**“God” is dead but “god” lives: Rethinking pastoral care in post-theist perspective**

**Mag. theol. Paolo Zambaldi**

**1.The end of theism in the West: a story that goes back a long way**

In his famous text *From the Experience of Thought*, Germanic philosopher Martin Heidegger noted, «In any case there is here, however, a question. Is God therefore not dead? Yes and no. Yes - he is dead. But which god? The “moral” god, the Christian God is dead; the father from whom one takes refuge, the “person” with whom one deals and confides, the “judge” with whom one has an issue, the “rewarder” from whom one gets paid for one's virtues, that God with whom one makes one's “afları” but when does a mother ever get repaid for her love of her child? When Nietzsche says, “God is dead,” he means the God considered “from the moral point of view” (...).»[[1]](#footnote-0).

In this short fragment Heidegger summarizes a philosophical, theological and cultural thought/perspective that has a history, its own development and its “fathers”: from the texts of Baruch Spinoza[[2]](#footnote-1) to those of Anglican Bishop John A.T. Robinson[[3]](#footnote-2), from the theories of F.W. Nietzsche[[4]](#footnote-3) to the theses espoused by the Episcopalian J.S. Spong[[5]](#footnote-4), from the demythicization of Rudolf Bultmann[[6]](#footnote-5) to the “weak philosophy/theology” of Gianni Vattimo[[7]](#footnote-6) and J.D. Caputo[[8]](#footnote-7), via the thought and writings of many others. We thus understand from the outset how the decline of theism in the West is a complex phenomenon, which starts from afar and has moved under the influence of multiple factors: cultural and scientific; philosophical and theological; social and economic. All these elements of change have operated as powerful and invisible geological forces and have radically and irreversibly changed us, our reality and our way of saying “God.” In this world, and in us who are part of it, there is no longer room for a metaphysics as traditionally known, for pre-scientific representations of reality and the cosmos and an image of God born in the late Neolithic period.

The main and big difference between today, post-modernity, and past centuries lies precisely in a question of “proportions.” For whereas in the past, compared with a very narrow minority of innovative thinkers and their acolytes, the majority of the population in the West quietly accepted a theistic perspective, in one of its various declinations[[9]](#footnote-8), today the situation has been radically reversed: theism as a horizon of meaning and explanation of the facts of the world remains alive in a small group of initiates or “insiders,” while the majority of the population instinctively rejects this option, branding it as a set of myths/fables, typical of humanity's primitive past, as signs of ignorance and superstition, as something not real and therefore essentially useless. Indeed, it is undeniable that, modern science and the spread of knowledge, have profoundly transformed both us and our understanding of the universe/reality around us. This undeniable and irreversible process of evolution has led to significant changes, to a true «anthropological mutation»[[10]](#footnote-9) affecting every aspect of human life: from the world of information to transportation, from medicine to new technologies; from the new frontiers of physics to astronomical discoveries. Over the past 500 years, humans have seen their knowledge grow profoundly[[11]](#footnote-10), and new scientific discoveries continue to push the limits of human knowledge further. It follows that this changed humanity cannot help but reject the idea of a God defined according to the classical categories of theism: a God/Theos understood as a totally transcendent, anthropomorphized, omnipotent Being, endowed with “will,” omnipresent, providential, active in the history of human beings, creatures, and in the domination of the world and the cosmos. A kind of “great puppeteer,” separate, distant but also made constantly present through his claimed ability to alter reality and his personal relationship with creatures subordinate to him. The father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud hypothesized that all religious systems, beyond their apparent outward differences, were created for a very specific purpose: to give the lonely and fearful man an answer, a support, a “father” to turn to. «A precise continuity must be grasped between the existential condition of helplessness with the pressing demand for help, and the father figure (...) who on the one hand solves the enigmas of this world and on the other guarantees him a solicitous providence that will watch over his life and remedy, in an afterlife, any shortcomings of this one.»[[12]](#footnote-11).

