Similarly, in Córdoba, *El Cuarteto* started to grow as a popular rhythm, arriving on the scene with singers like Gary, Carlos 'la Mona' Jimenez and Miguel 'Conejito' Alejandro. *El Cuarteto* is only one of the regional rhythms where tropical music is expressed. The *movimiento tropical*, as the Cumbia movement is also called, mixed the Andean rhythms from Salta and Jujuy (in northwestern Argentina) and southern Bolivia. This particular rhythm, expressed in the work of Ricky Maravilla, shows how tropical music is not a homogeneous movement. A very different rhythm was developed in the State of Santa Fe and the Litoral region, where *Los Palmeras* and *Pancho y la Sonora Colorada* became very popular, frequently collaborating or competing with *Chamamé* music. At the same time in Paraguay, *La Cachaca* developed from the strong influence of Paraguayan *polka*, with bands like *Los Sandys*. Many of these bands have had long careers, although the mass media has only very recently *discovered* them.

In Buenos Aires, all these regional rhythms that make up the *movimiento tropical* were mixed in new dancing clubs or *bailantas*, as they are called. There, bricklayers, truck drivers, domestic employees, teenagers from the neighbourhoods of Greater Buenos Aires, together with Paraguayan, Bolivian, Chilean, Peruvian, and Uruguayan immigrants, intermingled with other migrants coming from all over Argentina. Whether they were single adults, widowers, or divorced, they represented the mixture of different social classes, local cultures, and even the wide ethnic plurality of the country, especially Greater Buenos Aires. In 1992, the singer Ricky Maravilla was invited to sing at a party in the Buenos Aires' *barrio* of La Recoleta. *La Cumbia* had conquered the whole of Argentina. Music managers took advantage of this movement and began to promote new bands and soloists, gathering them each weekend in endless musical television shows. *La bailanta*, transformed from dance clubs to *money-making machines*, had come to stay.
3.2. The Tango phenomenon

This Cumbia phenomenon is not a new thing in the popular imagery of Argentinean culture. Sixty years before, a phenomenon happened to an unknown singer who was conquering, little by little, the popular and marginal sectors of Buenos Aires neighbourhoods with his orchestra. I am referring to Carlos Gardel and his Tango.20

The tango, as a musical phenomenon, was born in the suburbs and brothels of Buenos Aires.21 It was the rhythm of men who were challenged in fights, knife in hand, to defend their territory or possession, which many times was a lio de polleras.22 The experiences of those men, who interacted with prostituted women or with working-class women, were also the topic of most of tango lyrics. Some of the places where this music was performed and danced were also called Tango. Carlos Gardel, among others, improved an old musical movement that originated in the nineteenth century. It was from the second half of that century that freed slaves, who were the heirs of African-Latin American popular music, developed tango music in suburban barrios and places near the harbour. The tango that the freed slaves produced was a very undefined rhythm, since all the music produced in those places was called tango.23 Truly it was music of black people, although, in turn, it mixed with unmistakably Spanish rhythmic influences. Thus, the expression negro/black music became a racist/classist prejudice in Argentinian popular culture, used to degrade someone because of her/his popular background of origin.

In its beginnings, the tango was not well appreciated by much of Argentinian society, which considered it to be ignorant and vulgar. In principle, it was danced exclusively among men since the tango lyrics were considered vulgar and thus not appropriate for women.24 Tango also did not carry out any cultured philosophical content or moral values that the Argentinian upper classes expected of cultured music and dance. Tango lyrics only spoke of the lives of frustrated loves, broken hearts, and absent lovers. Political concerns, such as denouncing the consequences of the Great Depression in the 1930s or the results of the World Wars, were not present in tango lyrics. However, the teenagers of the Buenos Aires bourgeoisie little by little adopted this music as their own. Los niños bien (wealthy kids), the nickname given to those upper-class teenagers, used to visit los arrabales (brothels) in order to dance, have fun, and have sex with prostitutes. The forbidden love of rich men with poor women, even former prostitutes, was reason enough for scandal in the upper classes of Buenos Aires.25 The bourgeoisie intellectualized the tango, modifying its
lyrics, correcting its spelling and grammatical construction in order to make it more acceptable, even softening some words of the *lunfardo* – the crude slang of Buenos Aires.²⁶

*Tango* thus entered the *boites* of Buenos Aires and soon became a success around the world in France, Japan, even in Hollywood movies.²⁷ It became the Argentinian expression *par excellence*. The rhythm that was disqualified by many, condemned because of its popular character, was now danced and even taught by those who had looked down upon it. When we turn to the *Cumbia* movement, we notice that much of the critiques and arguments used to judge this phenomenon are similar to those of the *tango* phenomenon seventy years before.

4. REACHING HEAVEN: ON BECOMING A FIGURE OF POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

Gilda and Rodrigo, loved by their fans, are criticized by people for whom this music produces racist/classist opinions: 'Es música de negros,'²⁸ 'It is music for people who consume any thing,' 'What else can one expect from the poor?' and so forth. On the one hand, for those who love Gilda, she is *Santa Gilda*, a saintly woman who died early in life. Her death is an inexplicable mystery. It is seen as a horrendous accident that truncated the life of a very young woman. On the other hand, Rodrigo is considered an angel, a good man who died and was then transformed into someone who can protect whoever trusts in him. These kinds of deaths may have led people to conclude 'God surely listens to them, and it is for that reason that they will help us if we pray to them'.

