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Faces of the Peaceable God: Religious Imaginaries and the Challenge of Peace in Colombia

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After more than fifty years of civil conflict and nearly a quarter million casualties, Colombia finally signed a peace agreement in 2016. Subsequently, a Truth Commission was tasked with producing a report to provide a new political narrative to address the conflict, suggest ways to warrant non-repetition of atrocities, and foster peaceful coexistence. The report frequently refers to "social imaginaries" as key and hints at communities of faith as having an important peacebuilding role; however, it leaves multiple questions open. How are these imaginaries structured? How are they formed and transformed? How can religious imaginaries actively contribute to peace? This article seeks to (a) highlight important aspects of Colombia's current political landscape and its intellectual opportunities, (b) outline a cross-disciplinary approach to develop a theory on the [trans]formation of imaginaries, and (c) illustrate how this theory can shed light on the role of religious imaginaries in Colombia, enhancing their contribution to the cultural transformations necessary for lasting peace.

Introduction

This article was developed in the field of science and religion, with strong philosophical content, and very much in dialogue with the social sciences: it argues that human imagination plays a vital role in belief [trans]formation, and that understanding said role opens a space for religious imaginaries to promote human consilience in communities riven by conflict in my home country of Colombia.

At its core, the argument is framed as an opportunity to develop novel conceptual resources to help others. It is fundamentally understood as a means to serve, first, on a wider and more philosophical level, by offering an innovative bridge between the field of science and religion and the world of the human and social sciences,[1] as it expands recent avenues being explored between them—especially regarding the relevance of common transdisciplinary resources and the significant role of human imagination in belief formation and transformation; second, as a more politically situated initiative, it also means to contribute to ongoing peacebuilding efforts in Latin America and, more specifically, to the pending task of disseminating, discussing, complementing, and implementing the findings and recommendations of the report published by the Colombian Truth Commission (CEV) in 2022.

The main body of this article follows the STAR method (Situation-Task-Action-Result)[2] to structure four key elements: the situation-context for the stories of war and peace taking place in the political scene of contemporary Colombia; the task-challenge of clarifying how the CEV's report appears in said context, how it understands what social imaginaries are, and, in particular, how it suggests religious imaginaries can contribute to peace in the country; the action taken in order to engage with the challenge, that is, the investigation of the human imagination and our imaginaries; and lastly, the result of the whole endeavor includes a brief description of a theory concerning the transformation of imaginaries and its application to the religious imaginaries in the CEV's report.

Before turning to this fourfold account, however, I would like to open with two reflections that seem worth mentioning, given the peacebuilding background of the discussion: one on the ethical importance of asking about those who suffer as victims of a political crisis and another on the urgency of revising warring imaginaries.

A First Reflection: On the Importance of Asking about Victims

Between October 2018 and October 2023, an exhibition of artistic photographs titled *The Witness [El Testigo]* was open to the public in Bogota, Colombia. It comprised more than 500 black-and-white pictures of the Colombian conflict, all taken between 1992 and 2018, showcasing depictions of displacement, forced disappearance, violence against civilians, and peace demonstrations,

among others (Trujillo 2023). On March 15, 2019, I visited *El Testigo* as part of a delegation of peacebuilding scholars from Universidad Javeriana, and we had the privilege of having the artist responsible for the photographs, Jesús Abad Colorado, tour us around the multiple windows he had opened for us to glimpse the conflict's lights and shadows. Two things are worth noting here.

First, among the many pictures, there was a particular photograph that caught my attention (Figure 1). It portrayed a young girl looking back at the camera through the cracked window of her house. The artist told us that the fissure had been opened by a bullet and that the picture had been taken in the Comuna 13, one of the most intensely war-struck neighborhoods of the city of Medellin in north-western Colombia. The photograph captures a stark contrast between the fragile and almost playful innocence with which she peeks out into the world through equally fragile glass and the brutal harshness of the bullet, the crack, and the war that produced it all.

Figure 1: Photograph of Angi Marín by Jesús Abad Colorado.