Such profound changes, and so rapid when compared to human history, have inevitably put the “theism system” and, consequently, the historical religions inspired by it, into deep crisis. The process known as “secularization” has now relegated to the margins of society, and of human thought, the God of theism now evaluated in the light of reason and progress. These signs of the end of theism in relation to Christianity were succinctly set forth by Episcopalian Bishop J.S. Spong in his paper entitled «The 12 Theses. Call for a New Reformation»[[13]](#footnote-12) and elaborated upon in numerous of his works and lectures over the years. In a nutshell, the U.S. bishop highlights how theism, as an attempt to define God, is now dead for today's Western man: in fact, he can no longer believe in an in-credible God, in a supernatural/magical being who intervenes, or not, in human history. This rejection also gives rise to the need to reformulate, by demythicizing it, Christology. Indeed, from a post-theist perspective, it no longer makes sense to understand Jesus of Nazareth as the embodiment of a theistic deity. We easily understand how our reading and understanding of the Gospels changes significantly: from narratives of miracles no longer valued as real events in space and time, to a new understanding of the cross, no longer understood in a primitive sense as a sacrifice of atonement, and of narratives about the resurrection, no longer read in a literal sense[[14]](#footnote-13). Even that quest we have always called “prayer/supplication/lode” changes as the ethos of the time changes: moving from a petition to a theistic deity, to an experience of inner connection, communion, and “immersion.”.[[15]](#footnote-14)

**2.The consequences of the end of theism: the decline of religious systems**

The practical/pastoral consequences of this death of the God/Theos are now there for all to see and are ( despite the clumsy attempts of all religious institutions to downplay and “sugarcoat” it) of “biblical” magnitude. Anyone in contact with the Churches in the West has witnessed in the last century a colossal “exodus” of people of all ages, ethnicities, genders and social strata, a “hemorrhage” that shows no sign of stopping. Two recent figures are particularly striking in this regard. The first indicates that, in Italy, people who claim to be “regular practitioners”[[16]](#footnote-15) have practically halved in just 11 years, from 36% to 19%; in contrast, “never practitioners” have doubled: from 16% to 31%.[[17]](#footnote-16) The second reminds us that just a few years ago Gallup[[18]](#footnote-17), a U.S. analysis and opinion polling firm, recorded for the first time since 1937 that in the U.S. less than 50% of Americans attend a place of worship and as many as 21% do not identify with any religion; whereas the latter in 2000 were only 8%.[[19]](#footnote-18) But let's then think about how many have chosen to leave the Catholic Church in Germany: 402,694 people for the year 2023; the previous year (2022) there had been as many as 522,821.[[20]](#footnote-19) Above all, the best, most intelligent people and those with a higher cultural level leave.[[21]](#footnote-20) In Italy this phenomenon, if one looks even quickly at the data for 2022-2023, is very evident and draws a significant identikit of the average believer: woman, housewife or retired, with no educational qualification or with just the elementary one. Conversely, those who are young, have a satisfactory profession and a good education are careful not to attend “traditional” religious environments.[[22]](#footnote-21) Also leaving are parish volunteers and those who, in spite of everything, are still searching for a perspective of meaning, the most open, the most dialogical. “And who will be left?” one naturally wonders. There will remain small, increasingly closed groups, nostalgic for a past that cannot return, strongly self-referential: fundamentalism is in fact, and I believe will increasingly be, the response of theism and historical religions to their own crisis. An illusion that will be short-lived, a last desperate gasp before extinction.

If we are women and men who are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that, although this prospect often frightens us and makes us anxious, it is real: it presents its challenges but also a whole range of new opportunities. Freeing ourselves from theism will also mean freeing ourselves from a whole series of images, words, and concepts that, instead of making our journey of spiritual growth easier, weigh it down. In fact, anyone born in the last 100 years in the West has absorbed, almost by a sort of osmosis, a whole wealth of knowledge and understanding that has grown by leaps and bounds and has gradually become more accessible, but many basic questions of man today, still remain unanswered, while others have been answered very precisely, but these do not involve either otherworldly deities, or miracles, or al dilà bearers of rewards or punishments. So today to describe anyone who does not feel uncomfortable entering a place of worship, or talking about God in the terms of theism, or agreeing to read the pages of a sacred text as if they were a historical chronicle, there are only three possibilities : either this man/woman is incapable of understanding at all; or he/she is in bad faith because he/she derives some personal benefit from maintaining the status quo; or, more simply and easily, he/she just desperately wants to “believe to believe” borrowing the expression from the title of a famous essay[[23]](#footnote-22) by Gianni Vattimo.