4.1. The Case of Gilda

4.1.1. De Vita Gildae

*Cumbia* singer Gilda died in an automobile accident on 7 September 1996. On that fateful morning at kilometer 129 on route 12 in Paranacito, Entre Ríos, a truck hit her tour bus, which was transporting her whole band and Gilda's family. They were all returning from Rosario city, where she had given a concert. Gilda, her mother, her daughter Mariel, and four of the musicians of her band perished in the accident. Her husband and her son were left gravely injured but they survived. From this moment, Gilda, who was at the zenith of her career, became a symbol of the *movimiento tropical*.²⁹

Gilda, whose true name was Mirian Alejandra Bianchi, was born on 11 October 1961 in Villa Devoto, Buenos Aires. Her music career began in 1993. When she died she was only thirty-five years old.³⁰ Year after year,
on 7 September a multitude of people congregate in Plaza Miserere, a
square in front of September 11 railway station, in El Barrio of Balvanera,
Buenos Aires. There they offer their homage to Gilda. At Gilda's tomb
in La Chacarita cemetery, thousands of fans offer flowers, drawings, and
pictures. At the site of the accident, a chapel has been erected which has
been destroyed many times by unknown people. The same thing has
happened at Gilda's Square, which has been built by the people of José C.
Paz, a barrio located in Greater Buenos Aires.

4.1.2. Santa Gilda

Underlying the phenomenon of Santa Gilda, as well as el Angel Rodrigo,
we find religious questions that lie beyond institutionalized Christianity.
Religious issues do not exist locked in temples but rather they emerge
in widely diffuse places. As we said earlier, Gilda is, for many people's
religiosity, a Santa. I would like to turn to four testimonies offered by
people who feel Gilda to be a religious saint.

David, a sixteen-year-old teenager, expresses his feelings in a way that
resembles the public confession of evangelical traditions:

She is everything for me, you know what I mean? I have always liked
her. I have always followed her. She did not die, man; she is in my
heart. Gilda goes on singing and reigning over the Cumbia movement.
All that she triggers in me comes from the heart.

Ariel, another adolescent, perceives the constant witness and company
of Gilda, a characteristic of the Santas and the Santos of Christian piety:

We come to see and to listen to all that is related to our idola, the
teacher, the greatest that exists and that will exist until the end of time
... She will be present until the day when we go to her, to be next to her.
We are very fanatical: she is unique.

Angel Rosemary is twenty-four years old. He feels a similar experience
that has been expressed in previous testimonies: 'Every time we can, we
come to listen to her, because we know that from somewhere she is looking
at us.' This is the feeling of constant companionship and the special
protection a saint brings to people by watching over them.

These feelings are also translated into actions; Gilda's fans are inspired
by her to live their lives in certain ways on her behalf. This is the spirit of
another testimony offered by a group of thirty-year-olds from a barrio of
Greater Buenos Aires:
We want to help the oldest people because Gilda said that everybody cares for children, but nearly nobody helps seniors ... We want to do something for the viejitos [little elders] that are destitute and do not have anyone who cares for them. Gilda would have wanted it, because it was very painful for her to see seniors lying down in the stations or begging for a coin or some food on the streets.

When we listen to this type of declaration, we cannot avoid the resonance of the testimonies of people who pray every 7 August at the Basilica of San Cayetano in Liniers, one of the most visited areas of Buenos Aires, or of those who pray at the sanctuary of Our Lady of San Nicolás, in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Gilda, as a popular saint, also has a specific prayer attributed to her: 'Gilda, do not abandon me at any moment, because I need your infinite kindness to protect me from all evil.' Special prayers are also attributed to other manifestations of popular religiosity such as El Gauchito Gil, La Difunta Correal in San Juan, or even Carlos Gardel, Eva Perón, or Maria Soledad, just to mention some of the vast examples of popular saints in Argentina. I turn now to the singer Rodrigo, who also lost his life in an accident at a very young age. El Angel Rodrigo is a phenomenon similar to Santa Gilda.

4.2. The Case of Rodrigo

4.2.1. De Vita Rodriginis

Rodrigo, also known by the nickname of El Potro (the young stud), died in an automobile accident on 24 June 2000. Rodrigo was coming from a concert in La Plata, the capital of the State of Buenos Aires. At kilometre 25 on the freeway from La Plata toward Buenos Aires City, the truck carrying Rodrigo, his ex-wife Patricia, his son Ezequiel Ramiro, his friend Fernando Olmedo, his assistant Gustavo Cachi Pereyra, and his producer El Negro Moreno, was hit by a white truck that had been following them since the toll booth several kilometres behind them. Rodrigo and his friend Fernando Olmedo died in the tragic accident. Rodrigo was at that moment, like Gilda, at the zenith of his career. At the moment of his death, Rodrigo was only twenty-seven years old.