Second, as I walked through the exhibition's four large rooms, I could not help but notice that several photographs incorporated religious contents or references. One picture showed a child and an old lady in front of a recently unearthed corpse, covered in a dark sheet except for one of her hands. We were told the child recognized the body belonged to her mother because of the rosary clutched in her hand: a gift from the grandmother—the old lady next to her. Another picture showed two nuns courageously wading a river and carrying above their heads provisions for a group of victims on the other shore. Close by, a portrait showed the interior of a bomb-destroyed chapel and in the foreground, a broken crucifix; the famous Christ of Bojayá, witness to the 2002 massacre where more than seventy innocent people died while imploring for godly refuge (Durán 2017).

A Second Reflection: On the Urgency of Revising Our Imaginaries

Years later, I realized that among the many things that motivated me to initiate my research was discovering that, just like the little girl in Jesús Abad's picture, most Colombians have grown up in a warring country, looking out into the world through an existential window that has been dramatically wounded by violence. In different ways and with various degrees of brutality, our views of the world have been scarred and fractured by war; in that sense, the cracked window in the photograph can be interpreted as a powerful symbol representing the violent and conflict-laden lens through which many Colombians have viewed and experienced the world. In that sense, any action towards peace needs to not only acknowledge those ruptures but make every possible effort to heal them.

Although there are multiple ways to describe and understand these worldviews and approaches, recent scholarship in various fields has focused on "imaginaries" as a useful category.[3] Briefly put, imaginaries are the means through which the imagination allows us to conceive different ways to unify the manifold. Be it the sensory manifold (Lennon 2015, 24) or the conceptual manifold, imaginaries are ultimately the mental devices that allow us to explore new ways of articulating different elements into a story, or even different stories into a broader meta-narrative. That challenge, once again, was part of the Colombian Truth Commission's mandate,[4] which charged the commissioners with the task of clarifying the complex and broad range of elements surrounding the Colombian conflict (art. 11, §1-13), listening to the many voices of the conflict by creating dialogical spaces at the international, national, regional, and territorial levels (art. 13, §2), and finally, elaborating a report that might offer a new, broader, and more encompassing story that could reflect all of the above (art. 13, §5).

The cracked window in Colorado's picture, once again, is a graphic invitation to such a revision of imaginaries and an eloquent reminder of its relevance today.

Situation: War and Peace in Colombia

After decades of war and years of negotiations, a historical accord was signed in 2016 between the guerrilla members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the Colombian government. As a result, a Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition was established: a government-based apparatus designed as Colombia's fundamental architectural scaffolding for transitional justice[5] and tasked with guaranteeing "the rights of conflict victims, ensuring accountability and recognition of responsibility, as well as comprehensive reparation measures and guarantees of non-repetition" (CEV 2022, II, 12).

In order to serve its purpose, the Comprehensive System was mainly comprised of three organisms: the CEV, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (Justicia Especial para la Paz (JEP) in Spanish), and the Unit for the Search for Persons Presumed Disappeared in the context and by reason of the armed conflict (JEP 2022, 2). The JEP is a still-active autonomous judicial entity obligated to investigate and adjudicate cases. As a complementary nonjudicial arm within the system, the CEV's mandate assigned it three main objectives: (1) to contribute to clarifying the complex causes and consequences of the armed conflict in the country; (2) to promote and contribute to the recognition of victims and the voluntary recognition of individual and collective responsibilities; and (3) to promote a more peaceful and democratic coexistence in the territories (Presidencia de la República de Colombia 2017, I, Art. 2).

The CEV (2017, III, Art. 13, n. 5) was asked to prepare, publicly present, and widely socialize a final report that considered "the different contexts, reflect the investigations around all the components of the mandate, and contain the conclusions and recommendations of its work, including guarantees of non-repetition." The report is a complex text meant to seek "the truth of what happened in the context of the internal armed conflict, to shed light on the violations committed therein, and to offer society a broad explanation of its complexity and an account that includes all voices" (JEP 2022, 4).

Rendering a rigorous account of the report´s eleven massive volumes surpasses the scope of this article. It is worth noting, however, that the volume entitled *Hallazgos y Recomendaciones* plays a vital role as a global approach to the CEV's work; it provides an overview of the whole report, synthesizing both the main findings and the recommendations that the mandate required the report to cover.