Actually, what is scary to admit is that we are no longer the humanity of the late Neolithic period, but neither are we the women and men of the Council of Nicaea or Vatican II. In this sense, Jesuit Roger Lenaers[[24]](#footnote-23) analysis of the text of the Creed/Symbolum centers many problematic aspects we have already discussed. For whether one speaks of the Apostolic Symbol or Nicene-Constantinopolitan in theological terms, with all their problematic aspects, or whether one considers the historical-political genesis of the texts, this prayer remains an excellent summary of the theological, linguistic and pastoral problems of Christianity in relation to post-modernity.[[25]](#footnote-24)

**3.New perspectives on saying “god” beyond “God”**

American philosopher and theologian J.D. Caputo states in one of his papers that: «The folly of God is that God does not exist. God insists, but he does not exist. So stay away from the endless, magniloquent wars between theists and atheists and listen to the phenomenon, the event, the unconditional, however infuriatingly elusive it may be.»[[26]](#footnote-25). In fact, the author continues in the same text, «The event contained in the name (of) ‘God’ exceeds all calculation, exceeds all rule, eludes all program. God's name is the name of the possibility of an event. God's is the name of the realm in which the event visits us as an unexpected call, waking us up in the middle of the night with a vigorous knock at our door.»[[27]](#footnote-26).

Indeed, the new theological-pastoral challenge of post-theism is to be able to say “god” beyond “God”[[28]](#footnote-27) to be able to connect with the nameless Mystery[[29]](#footnote-28), that encounter that allows me to experience what gives meaning to our human adventure.[[30]](#footnote-29) In this sense, we easily realize that theological languages, practices and content must change to adapt to the quest of today's man, if we want a new form of inculturation, perhaps even more daring and decisive, than that which took place between the late first and fourth centuries A.D. and arose from the encounter between a still Judeo-Christian world and Greco-Latin culture.[[31]](#footnote-30) But just as that enculturation generated Christianity as a particular way to the figure and message of Jesus Christ, so we are impelled to abandon the paradigm “Christianity” and enter another perspective, that of the meek man of Nazareth, an unarmed prophet and truly the «mouth of God»[[32]](#footnote-31). Giocchino da Fiore[[33]](#footnote-32) himself in the had already sensed the need and evidence for this path. In fact, the 12th-century Calabrian monk and abbot had already in his time divided human history into three ages or heavens.[[34]](#footnote-33) A first epoch, the Age of the Father, which includes the Old Testament history and narratives: this time is a primitive age that needs to be controlled through moral norms and codes; it is the time when man needs “God the Father.” Then there is a second epoch, that of the Son, which Joachim identifies with Christian history from the narratives of the Gospels to the beginning of the 13th century, still marked by the domination of religions and heavy injustices, in which faith is alive but still limited. Then there is a final epoch, the epoch of the Spirit, which begins precisely from 1260. This time will be characterized by a true spiritual revolution in which humanity, free and “adult,” will have a direct/unmediated contact with God: this will enable it to free itself from religious logic, selfishness and the phenomena of social injustice.[[35]](#footnote-34)

What is needed is a new way of saying “God”/Mystery/experiencing an encounter that can be compatible with the new keys or paradigms with which we read our reality.[[36]](#footnote-35) In fact, as the Basque theologian rightly points out there is «(... ) a hermeneutic paradigm (our knowledges do not describe reality as it is objectively, but, on the contrary, are always partial and provisional interpretations); a non-dualist paradigm (matter and spirit, for example, are not two distinct principles or elements of reality, but two modes or states of reality), holistic (all reality is inter-relational), post-metaphysical (there are no real entities - god, spirit, heaven, hell... - independent of the universe or multiverse we call “physical”), dynamic and evolutionary (everything moves and transforms ceaselessly, Homo sapiens included, in a world that is self-creating and radically open to an unpredictable future), cosmocentric (and, therefore, trans-anthropic), ecological, feminist and egalitarian, and radically pluralistic. I try to say God at this cultural, religious, ethical-political, cosmo-bio-ecological crossroads. And I think it can make sense to say it.»[[37]](#footnote-36).

This decisive turning point is not something that will happen immediately, nor will it be an easy path devoid of trial and error, falls and necessary restarts. Nonetheless, it is this shift that 21st century humanity demands of us and that we cannot avoid. A few months ago I had the good fortune to be invited to a discussion evening with a class of a religious high school in my hometown (Bolzano/Bozen in Alto Adige/Südtirol). The evening had been strongly desired by the high school students themselves in order to be able to discuss some topics concerning faith and its relationship to today. During this meeting, one girl, after harshly criticizing the theistic image of God and pointing out its limitations and contradictions, asked a question that was anything but trivial: “If I have my spirituality and live my relationship with ‘God’ in a broad sense/nature/the cosmos well... What sense does it make to ask myself to ‘turn off my brain’ every time I enter a religious environment? What sense does it make to have a church? Does it still make sense to look for answers in any structured religion?” The question surprised me greatly because of the maturity of the reasoning, but also because it is the same question that broods in my heart and (consciously or unconsciously) in that of every person in the West today.