Rodrigo Alejandro Bueno was born on 24 May 1973 in Córdoba city, the capital of the State of Córdoba. He began his music career in 1984 singing in the band Chévere, when he was only eleven years old. He recorded his first solo song when he was fifteen years old. He was one of the few singers who was able to fill up El Luna Park, one of the most famous stadiums in
Buenos Aires City. Perhaps one of the most shocking aspects of the death of Rodrigo is that he died on the anniversary of the death of Carlos Gardel, 24 June 1935. Gardel also died in a tragic accident, at Medellín Airport in Colombia. The people built a shrine to Rodrigo at the place of the accident, which is visited every day by hundreds of people who pray to him for miracles.

4.2.2. El Angel Rodrigo

Rodrigo had thus become a figure of popular religiosity. After his death, the people changed his nickname to El Angel (the angel). Rodrigo, transformed into el Angel Rodrigo, is now a popular saint able to grant miracles to his faithful followers.

Canal Infinito, one of the television channels in Argentina, opened a survey on the Internet with this question: 'Do you think that the deceased Argentine singer Rodrigo can really grant miracles?' Hundreds of testimonies about the miracles of Rodrigo have crowded the website since the posting of the survey. Let me turn to some of those testimonies.

Sabry points out in her testimony that el Angel Rodrigo is like a messenger. She says,

I believe that El Ro [short for Rodrigo] can perform miracles because he is a person who came to earth to fulfil a mission, that is, to entertain and make the people who trusted in him happier. Fulfilling that mission, he surely made the people who live in heaven happier, that is why he left so prematurely ... He is my angel.43

Huguin emphasizes the faith aspect of el Angel Rodrigo: 'This is the product of faith ... With faith you can move mountains and, why not ... get miracles, too.'44

Claudia describes profoundly the angelic aspect of el Angel Rodrigo, especially in believing the nearness of Rodrigo to God:

Miracles happen according to the faith one has, and those who love Rodrigo believe he is with God. He is an angel and can grant miracles to the people who trust in him. He was the best on this earth, and I am sure he is now the best in heaven. It is a pity that God took him away so soon; God could have allowed us to enjoy more of his existence. Without him, life is not the same. A half of our heart died that ill-fated June 24, 2000. The only thing I ask from God and Rodrigo is that the day I die, he [Rodrigo] would be waiting for me with open arms so I would be able to tell him how much I've loved him ...45
Marianne describes the constant presence of *el Angel Rodrigo* in a way similar to popular descriptions of the actions of *el Angel de la Guardia* (the Guardian Angel), a very common devotion in Argentinian popular religiosity:

Only those who truly love him know how special he was, the outstanding brightness of his crystalline gaze, and the sweetness of his words in every painful situation. Very few know about his great sensitivity and his sincere disposition for helping others to smile. A part of my life is gone with him, but I only have to call him and ask for help in a bad moment to feel his presence by my side and a relief from my anguish, whatever it could be. He saved my life, and he still keeps on helping me from heaven; he looks after me and protects me twenty-four hours a day. I adore him and I will always be indebted to him...

Finally, Tincho, on the day of the third anniversary of Rodrigo’s death, testified of the constant help *el Angel Rodrigo* has given him in his life: ‘I have corroborated that ro[d]rigo [sic] really makes miracles; he has helped me in a lot of situations in these three years. He really has that capacity.’

At Rodrigo’s shrine ‘people sing his songs, pray for help, raise crosses in his name, and drop beer – his favorite drink – on the floor’. This liturgy of popular religiosity is not that different from that conducted at the sanctuary of *La Virgen que Desata los Nudos* or *San Cayetano* in Buenos Aires or *el Gauchito Gil* in *El Litoral* region. It shows the faith of the people yearning for the presence of the Divine in their daily life.

4.3. Unpacking the Process of ‘Popular Beatification’

Critiques of the *movimiento tropical* say that its accompanying popular religiosity does not make sense. Could it be possible that it is merely superstition? Could there really be some hidden meaning in the superstition that rationality is not able to see? I believe that *Santa Gilda* or *el angel Rodrigo*, as well as each of the popular saints mentioned before, represent for people an archetype, that is to say, a model of being human that appeals to human desires. On the one hand, it occurs through a process of *re-signification* that gives a new experience of the person who is considered as a popular saint. This process takes into account not only what the person was in her/his life, but also what s/he represented for people when s/he was alive. People do not care so much about the truth of her/his biography, but primarily how her/his life, her/his statements, or
her/his work embody popular expressions. On the other hand, experts talk about trans-signification. The popular person is taken as symbol, and then becomes mediator between human beings and the Divine. This is understood only if that person was good and died in a sudden and tragic way. People seek a way to make meaning of the tragic death of someone whom they perceive to have been a good person. We can wonder if what underlies collective unconsciousness is the same question that Job and his friends asked: why do good people suffer/die this way?

The question of suffering and sudden death is very strong in people's mind as well as in popular cultures. For this reason, the songs of Gilda and Rodrigo, or of any other popular singer, can touch the depth of people's hearts. Santa Gilda, el Angel Rodrigo, and other popular saints play a very important role in daily life as they appeal to the sacred aspect of existence:

> Even when popular culture is violated by a process of technification ... it remains attached to its roots; in songs and folklore it re-says the sacredness of its origins and its foundation in the world. All things considered, it is human beings who talk about themselves and 'say' their meaning of the cosmos.