While looking for thematizing passages on imaginaries in general, an interesting feature of *Hallazgos y Recomendaciones* is its unambiguous treatment and exposition of what cultural transformation is and how it should be seen as a vital component of the CEV's suggestions to both understand how the country's past has led to its present and strengthen present efforts towards a more enduring peace in the future. Furthermore, it is precisely in

this section of *Hallazgos y Recomendaciones* that the concept of "imaginaries" makes its most frequent thematizing appearance in the text. *Hallazgos y Recomendaciones* uses the word sixteen times, ten of which appear in Finding No. 10—an analysis of the relationship between culture and armed conflict in Colombia—and Recommendation No. 8—the counsels the CEV puts forth as a means for the country to live in a more peaceable culture (CEV 2022, II, 657–712).

For the CEV, the pursuit of peace in Colombia is not only a challenge necessitating the reform of social institutions but, more importantly, a transformative process demanding a shift in the mindsets and worldviews—*imaginaries*—that originally shaped these institutions and practices. Along those lines, *Hallazgos y Recomendaciones* describes the relationship between culture and conflict as a constant feedback and co-affectation. However, the text also strongly accentuates the role of culture as a causally preceding phenomenon: although our conflict has had an influence on our culture, our efforts towards peacebuilding require us to broaden our view and also consider those aspects of our cultural imaginaries that have been relevant in originating and perpetuating the conflict:

> Culture shapes the context in which life in common develops. Therefore, culture lies at the root and the starting point of the internal armed conflict, and thus, may lead to understanding how the conflict developed. . . . Focusing on the cultural issues in which the armed conflict has been installed and rooted in Colombia is essential, since the real changes are made there. Adjustments in legislation or institutions are not enough if our behaviors, values, and relationships with others are not transformed as well. As Pablo de Grieff told the CEV: "institutional engineering is not the only solution on which the future peace of the country depends. It also needs interventions at a more normative and cultural level." (CEV 2022, II, 539)

The text introduces the concept of "devices of cultural re-edition" and describes them as those key elements "through which culture is shaped and reshaped as a framework of meanings, significantly impacting the development of individuals and communities on a daily basis" (CEV 2022, II, 575). When illustrating these devices of cultural re-edition, *Hallazgos y Recomendaciones* refers to key institutional or sectorial actors that have a wide presence and influence on culture and thus a powerful impact in the way imaginaries—whether structurally violent imaginaries or imaginaries as persistence factors—form and transform. Four in particular are highlighted: the formal educational system; the people installed in power; media and social networks; and, most notable for the present text, churches and communities of faith.

Task: Unveiling the Faces of the Peaceable God

Having briefly sketched aspects of the peace agreement's rendering of the Truth Commission and its report, I focused on how *Hallazgos y Recomendaciones* includes an important reference to cultural transformation as a fundamental element of its peacebuilding efforts. Said cultural transformation is (a) strongly phrased in terms of the imaginaries it seeks to transform, and (b) includes religious imaginaries as part of the country´s most powerful devices of cultural re-edition.

In light of this, an important task the report leaves open for future engagements can be summarized in the following two questions, both of which seek to better understand the many faces through which the god of peace has played a role in the Colombian landscape. First, what are those imaginaries that the report mentions and, more importantly, how are they formed and transformed? Second, how could such an understanding contribute to ongoing peacebuilding efforts in Colombia, especially in dialogue with the communities of faith and the imaginaries that structure their experience of war and peace?

Action: Exploring the Imagination and Our Imaginaries

As a prerequisite to successfully engaging with these two questions— that is, to develop a clearer idea of what imaginaries are in general and how religious imaginaries can contribute to a more peaceable culture in Colombia according to the CEV's report— I turn to other disciplines and make a digression to engage with Kathleen Lennon's philosophical work on imagination and the imaginaries.

Lennon describes imaginaries as the "affectively laden patterns/images/forms, by means of which we experience the world, other people and ourselves" (Lennon 2015, 1; 2004, 113). Imaginaries are the lenses through which we perceive the world, or the maps that orient us to our surroundings, providing a sense of place and directionality (Gutiérrez González 2023, 125–26). In that sense, there are a few key features to point out from Lennon's description of an imaginary:

1. Imaginaries are primarily thought patterns: they refer to the conceptual structures that configure our way of understanding ourselves and the world around us.
2. Imaginaries are affectively laden: they are not exclusively composed by theories and ideas; they also include our affects and our emotional life.
3. We experience the world by means of our imaginaries: they configure our experience of existence in general, but also ground our view of our own bodies, our individual and social identities, and our cultural practices.