So we understand that if we want to go “beyond” this model even what we still call “pastoral care”[[38]](#footnote-37) changes: we urgently need a, pass me the term again, “post-theist pastoral care” that is, a different approach that starts from different presuppositions, from a more sincere, broad and welcoming idea of “God,” of revelation[[39]](#footnote-38), of community, of spirituality/internity[[40]](#footnote-39). This path, which is inevitable if we do not want all to be lost (especially the best part of the message of Jesus of Nazareth and all the valid human research that in every age has prompted men and women to ask the same questions we do!) will force us to “let go” of so much, but also to use our heads and creative capacity. In fact, if we will leave old structures and logics, we will find “other” places where it is possible to say “God” with other words[[41]](#footnote-40), with other people who come from paths far from ours, without performance anxieties, results to be obtained or will to impose but with the consciousness of needing an “other” life.

Regarding the Christian Churches (Catholic, Orthodox, and various Eastern rites, churches and communities born from the Reformation), there is an urgent need for a new post-theistic practice, a way of living the message of Jesus that, among other things, can only see the end of the church/parish/territorial unit dispensing religious and assistance services and the birth of new centers of spirituality. These will be less identity-based and confessional but more open and free, places with environments and proposals suitable for men and women who today have a "planetary" spirituality. This journey will inevitably also mark the end of dogmas (explicit or implicit), religious rules, and our traditional Christian understanding of the sacraments. With the post-theistic practice, the exacerbated need for uniformity[[42]](#footnote-41) within communities and as Churches will obviously end, and we will consequently orient ourselves towards a theologically, humanly, and spiritually increasingly plural horizon. Finally, and partly it has already happened, a new spirituality of search and immersion will emerge, a mystical but also plural and "secular" spirituality[[43]](#footnote-42). In this sense, the practices of meditation, Tantra and Yoga, silent contemplation, and quiet prayer become important and help us to forever abandon the theistic type of prayer.

What will emerge will be a spirituality that is, consequently, more "mixed", less codified, less exclusive and excluding, but also more alive, possible, and suitable for us. It will have some very important theological, linguistic, and cultural cornerstones. Several years ago, the theologian Rev. Dr. Charles M. Bidwell[[44]](#footnote-43) and the Canadian Centre for Progressive Christianity[[45]](#footnote-44), gathering the thoughts of various communities that identify with this movement, developed 8 fundamental and indispensable points to re-orient our spirituality in a post-theistic key:

«1. center our faith on values that affirm the sacredness and interconnectedness of all life, the inherent and equal worth of all persons, and the supremacy of love expressed actively in our lives as compassion and social justice

2. engage in a search that has roots in our Christian heritage and traditions

3. embrace the freedom and responsibility to examine traditionally held Christian practices and beliefs, acknowledging the human construction of religion, and in the light of conscience and contemporary learning, adjust our views and practices accordingly

4. draw from diverse sources of wisdom, regarding all as fallible human expressions open to our evaluation of their potential contribution to our individual and communal lives

5. find more meaning in the search for understanding than in the arrival at certainty, in the questions than in the answers

6. encourage inclusive, non-discriminatory, non-hierarchical community where our common humanity is honoured in a trusting atmosphere of mutual respect and support

7. promote forms of individual and community celebration, study, and prayer which use understandable, inclusive, non-dogmatic, value-based language by which people of religious, skeptical, or secular backgrounds may be nurtured and challenged

8. commit to journeying together, our ongoing growth characterized by honesty, integrity, openness, respect, intellectual rigor, courage, creativity, and balance»[[46]](#footnote-45)

**Attached texts**

**Creed (R. Lenaers SJ)**

«*I believe in God, the ultimate Mystery, infinite Love,*

*who progressively expresses Himself*

*in the wonders of the cosmos that has evolved*

*up to self-conscious beings, male and female.*

*And I believe in Jesus, our Messiah,*

*the authentic human image of God,*

*born of human parents,*

*yet entirely the result of God's initiative of salvation.*

*Who accepted to suffer and die, was crucified under Pontius Pilate,*

*died and was buried,*

*but is nevertheless fully alive,*

*because, fused with God due to His love,*

*He has thus become a force that will lead*

*all humanity to its fulfillment.*

*I believe in the inspiring activity of the Spirit of life*

*that is God,*

*in the worldwide community, called Church,*

*in which Jesus Christ lives, i*

*n God's offer to heal us and transform us into true human beings*

*and in the divine future of humankind,*

*a future of life.*

*Amen.*»[[47]](#footnote-46)