The Cumbia phenomenon uses elements present in popular cultures through its songs. In popular religiosity, the God presented by institutionalized Christianity is often seen as quite distant. Even more, Christ is considered so sublime and important that his humanity is not perceived clearly, thus the need for another mediator, someone whom people see as more human. Mediators are necessary bridges that enable an encounter with the Divine. In this sense, Gilda is the perfect fully human archetype: she loved, she suffered, she was a mother, she was divorced, and she died tragically. Therefore, it is believed that she can better understand a person who suffers in los barrios of Buenos Aires, or in any other city of Argentina. Surely, it is this ability that places Gilda near to God. In many aspects, a symbiosis between the Virgin Mary and other feminine mediators takes place in popular religious experiences. The case of Rodrigo is very similar. All these processes exist mostly free of religious intellectuals.

The difference between Santa Gilda and el Angel Rodrigo in this popular beatification relies on their sexuality. While Gilda is a Santa (female saint), Rodrigo is an Angel, which in Christianity has a very ambiguous definition in relation to sexuality. While for the official doctrine of angelology, angels are asexual, for the popular images of angels; they are mainly men. It is very rare to see pictures, holy cards, or stories of angels who are female. On the one side, the emphasis on Gilda is placed on her maternity, as a
semblance of the duties of women, that is, to be wives and mothers. On the other side, Rodrigo was known as *El Potro* (the young stud), which is a highly sexual image. It emphasizes the energy and potential sexual energy that this young singer shows as a model of masculinity to his followers, whether a model to imitate in the case of men or an object of sexual desire in the case of women. No wonder that, in order to reach heaven, Rodrigo has to change his sexual energy of *El Potro* for the more settled, asexual image of an angel.

What underlies this process of beatification is the notion of sexual division of labour, which is represented in the charismas of these two popular saints. While Santa Gilda protects her children as a mother like the Virgin Mary, el Angel Rodrigo protects them as a father. In both cases, it is hard for the children to think of their parents as capable of any sexual passion! This is why Rodrigo has been converted in his process of sanctification into a messenger of God. This shows how in popular culture the performance of hetero sexual images is re adapted in religious worldviews. In this popular divine economy it is required of the popular saints that they be also models of acceptable/decent performance of their sexuality, even at the risk of losing that sexuality in the process.

Therefore, popular religiosity does not contradict the moral sanction, especially the tutorship that Roman Catholicism has exercised over the country since the time of the colonies. This morality has underpinned the collective unconsciousness of Argentinian society. Sexuality and gender performances have to remain in secure boxes in order to be controlled by hetero-patriarchalism through institutionalized Christianity. As a requirement for the process of beatification, popular saints have to restrain themselves from any image which could subvert the sanction notion of sexuality, even if the step implies a complete asexualization, as in the case of el Angel Rodrigo. In the case of Santa Gilda, motherhood is emphasized in order to guarantee the respectability of Gilda as a decent woman.

In this sense, the cases of Santa Gilda and el Angel Rodrigo reaffirm standard traditional archetypes of human beings in a predominantly hetero-patriarchal society. Perhaps, this could explain why women predominantly follow these popular saints. In any case, we are about to see how popular religiosity will address this particular issue in the future, especially in the midst of a frank discussion about the place of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, and intersex individuals in Argentine society.
5. RECOVERING POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

5.1. Popular religiosity as a new episteme

At the base of popular religiosity is the critique of modernist rationalism. Even in its critical forms like socialism, which seek to be in solidarity with grassroots people, the rationalist element of modernism remains privileged. Popular religiosity, without denying the rationalism of faith, opens up spaces to value and acknowledge experience. Popular religiosity approaches faith from the place of experience first, and only later from rationalism. In this sense, we come to the core of popular religiosity, that is, the function/role of establishing a new kind of rationality (episteme) that values the personal and collective experience of people as the subjects of faith and theology. Even more, this type of rationality is already present in different contexts throughout the ages, but most of the time it has been denied by intellectuals who have misunderstood that which they categorized as popular. Instead of recognizing popular as that which is the production of the people, they understood popular as vulgar and non-cult. This process is called Eurocentrism. Contemporary popular religiosity, as it is lived in third-world countries, is a positive step in the recovery of a wider understanding of religiosity and rationality. Popular religiosity also values the richness of the whole universe and all its beings, an issue long reclaimed by Liberation Theologies in relation to the poor.

Contemporary Latin American Liberation Theology movements in Argentina are recovering popular religiosity as a deep value. Although this claim is made mostly from Base Community churches, the academy also has started to move in that direction. The Seminario de Formación Teológica (Seminar for Theological Training, or SFT) has courageously rescued popular religiosity as a valuable resource for the wide Christian Church. The SFT is an annual ecumenical gathering of about two thousand lay people, religious, and community leaders, as well as social activists, who meet in one of the cities in Argentina for a week of theological reflection, worship, and social action. Sociologists such as Fortunato Mallimaci (in the field of popular Catholicism) and Hilario Wynarczyk (in the field of popular Protestantism and Pentecostalism), and phenomenologists of religion such as José Severino Croatto have also rescued the value of popular religiosity in Argentina as part of their work in the academy.