In addition to these more structural descriptions, Lennon's ideas provide a basis for a less static, more dynamical engagement, i.e., an approach that considers not only the individual elements that comprise our imaginaries but also the processes through which they form and adapt. Although she does not fully develop this idea, Lennon (2004, 117) explicitly addresses the issue of how "many of the social imaginaries we encounter are damaging," that is, how they enable or inhibit certain kinds of agency in an undesirable manner.[6] In that sense, I imitated her method and "distilled" her own description of the imaginaries to identify three fundamental concepts in her texts: visualizing imaginaries, assessing imaginaries, and adapting imaginaries.

Visualizing entails a growing awareness of imaginaries—allowing ourselves to transition from looking through our imaginaries to looking at our imaginaries—and their provisional—and thus, adaptable—nature. Assessing involves recognizing an ecosystem of imaginary forms: the interwoven configuration of the many imaginaries that structure a person's or community's beliefs. Much like in a tree, some portions of the ecosystem will be more grounding than others, thus requiring diverse evaluation methods—endosystemic or exosystemic. And finally, adapting imaginaries requires the pursuit of an environment that provides a transformative awareness of alternative imaginaries and communities, mostly through the stories and narratives we tell each other, the narratives told by those with different experiences and thoughts, and those we tell ourselves.

In a sense, finding ways to respond to the threefold challenge of imaginary transformation requires not only taking up Lennon's valuable insights but also seeking to complement them by exploring ways in which imaginaries have formed and transformed in different scenarios; in other words, looking not just at theorizations concerning imaginaries but at actual experiential cases of imaginary transformation that might shed light on the subject. A considerable advantage is the alleged universality of Lennon's claim: if she is right in believing imaginaries are the key structures through which we experience the world and map our existence in it, almost any stance of the human experience has the potential of being revised to examine how our imagination is used there, thus rendering insights and clues as to how we might engage the threefold challenge.

Although the present text does not allow a detailed account of such an exploration, I will say that looking at various authors' views on how imagination contributes either to the elaboration of their own worldviews or to conversations taking place between various worldviews is immensely useful to envisage the imagination's world-building role as a form of map-making instrument, to echo Mary Midgley's (2011, 37–40; 2002, 10–11) metaphor. By looking at disciplines as divergent as fantastic literature, theoretical physics, science and religion,[7] and even peacebuilding, one can preserve the important differences between these fields while also noticing parallel works of the imagination in each of them. Thus, the possibility of a wider account of the imagination—an interdisciplinary

approach to the cosmopoietic imagination—is unlocked: an understanding of our imagination as the means through which we articulate disjointed data (a territory) into a meaningful configuration (a map) in the context of a particular setting (a field) and with a particular purpose (desire).

The result of the action I describe in this section is twofold. On the one hand, we arrive at a theory that approaches our imaginaries as maps of meaning for the world and clarifies how they can be visualized, assessed, and adapted—a theory of cosmopoietic imaginaries. On the other hand, there's an exploration of how said theory can be applied to analyze the peaceable role suggested for religious imaginaries by the CEV's report—a peaceable itinerary for communities of faith. Both components are explored in what follows.

First Result: A Theory of Cosmopoietic Imaginaries

A theory of cosmopoietic imaginaries seeks to explain the formative and transformative processes of our imaginaries by understanding them as worldbuilding (*cosmopoietic*) devices. By bringing together the more structural elements described by Lennon and complementing them with the parallel elements described in the interdisciplinary mapping approach to the imagination, a theory of cosmopoietic imaginaries seeks to respond to each of the aforementioned aspects of the threefold challenge of imaginary transformation.

How can we **visualize** our imaginaries? Cosmopoietic visualization of imaginaries involves two key aspects, i.e., a double exposure: on the one hand, an exposure to the cosmopoietic structure of imaginaries, and on the other, an exposure to multiple and diverse imaginaries. This double exposure allows us to visualize damaging imaginaries *qua* imaginaries; to visualize other imaginaries—their existence, their cosmopoietic elements, the cognitive and affective sense they provide, etc.; and to visualize their contingent character.