**Our Father (Rev. Dr. Charles M. Bidwell)**

«*My Creator (soul's Source, spirit's Destination, Ground of Our Being, etc.)*

*in whom/which is heaven, or within which we can find heaven (as co-creators) we revere/respect you*

*We will work to see your divine intent become a reality where we live.*

*We will work to see that everyone has the food they need to live and have health and energy to contribute to the welfare of Earth and its life systems.*

*We sense that we are forgiven for our admitted shortcomings to the extent that we art able to forgive others their failures.*

*We recognize the presence of evil in our world and strive to avoid being a part of it as well as pointing it out whenever we are aware of it.*

*We work for these changes in our lives and in the lives of others in the spirit of Jesus who cared for all those who were unjustly treated or oppressed.*

*May we make these things so.*»[[48]](#footnote-47)

1. Heidegger M., *Dall'esperienza del pensiero. 1910-1976*, Genova, Il Melangolo, 2011, p. 128. A similar statement can also be found in Heidegger M., *L’eterno ritorno dell uguale*, xxx, p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. To explore the figure of the Amsterdam philosopher, his thought and his relationship with the Holy Scriptures, religions and “God” himself: Cfr. Zambaldi P., *Conversando con Baruch. Spinoza un filosofo “oltre le religioni”*, San Pietro in Cariano (VR), Gabrielli, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. For a biography and summary of his thought: Cfr, Spong J.S., *Letteralismo biblico: eresia dei Gentili. Viaggio in un cristianesimo nuovo per la porta del Vangelo di Matteo*, a cura di don Ferdinando Sudati, Bolsena (VT), Massari editore, 2018, p. 16-20; Cfr. Robinson J.A.T., *Dio non è così. Honest to God*, Firenze, Vallecchi Editore, 1965. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Cfr. Restaino F., *Storia della filosofia. La filosofia contemporanea: Scientismi, Storicismi Irrazionalismi. 1815-1918*, IV/1 , Torino, UTET Libreria, 1999, p. 206-223. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Cfr. AA.VV., *Oltre le religioni. Una nuova epoca per la spiritualità umana,* a cura di Claudia Fanti e don Ferdinando Sudati, San Pietro in Cariano (VR), Gabrielli, 2016, p. 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Cfr. Ronchi S., *Rudolph Bultmann. Il teologo del Dio non oggettivabile*, Torino, Claudiana, 2005, p. 11-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Cfr. Restaino F., *Storia della filosofia. La filosofia contemporanea: Filosofie analitiche e continentali. Dal 1918 a oggi*, IV/2 , Torino, UTET Libreria, 1999, p. 336-339. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Caputo J.D., *Filosofia e teologia*, a cura di Andrea Aguti, Brescia, Queriniana, 2016, p. 5-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Think of the distinction between theism and deism made by Paul Gamberini or the various other declinations or currents of theism. Cfr. Gamberini P., *Deus due punto zero. Ripensare la fede nel post-teismo*, San Pietro in Cariano (VR), Gabrielli, 2022, p. 34-36; <https://paologamberinisj.home.blog/2025/01/22/adhuc-aliquid-de-persona-dei-non-omittenda/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. ‘Anthropological mutation' is a concept developed by Pier Paolo Pasolini in the 1970s. Pasolini used this term to describe the profound social and cultural changes he observed in the Italian society of his time. According to him, these changes were caused by the advent of consumerism and the spread of mass media, which were radically transforming people's values and behaviour.Cfr. Bazzocchi M.A., *L’Italia vita dalla luna. Un paese in divenire tra letteratura e cinema*, Milano, Mondadori, 2012, p. IX; Brunetta G.P., *Cent’anni di cinema italiano*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1991, p. 491-492. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Just think of some of them: from quantum physics and its string theory, to molecular biology; from new discoveries and criteria in the field of palaeontology, to discoveries in astronomy and astrobiology; from biochemistry, to new knowledge in the field of genetics. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Freud S., *Il disagio della civiltà*, Roma, Newton Compton, 2016, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. The ‘twelve theses’ first appeared in May 1998 in an article in *The Bishop's Voice* (Bulletin of the Diocese of Newark) and appeared as an appendix to the text *Here I Stand: My Struggle for a Christianity of Integrity, Love and Equality* (2001). They were also published under the title The twelve Theses: a call to a new reformation, in Horizonte, Quarterly of Theology of the Pontifical University of Minas (Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil), no. 37, January March 2015, pp. 112-162. In Italian they can be found in numerous publications and articles, in slightly different versions and translations. As reference texts in Italian we cite: Cfr. Spong J.S., *Un cristianesimo nuovo per un mondo nuovo. Perché muore la fede tradizionale e ne nasce una nuova*, Massari editore, Bolsena (VT) 2010, (testo in appendice), pp. 349-354; AA.VV., *Oltre le religioni. Una nuova epoca per la spiritualità umana,* a cura di Claudia Fanti e don Ferdinando Sudati, San Pietro in Cariano (VR), Gabrielli, 2016, pp. 69-120. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Spong J.S., *Letteralismo biblico: eresia dei Gentili. Viaggio in un cristianesimo nuovo per la porta del vangelo di Matteo*, Bolsena (VT), Massari editore, 2018, p. 23-34; Spong J.S., *Perché il cristianesimo deve cambiare o morire. Riforma della fede e prassi della Chiesa*, Trapani, Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2022, p. 39-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. In this regard, a good introduction is Don Paolo Scquizzato's text on silent meditation and the new frontiers of this practice. Cfr. Scquizzato P., *Se non lo cerchi lo trovi. Introduzione alla meditazione silenziosa*, Milano, Paoline Ed., 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Regardless of the specific religion they belong to, but still in a country where the vast majority profess themselves to be Christian/Catholic. In fact, the Italians who call themselves Catholics, in 2023, are 71.1% of the population: 15.3% say they are practising Catholics, 34.9% say they participate only occasionally in Church activities and 20.9% say they are “non-practising Catholics”. <https://www.censis.it/territorio-e-reti/italiani-fede-e-chiesa>. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Dall’indagine Istat *Aspetti della vita quotidiana (2001-2022)* in relazione alla fede e alla pratica religiosa.