The recovery of the richness of popular religiosity occurs in the context of a self-identified Christian country. On the one hand, Argentina has been strongly influenced by Roman Catholicism, which has exerted tutorship over society since colonization. On the other hand, Argentina has also
faced the influence of Protestant–Evangelical Churches. Most of these latter churches are very conservative due to the influence of missionary ideas imported from the United States that are exogenous to Latin American context and history. Given this situation, popular religiosity has found different ways to survive in a hostile environment. Among Protestant–Evangelicals, popular religiosity has been channelled in the Pentecostal Movement, which has produced a variety of churches and healing-houses in Argentina. Among Roman Catholics, popular religiosity has thrived in Afro-Brazilian religions (Cambomble, Umbanda, and Kimbanda) and in popular devotions like San Cayetano or El Gauchito Gil.  

5.2. Popular religiosity: Christian religiosity?

Many times institutionalized Christianity and its theology feel a sensation of failure when it observes its lack of attention to popular cultures. The Christian message has got very far from the popular sectors, which lie mostly in the other direction from what institutionalized Christianity expects. Christ is God incarnate in order to bring human beings nearer to the Divine Being. But it seems that the image of Christ is no longer able to communicate this mediation to popular cultures or, if it does so, it needs a chain of mediators that can reach Christ in order to get, finally, to God. Despite some efforts of institutionalized Christianity to bring people nearer to Christ in a liberal way, we can see that rarely does it triumph in its efforts.

It seems that most academic theology does not realize that popular religiosity relates to the real necessities of people. Perhaps if people have ceased to go to church, it is because institutionalized Christianity has not known how to achieve an empathy with them. Many times it is difficult for institutionalized Christianity to understand the basic necessities of the people and to overcome the situation of miscommunication of those needs. Instead, it has forced people to adapt themselves to a pre-elaborated form of Christianity, forcing them to abandon elements deeply ingrained in their beings. To acknowledge this situation reconfigures institutionalized Christianity and academic theology to abandon the erroneous notion of the lack in popular cultures. According to this notion, there is a cultural wealth possessed by middle or upper classes, which is absent in popular cultures/religiosity. Just the opposite is true: popular religiosity possesses its own cultural wealth by positively and concretely capturing people's concerns in daily life and being able to integrate them into answers for their lives. This is its episteme.
It is a mistake to believe that people can be reached without acknowledging the reality of a very human mediation with the Divine that exists in popular religiosity. Recognizing this reality reworks the concept of mediation in order to recognize Christ in a real way. This is exactly what Jesus himself did. For example, it is in the parables that Jesus was able to concentrate on people’s concerns and to connect them with God in a deep and effective way. If Jesus and his message were able to exert such a deep impact in the society of his time, it was because of Jesus’ understanding of the simple logic of the people of his time. He achieved empathy with the people and with their concerns. Jesus did not worry so much about transmitting a dogma to be perpetuated through eternity. Instead, he challenged each human being to imitate/follow him.

In fact, this was the dispute that Jesus continually had with the Pharisees. If there is something wonderful and captivating about Jesus’ character, it is the fact that he fully expressed his own humanity, which led him to value individuals deeply, being identified with their difficult life situations. When Jesus cried for his dead friend, when he was touched by the death of the only son of a widowed old woman, when he shared the knowledge of God with women – a forbidden act – or even when he recognized the humanity of a prostituted woman, that was the powerful manifestation of the humanity and power of Jesus. It is necessary to have this deep relationship with God in order to value humanity beyond what we see, to avoid falling into the manipulation of using human beings for our own capricious ends. Jesus wanted human beings to imagine with God’s eyes what they could be. When Christianity denies the value of popular religiosity, it also denies the deep and integral proposal for human beings to assume their humanity fully in the light of a God who embodied full humanity in the person of Jesus. God, in Jesus, was more interested in the daily situations of human beings than in following empty traditions.

A phenomenon like the veneration of Santa Gilda or el Angel Rodrigo in Argentinian popular religiosity is a call for institutionalized Christianity to reflect on its own spirituality. It criticizes the aspiration for the omni-comprehension of reality that excludes what popular sectors think and feel about themselves or about their relationship with the Divine. On the contrary, institutionalized Christianity criticizes popular expressions like Pentecostalism, denying a legitimate Divine presence in it.

The challenge is formidable. It necessitates a seeking of the other/s as such and with/from them discover God. Christians have not been sent into the world in order to transmit theological discussions, but to announce the message of the fullness of life in Jesus Christ. The other/s shows us
the path to discover where Jesus' message traffics today in concrete forms. Colonization enters when institutionalized Christianity either forces the other/s to accept its own theological discussions or represses people's expressions of their full humanity. The spirituality surrounding Santa Gilda and el Angel Rodrigo is faith in search of meaning; a meaning that institutionalized Christianity has failed to transmit to the people.