How can we **assess** our imaginaries? A theory of cosmopoietic imaginaries resorts to human consilience[8] as a potential criterion for assessment across the various levels of the ecosystem of imaginary forms. Which of our imaginaries are grounding—more affectively laden, more significant in terms of the overall role they occupy in our lives—and which are less grounding? A theory of cosmopoietic imaginaries distinguishes between these various levels and suggests the way they provide human consilience (or not) is key, be it with regards to other imaginaries we have or other ecosystems entirely.

How can we **adapt** our imaginaries? If the cosmopoietic key to the first challenge is double exposure and the key to the second is a consilient assessment, the key to answering the third and final challenge is enabling a particular form of imaginary game. The latter is a safe form of exploration and experimentation where other imaginaries are explored and two fundamental tasks are performed: first, a new imaginary is experienced in a safe way, and its degree of consilience is verified; and second, the new imaginary is also explored in terms of how it

is lived by a community, thus opening the possibility of tangible new imaginary configurations for oneself.

These configurations a theory of cosmopoietic imaginaries aims to open are called *platforms of coincidence*: they can be understood as a unique type of space that enables the transformation of imaginaries to take place by allowing double exposure (answering the challenge of visualization), consilient assessment (in response to the challenge of assessment), and imaginary game (thus satisfying the requirements for adaptation). They are characterized by the coincidence they offer. That is, they provide an opportunity to share a common ground with other individuals or communities and their imaginaries, to contrast one's experience and imaginaries with them, and to gauge the ways in which those imaginaries and their intrinsic and/or extrinsic elements can be reappropriated into new pathways.

A suitable example of a platform of coincidence is, *par excellence,* any form of dialogical stage, be it personal, academic, or political. However, the arts also offer a privileged form of platforms of coincidence. By experiencing a work of art—reading a novel, watching a film or theatrical piece, visiting an exhibition of paintings, attending a concert, etc., a suitable space can be opened for double exposure, consilient assessment, and imaginary game.

Second Result: Religious Imaginaries in the CEV's Report

There is much that can be said about a theory of cosmopoietic imaginaries. However, I now wish to convey a set of some of its fundamental ideas, focusing less on the cosmopoietic technicalities and more on its comprehensibility and its contributions as a practical proposal for peace in Colombia.

The theory has developed three main categories—visualization, assessment, and adaptation—and evaluated how each of these comes about in the CEV's report and its engagement with religious imaginaries. The key questions to ask then have been: How does the CEV's report visualize religious imaginaries, especially those it considers problematic? How does it assess them? How does it propose to adapt them?

A short summary of the theory's answer—less laden with cosmopoietic jargon—could be the following. First, the report visualizes a wide array of religiously inspired cultural practices and the imaginaries that uphold them. It focuses on those it considers harmful, given the way they have contributed to preserving warring dynamics in the country. It also recognizes the potential communities of faith have as "devices of cultural re-edition," i.e., as important allies in peacebuilding efforts. Second, although the criteria the report uses to assess these imaginaries is not always evident, a closer reading of the text reveals it has "translated" the warring contributions by framing them in terms of a particular cultural project. In other words: the negative religious imaginaries the report visualizes as damaging are ultimately those that go against what seem to

be the CEV's core values—"dignity," "diversity," "life," "human rights," and "dialogue and reasoned deliberation" (CEV 2022, II, 726; cf. 631)—and against the report's own project of cultural reform towards the configuration of a secular ethics and the development of a more inclusive democracy. Third, the report's suggestions for the adaptation of imaginaries are thin; the report by itself is a long, complex, conceptually heavy text that, if left alone, would not suffice as a satisfactory means for cultural transformation. However, understanding how the report sees itself as part of a wider system—which includes the Comprehensive System, the CEV's Transmedia,[9] the numerous initiatives civil society had before the CEV existed, the articulation of many of those initiatives in what is now called the Legado (the CEV's Legacy), etc.—reveals it never intended to be seen as a compartmentalized initiative but as a guideline and a blueprint catalyzer for present and future peacebuilding initiatives.

There are many ways in which a cosmopoietic reading of the report can be discussed further and developed more fully towards a set of recommendations or suggestions that may be implemented by whoever wishes to work alongside communities of faith toward peace in Colombia. However, there is a train of thought I wish to convey in the following lines, as I believe it is of particular importance.