6. CONCLUSION

Institutionalized Christianity could engage in dialogue with other expressions of faith like the veneration of popular saints such as Santa Gilda or el Angel Rodrigo. But in order to do this, institutionalized Christianity has to recover the image of a risen and very present Christ in daily life. A phenomenon like Santa Gilda or el Angel Rodrigo constitutes a call for a commitment by institutionalized Christianity to revise its own spirituality. People engaged in popular religiosity are asking for an experience of God closer to the situations of their daily life. They want God to accompany them in each situation of life. Both Santa Gilda and el Angel Rodrigo are but a few of the expressions that people find in order to reach God; they are not the only ones. There are also other singers and bands that embody people's difficult experiences. Are they going to become popular saints too? They challenge institutionalized Christianity to understand how the different communities that identify with those bands are discovering the humanity of Jesus. It is not the mission of institutionalized Christianity to condemn the roads by which humanity expresses its experience of God.

People need the human aspect of God to be clearer and nearer to them. The message of the incarnation is in fact about God assuming full humanity in Jesus. It is the duty of theologians and the duty of churches not to leave Christ locked inside temples, nor to remove him from the people. On the contrary, popular religiosity makes manifest what Jesus said: 'I am with you every day, until the end of the world.' Meanwhile, the value of people's faith in expressions like Santa Gilda or el Angel Rodrigo can guide institutionalized Christianity to witness the love of God for the whole of humanity in discovering the meaning of popular religiosity and its connection with the risen Christ.

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NOTES

1. In this paper I will oppose the categories institutional Christianity and popular religiosity. On the one hand, I understand institutionalized Christianity as the official and organized churches and confessions within Christianity which, most of the time, enjoy social acceptance. In Argentina, the Roman Catholic Church and traditional Protestant Churches represent institutionalized Christianity. On the other hand, I understand popular religiosity as those religious expressions which are uncontrolled by institutionalized Christianity. For further explanation about the difference between official (institutionalized) and nonofficial (popular) religion, see McGuire, 1997: chapter 4. See also Donini, 1985: 17–20. I prefer to use the category popular religiosity instead of popular Catholicism, in order to open up the dynamics of the popular saints of this article to other experiences that could come from different traditions rather than Roman Catholicism. On this, see Dussel and Esandi, 1970: 45.


3. Espin, 1997: 161–2. Italics in the original. The work of Dr Espin is doubly important since he not only systematizes the experiences of popular Catholicism in a context like the United States, but also offers theological reflections on those experiences.


6. Neoliberalism is usually associated with the role of the state and the reduction of its relation with economic and social affairs. There are three forms of Neoliberalism; the most common is that related to economic international policies that enhance globalization through institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Those international policies have ended up in the accumulation of wealth benefits in narrow elites and an unprecedented growth of poverty and instability of Third World countries. See Collins, 2000: 334–5.

7. I especially follow Espin here who identifies people with marginalized people in society. (See Espin, 1997: 162.)

8. Ibid., p. 369.

9. Ibid., p. 166. Italics in the original.

10. In this respect see Castro, 1969, especially the introduction: he analyses the direct connection between popular religiosity and folklore as its means of expression. He also notes the difficulty for institutionalized Christianity of acknowledging popular religious experience, except for a few examples like the Pacha Mama cult in popular Catholicism in Argentina, which is a profound chapter in his research.


13. ‘Any believer from a rationalized and modern religion would argue that God acts in her/his life and determines the triumphs and defeats, happiness and sadness, health and illness that happen in daily life. Even when paragraphs of the Bible are read such as the book of Job what is analyzed is its symbolic content. In popular sectors this perception is
the opposite. The divine intervenes in daily life and determines those situations. In this sense, Pentecostalism constitutes a better answer for the needs of the believers than the one from traditional Catholic Christianity (Roman Catholic and Protestant) (Belmes, 2001: 12).

14. This was the name given to dance clubs in Buenos Aires during the 1940s and 50s.

15. In this respect, Carlos 'La Mona' Jimênez affirms, 'El cuarteto is not my invention; it has existed for about sixty years, when it was created by El Cuarteto Leo. I am myself an adopted child of El Cuarteto [...] I took it out of Córdoba. Outside of the province of Córdoba, El Cuarteto is not only heard in Buenos Aires. Now El Cuarteto is heard in Paris, Miami, New York, Japan ...' (M.J.G., 'Beso a beso. Entrevista a la Mona Jimênez', Veintidos (27 April 2000): 65. Italics and translation mine.)

16. Chamamé is the popular rhythm of El Litoral region.

17. Polka is a European rhythm that in Paraguay became very popular and has developed local accents.

18. Barrio literally means neighbourhood. According to Philippe Bourgois, barrio is 'used generically to delineate a working-class Latino neighborhood ... in the West or Southeast of the United States' (Bourgois, 1995: 339 note 1). In using a Spanish word, I want to point out the different understanding that American and Latino cultures have in relation to their notion of neighbourhoods, which also helps us to better understand the importance of the barrios in Buenos Aires society.