This line of work starts by recognizing somewhat of a caricature in the report's portrayal of religious imaginaries. If one follows the main lines of the report's arguments and tendencies, it seems as if there was a "bad," mostly warring community—or communities—of faith in Colombia before the 1960s and then a "good," mostly peaceable community of faith after that decade. Although there was indeed a major cultural shift during that decade, taking place in all cultural strata including the Catholic Church, it is important to note that there were peacebuilding initiatives and peaceable religious imaginaries in Colombia before the 1960s and that there are warring mindsets that have been nurtured by religious imaginaries since then.[10] Broadening the perspective of the report's reading is not just a matter of academic honesty, historical accuracy, and political justice; it allows us to complexify and enrich our understanding of communities of faith in the country and reveal an important fact that seems not to have much light in the overall landscape of the report—namely, the existence of a fracture within communities of faith.

In other words, the contrast between the warring community of faith and the peaceable community of faith the report points to is not—and should not be—interpreted as a historical divergence. It is not a conflict between two historical stages but a clash between two imaginaries that have been present in the past and, I suspect, are still present today. I believe this clash is worrying, not because I would prefer a homogenous community of believers but because of the violence engrained in it. Having a wide variety of ideological differences and approaches, even within communities of faith, is desirable.

In a sense, there is need for a *tertia via,* a new analogical path that may shield us from unnecessary extremes both in univocity—assuming all communities of faith are or should be one and the same—and equivocity—assuming each community of faith is or should be radically different from the rest, with no common grounds.[11] Such a path would allow us to identify and assume a set of practices, perhaps, that enables us to both preserve strong identities on the one hand while providing a context in which their grounding principles, the individual and communal identities they foster, and the social practices they ground, can all be revisited and discussed on the other. The fundamental motivation behind this is how a "spiritual iridescence" seems like a desirable trait to foster within communities; in that sense, the problem to be addressed lies not in the diversity that subsists within our communities but in the violence with which it has frequently been assumed.

Undoubtedly, the report's account of religious imaginaries is wide: it mentions how communities of faith have frequently played an important peacebuilding role while sometimes suffering as victims themselves. However, it notes how religious imaginaries have also structured negative (non-peaceable) attitudes throughout the conflict: they have encouraged violence against communists, liberals, women, and LGBTQIA+ people; they have encouraged violence towards other denominations and within their own communities; they have taken up violent stances from both the left and right sides of the political spectrum; and finally, they have sometimes committed a sin of omission, lacking a more forceful condemnation of the country's issues and the resort to violence.

Mentioning this particular list is key here, since these are the imaginaries the report considers problematic and thus in need of revision. Considering said cultural analysis and understanding it in light of a cosmopoietic theory of imaginaries, there are a set of questions we need to ask—questions that indicate a series of steps or tasks as a contribution to religious communities' peaceable role in the country.

First, we need to ask about the visualization of these imaginaries: Is the report's visualization of damaging imaginaries adequate? Is the historical diagnosis of these violent cultural practices an acceptable one? Have those damaging imaginaries really been present in the history of Colombian communities of faith? Are there other damaging imaginaries the report may have missed that are relevant for a description of the roles communities of faith have played in the history of the country's conflict? Are these imaginaries still present in Colombian communities of faith today?

Second, we need to ask about the assessment of said imaginaries: How do the report's criteria contribute to or hinder the conversation we need to have? I believe the report's assessment recognizes the grounding character of Colombian religious imaginaries, but it offers an assessment using criteria that do not correspond to believers' ecosystem of imaginary forms. Put more

simply: we are in dire need of theological criteria that allow us to engage in a conversation with religious communities.[12] The task here then is to find ways in which the CEV's core values and cultural project can be translated into theological terms—and also seek ways to translate theologically laden criteria to secular terms—or in broader terms, to find ways in which the CEV's project can genuinely and effectively engage in dialogue with a theologically savvy community.

Third, we need to ask about the adaptation of said imaginaries: How does the report suggest we move forward? I have already mentioned the idea of "platforms of coincidence" as the means to provide spaces for the visualization, assessment, and adaptation of imaginaries. The question then can be redirected towards the kind of platforms of coincidence that may help us in the transformative process we require. The CEV's work has taken root in the numerous peacebuilding experiences that preceded its mandate, and it also fostered new experiences and spaces of encounter. Some have allowed the CEV to meet communities of faith; others have bridged encounters between victims and perpetrators. However, in light of what has been said here, the question that arises is the following: Are there any currently existing platforms of coincidence that allow dialogical encounters between the different sides of the aforementioned divide within communities? If there are such platforms, a key step would be to strengthen them and enhance their ability. If such platforms do not currently exist, the key step would be to seek ways to design new platforms and support them. Whichever way the question is answered, there are at least two ideas that may contribute to the process that follows.