19. See 'Santa Gilda'. Available at: http://ar.geocities.com/argentinamisteriosa/gilda.htm

20. The whole history of the Tango and the extensive literature written about it is beyond the scope of this article. For a whole description of researches and bibliography about the history of the Tango, see Miguel Russo, 'La Historia del Tango ha sido registrada en innumerable cantidad de libros y antologias', La Maga (5/5/92). Available at: http://www.lamaga.com.ar/www/area2/pg_nota.asp?id_nota=1245

21. Even if the time of the rise of the Tango is uncertain, most researchers agree that it was in the River Plate region, especially Buenos Aires city, where the Tango arose. It was influenced by La Habanera and La Milonga, two popular rhythms among merchants from the route La Habana (Cuba), Buenos Aires (Argentina), and Madrid (Spain). See 'La Historia del Tango'. Available at: http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/home/puente/puente18/tango18.htm

22. Literally 'quilt troubles', a popular expression to symbolize a romantic affair with a woman who was disputed by two lovers.

23. While the most acceptable thesis is that African slaves and their rhythms influenced the development of the Tango, some historians deny this connection. It was in 1926 that the Tango specialists developed the thesis of an African connection with Tango. This article agrees with this thesis. See 'Historia del Tango'. Available at: http://www.terra.cl/turismo/especiales/tango/historia.cfm

24. The Tango dance was performed exclusively among men for more than two decades until women were allowed to dance it. It was considered an erotic dance, since the movements of the groin resembled sexual intercourse. It is interesting that most researches avoid the homoerotic element of the Tango in this stage of its formation. See 'Historia del Tango'. Available at: http://www.tangoeventos.com/HISTORIA.thm

25. Prostitution has been a big issue in Argentina since the time of the foundation of the country. It has been used to keep women under patriarchal oppression to force them to marry in order to be considered respectable. Donna J. Guy says of this: 'Argentina[5] laws
... focused upon prostitutes and wives. As women whose sexual practices and relationships represented each other's antithesis, these two groups jointly defined the parameters of female citizenship in modern Argentina. Prostitutes determined the limits of socially-acceptable female sexual behavior so that self-identified female prostitutes lost the right to move freely within cities, work without medical inspection, and live wherever they pleased. In contrast wives, by law and religion sworn to remain sexually faithful, enjoyed all those privileges taken from prostitutes though they still suffered other civil restrictions' (Guy, 1992: 204). The tango, being associated with brothels and prostituted women, was not considered appropriate for women who wanted to remain respectable in the upper classes in Argentine society.


27. The success of the Tango in France and other parts of the world posits different situations in comparison with Argentina. For example, this explains the shock that the Argentinean upper-class had when traveling to Paris and seeing how the Parisian upper-class danced and celebrated the same Tango that the Argentinean upper-class condemned. In this respect see the important research of Andrés Carretero, Breve Historia del Tango (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional del Tango, 2001), p. 25. Available at: http://www.portaldelllibro.com/escritores/tango001.htm

28. It literally means 'It is Negroes' music', which is a very pejorative expression in Argentina.

29. See 'Siempre en Nuestro Corazón'. Available at: http://www.muevamueva.com/grupo/gilda/#mito

30. See 'Gilda'. Available at: http://www.tropicalisima.com/grupo.php3?p_idgrupo=21

31. Plaza Miserere is a very busy square in Buenos Aires. September 11 railway station is at the head of the Western line, a line that runs along the 100 kilometre corridor between Buenos Aires city and Mercedes in Greater Buenos Aires, which is considered still part of the Metropolitan Area. Plaza Miserere is also near several Bailantas, very famous for their long history of rising stars. A possible explanation of the choice of this place for Gilda's homage could be found in this geographical aspect.

32. This is not an isolated event in the homage for Gilda. A report on other such acts of homage can be found in 'En el Nombre de Gilda', in Asi 1014 (17 October 1997), 6–9.

33. See María Álvarez, 'El santuario de Gilda fue arrasado por las llamas', in Impacto 2, no. 89 (20 May 1999), 44–5; the author reports how merchants enrich themselves with the sale of souvenirs at the place of Gilda's death.

34. 'En el nombre', p. 9. Italics and translation mine.

35. Ibid. Italics and translation mine.

36. Ibid. Italics and translation mine.

37. Ibid., p. 8.

38. Eternamente Gilda, Prayer (Holy card).

39. Antonio Mamerto Gil Núñez or El Gauchito Gil is a popular devotion especially in El Litoral region. Originating in Corrientes State, where Gil was born on 12 August 1847, this devotion spread through the whole El Litoral region after his death by the military during the civil war of independence in Argentina. (See 'El Gauchito Gil'. Available at: http://ar.geocities.com/argentinamisteriosa/gil.htm)

40. Deolinda Correa or La Difunta Correa (the deceased Correa) is a popular saint in the west of Argentina, especially in the Cuyo region. She was a woman who died in the desert
of San Juan in 1840 but miraculously kept feeding her baby with the fluids of her breast. For a deeper analysis of La Difunta Correa see Althaus-Reid, 2000: 79, 83–6. See also 'La Difunta Correa'. Available at: http://ar.geocities.com/argentinamisteriosa/correa.htm

41. For a detailed description of the accident, as well as testimonies of the survivors, see 'Biografía del Cordobés'. Available at: http://www.elpotrorodrigo.8k.com/whats_new.html.