A first idea involves art is an important ally in the process, finding ways in which art may offer platforms of coincidence for these kinds of encounters; fostering transformational encounters between these imaginaries (e.g., my account of Jesús Abad Colorado's artistic exhibition) could be a way to move forward. John Paul Lederach's (Lederach 2005; 1999) theoretical reference to the arts and his performative use of them can give us an idea of how such artistic platforms of coincidence might be encouraged and why.

A second idea has to do with opening more explicit conversations in a theological register. In that sense, at this point, echoing Pope Francis's discourses during his 2017 visit to Colombia[13] seems adequate, especially due to his interest in synodality as a key feature of the kind of platforms of coincidence that communities of faith require. The pope has referred to synodality in the past as expressing "the nature of the Church," and it is also meaningful that the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2021–24) is precisely on synodality and entitled "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission" (Vatican News 2021). In a sense, the fundamental traits of what a theological platform of coincidence should be are somehow structured in the concept of synodality itself; opening synodal platforms of coincidence as

spaces for theological dialogue of an improbable nature (to use a Lederachian adjective) between groups within the various communities of faith in Colombia, particularly among those of differing theological positions, seems like an apt way to move forward.

Final Remarks: Opening Up the Conversation

Although there are numerous directions in which a cosmopoietic reading of the CEV's report may lead, I have developed a particular line of action that retrieves fundamental aspects of that reading and lands them onto practical suggestions or tasks. They are the result of developing a theory of cosmopoietic imaginaries, using it to read and interpret the report's understanding of religious imaginaries, and "distilling" that interpretation (to quote from Lennon)—down to more concrete terms and feasible dimensions.

A final word: I am entirely aware of the numerous peacebuilding initiatives that have been active in the country in the past decades, and I am fully conscious that there are many, both in terms of artistic spaces and even religiously inspired associations, with vast experience in the field who might already be enacting the values, attitudes, and inspirations my research points to. In that sense, there are three things I would like to add. First, I want to recognize and honor the country's victims, as well as the tireless work and struggles of so many who have toiled for years to bring about peace in the country; my academic engagement with peacebuilding at this point is nothing but an effort to make the field, the country, the CEV's report, and their own efforts visible. Second, I would hope that what has been said so far contributes to broaden the discussions, nurture the conceptualizations, and clarify the pathways through which peacebuilding initiatives—especially those involving communities of faith—may continue supporting peace in Colombia. Third, I am also aware that the country is in dire need of every hand available for peace, be it for the ongoing negotiations of future agreements with warring groups still in conflict or for the pending implementation of the agreements signed in 2016; not only do I fail to see how there might be a contradiction between both, but I firmly believe that one is inextricably linked with the other. True peace cannot contradict true peace, and if there is any way in which my work contributes, it will have fulfilled the purpose stated at the beginning—my research is fundamentally understood as a means to serve.

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1] It is worth noting here that the greater part of the science and religion corpus that has developed in the English-speaking world has mainly focused on the conversation between religion and the natural sciences; however, there have been projects in which its interaction with the social sciences has surfaced as culturally relevant and academically fertile, particularly in Latin American contexts (Silva 2015b, 486, 488, 490; 2015a).

[2] The STAR method is an interviewing technique that provides a down-to-earth, simple structure for narrative interview responses (Higgins 2014).

[3] The concept began to be referenced as an academic topic mainly in philosophical circles—especially thanks to the works of Jena Paul Sartre (2004), Cornelius Castoriadis (1997), and Charles Taylor (2004)—and its use has subsequently expanded to other disciplines, mostly within the social sciences and the humanities, e.g., sociology, anthropology, political sciences, cultural studies, and the like. See Mari Ovsepyan (2019), Kathleen Lennon (2015), Alister McGrath (2019, 2023), Lacan—cf. Carla Antonucci Licitra Rosa et al. (2021)—, Delfo Canceran (2009), Dilip Gaonkar (2002), etc.

[4] Cf. Decree 588 (2017), signed by Juan Manuel Santos, then president of the Republic of Colombia.

[5] By transitional justice, I am referring to a series of exceptional reforms and cultural shifts that emerge during political transitions, usually from conflict to sustainable peace or, more broadly, from periods of violence and repression to societal stability (International Center for Transitional Justice 2023; Hinton 2010; Teitel 2002)—reforms and shifts just like the ones sought after in post-agreement Colombia.

[6] I have discussed some of these aspects of Lennon's work in greater detail in *Imagination in Catholic Thought and Peacebuilding* (Gutiérrez González 2023).

[7] The case of science and religion is particularly interesting here. On the one hand, there are efforts to construct models—imaginaries—of the relationship between both fields: as an example, Stephen J. Gould's (2003) consilient imagination, especially in his later texts, offers a particularly interesting approach, where disciplinary identities are kept while allowing a fruitful dialogical dynamic between them. On the other hand, there are also those within science and religion who find that conceiving each individual field as an imaginary may be useful as well. Alister McGrath (2023, 136 ff.), for example, has recently written on "disciplinary imaginaries" as a category that can reintroduce useful theoretical traditions—like certain construals of natural philosophy—to contemporary academic discussions.

[8] I suggest the term as an umbrella concept that encompasses the multiple configurations of synergy the cosmopoietic imagination seeks in the various spheres of human experience—e.g., J. R. R. Tolkien's effort to articulate narrative elements into a story; Albert Einstein's project of including new information into wider, richer theoretical frameworks in physics; John Paul Lederach's idea of a new political form of relationship that includes one's enemy and allows both justice and peace; and so on. Briefly put, the concept of human consilience aims to describe a form of articulation that all of these configurations have in common, where (a) the distinctiveness of the different components is preserved and (b) instead of isolation, a form of dialogical articulation is put forth.

[9] The report's Transmedia is an online "digital complement" to the text, aiming to not only "promote its dissemination and appropriation" but also "overcome the obstacle of the Final Report being consulted only by a niche of people sympathetic to the research reports" (Legado CEV 2022, 105).

[10] Regarding the positive contributions before the 1960s, one only needs to think of the substantial influence of Bartolomé de las Casas in the whole of Latin America in the sixteenth century (Mayer 2014) and how his thought set strong precedents for the modern understanding of human rights (Delgado 2007) and is still referenced in public spaces (Gómez Isa 2019); or of peaceable figures that have moved closer to Colombia, like Saint Peter Claver in the seventeenth century, mentioned several times by Pope Francis during his aforementioned visit to the country; or of the way the Second Vatican Council understood itself as an effort in *aggiornamento,* in renovating the church in continuity (Gudiel 2011; Francis 2017c; 2017a; 2017b) and how this had roots in initiatives and theological movements that preceded the council itself; etc. On the other hand, regarding the problematic approaches after the 1960s, cf. William Mauricio Beltrán and Sian Creely (2018), Bibiana Ortega (2018), Alhena Caicedo and Carlos A. Manrique (2023, 160), among others.

[11] For a traditional view—deeply engrained in medieval philosophical discussions—of analogical thinking as a *tertia via* between univocity and equivocity, see Aquinas's *Scriptum super sententiis* (I d. 35 q. 1 a. 4 co).

[12] Although the CEV's core values—"dignity, " "diversity," "life," "human rights," and "dialogue and reasoned deliberation" (CEV 2022, II, 726; cf. 631)—are certainly not in themselves anti-religious or anti-Christian, they do offer room for varied interpretations and cultural adaptations, some of which may confront or clash with particular religious imaginaries. This is also the case with the report's project towards the configuration of a secular ethics and the development of a more inclusive democracy; depending on how these aims are presented and how their cultural concretions are conceived, the reactions of the various communities of faith move for or against them. It is precisely this space of conceptual and imaginary variance and that requires conversational bridges, clarifying translations, and dialogical spaces that ensure genuine conversations can take place.

[13] I am referring here to the various statements and discourses of the pope's public appearances during his apostolic visit to Colombia between September 6–11, 2017. Not only were some academics expecting the visit to be of particular significance for the country (Guerrero Guevara 2017), the Conference of Bishops and the media also saw the pope's visit as an opportunity for an important shift towards peace (Suescún 2017; Semana 2017).

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