Mass media in Argentina published pictures of the dead Rodrigo, minutes after the accident. An interesting analysis of this episode is made by A. Becquer Casaballe, 'El "Potro" Rodrigo con el estilo de "Gente"'. Available at: http://www.fotomundo.com/servicio/Rodrigo.shtml

42. 'Biografía de Rodrigo Bueno'. Available at: http://www.angelfire.com/music2/rodrigo/Rdrigo2.html


46. Marianne, 'Rodrigo es un angel que nos paso a visitar por la tierra' (29 December 2001). Ibid. Translation mine.


50. For example, everyone knows that the story that Gilda was a kindergarten teacher and that her career began when she sang at a school party is false. The facts did not happen this way, but although the popular historiography registers these facts as false, nobody worries about them. The myth is built on what she embodied for popular culture, not on the accuracy of her biographical data. See María Farber, 'Sorprendentes Revelaciones de Gilda en un Libro sobre su Vida', Impacto 3, no. 110 (14 October 1999), 6–7.

51. The question about suffering and death is what Peter Berger calls the problem of theodicy, the search for an explanation of those facts through religious legitimations. According to Berger, these legitimations allow human beings to make the pain caused by death or suffering more tolerable. They are so important for social order that they become the basis for other legitimations. He states, 'This implicit theodicy of all social order, of course, antecedes any legitimations, religious or otherwise. It serves, however, as the indispensable substratum on which later legitimating edifices can be constructed. It also expresses a very basic psychological constellation, without which it is hard to imagine later legitimations to be successful. Theodicy proper, then, as the religious legitimations of anomic phenomena, is rooted in certain crucial characteristics of human sociation as such' (Berger, 1990: 55).


53. In this connection, A. Quijano says: 'Popular culture is not only - although it is basically so - the culture of the dominant classes for the consumption of the people, but also an original expression of that people' (Quijano, 1971: 39–56, quoted by Negre Rigol, 1975: 31; translation mine).

54. 'The 'Christs' of the vanguards, like the songs of protest, often fail to appeal to the
masses because those vanguard groups do not take into account that the notion of 'protest' is already present in the religiosity of the people, in their folklore (in the case of music and singing), although in ideal and utopian form. Marx, much less enthusiastic for early Christianity than Lenin, Kaustiy, or Engels, was not able to avoid a required first step through the 'religious alignment' in order to discover the 'fetishism' of capitalist society. But this brief step through religion was enough to perceive the ambiguity of an oppression-protest, although for him religion was a superstructure that was already disappearing in the proletariat' (Negre Rigol, 1975: 31; translation mine).


57. Eurocentricism is a process through which Europe labelled itself as civilization, and the rest of the world was labelled as barbaric. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam say, 'Eurocentricism sanitizes Western history while patronizing and even demonizing the non-West; it thinks of itself in terms of its noblest achievements - science, progress, humanism - but of the non-West in terms of its deficiencies, real or imagined' (Shohat and Stam, 1995: 3). The modern notion of the individual who alone thinks and determines reality (the Cartesian cogito) brings implicitly the notion of objectivity. The notion of objectivity is related to the narcissism of the Self that pretends to rule the world according to the willing of the individual who thinks the world, making it an object. Nonetheless, the definition of the world from this perspective is a social construction with the power to neutralize any other interpretation of what is reality or what is true. The problem is not to have subjective understanding of what is reality or what is true. Rather, the problem relies on the impossibility of the Cartesian cogito acknowledging that there are particular understandings based on different individuals defining what is true or what it reality, all of them competing in a web of power relationships to establish their voice as the primal voice. It is this Eurocentrism, which lies so deep in Argentinian Christianity, that says popular religiosity is not really religious experience. As a movement of resistance, popular religiosity is learning how to express itself beyond the tutorship of institutionalized Christianity.


59. The SFT makes efforts in all of its activities to reflect theologically on popular religiosity. We read in its last report, 'In the roots of our [popular) identity we reaffirm our dignity as people baptized, as Sons and Daughters of God Father and Mother. It is a dignity that enables us to gather, to reflect, to discern, and to contribute to the theological reflection of the Church and all the Churches. Dignity that is shown with facts and commitments' (Maidana, 2002: 167; translation mine).


63. For a deep analysis in this respect see Mallimaci, 2002b: 9-18. Mallimaci also proposes five categories of Catholicism in Argentina, popular Catholicism being one of those categories. See Mallimaci, 2000.

64. 'It seems that some pastoral works do not always consider that the religious experience of the people means something like life and death for the popular conscience, and sometimes there is the tendency to modify it through a reflection on the topics and questions that belong precisely to the universe and the religious experience of the agents, not allowing the popular groups to express and discuss their own ways of living and understanding God and the world' (Costa, 1980: 39; bold in the original, translation mine).
65. See Belmes, 2001: 12.
66. 'In the religious world where he lived and which he had to take away from the dominant powers of his time, Christ saw more possibilities in the simple faith of the people and in its ironies than in the scholarly religion of the powerful. But he carried out - and this has been forgotten by those who exalt popular religiosity too much - a truly revolutionary religious transformation, which opposed the one professed by the masses' (Negre Rigol, 1975: 34; translation mine).
67. See John 10:10.

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