    <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=2434> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. <https://www.gallup.com/corporate/212381/who-we-are.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. Data cited in *Katholische Kirche in Deutschland: Statistischen Daten 2023* (27.06.2024). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. I can also confirm this from my experience as a Catholic priest for nine years active in parish pastoral work and in various categorical pastorals in a European diocese (Bolzano-Bressanone, Italy). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. It is no coincidence that religious practice and degree of personal education/culture are, at least in Italy, inversely proportional. Cfr. Indagine Istat *Aspetti della vita quotidiana (2001-2022)* in relazione alla fede e alla pratica religiosa. <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=2434> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. Vattimo G., *Credere di credere. È possibile essere cristiani nonostante la Chiesa?*, Torino, Garzanti, 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. Cfr. *Un gesuita contro il Dio onnipotente*, Roger Lenaers in conversazione con Claudia Fanti, in Micromega, n. 8/2017, p. 141- 154; Lenaers R., *Cristiani nel XXI secolo? Una ri-lettura radicale del Credo*, Trapani, Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Per approfondire Cfr. Lenaers R., *Il sogno di Nabucodonosor. Fine della Chiesa medievale*, Bolsena (VT), Massari editore, 2009; Lenaers R., *Cristiani nel XXI secolo? Una ri-lettura radicale del Credo*, Trapani, Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. Caputo J.D., *La follia di Dio. Una teologia dell'incondizionale*, Brescia, Queriniana, 2021, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. Caputo J.D., *La follia di Dio. Una teologia dell'incondizionale*, Brescia, Queriniana, 2021, p. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. Clarification: writing “God” as distinct from “god” is not a quirk or an oversight, it is a precise intention. In fact, by “God” I mean the divinity in its classical theistic conception, while by “god” I mean an “other”, post-theist way of understanding the divinity, open to the Mystery. J.D. Caputo himself when making this distinction uses the terms «𝔊𝔬𝔡» and «God». Cfr. Caputo J.D., *What to Believe?: Twelve Brief Lessons in Radical Theology*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. Cfr. AA. VV., *Oltre Dio. In ascolto del Mistero senza nome*, a cura di Fanti C. e Vigil J.M., San Pietro in Cariano (VR), Gabrielli, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. Something very similar to Martin Heidegger's concept of a “coming” God, which identifies him as a passage or nod. Cfr. Heidegger M., *Contributi alla filosofia (Dall’evento)*, Milano, Adelphi, 2007, p. 403. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. Cfr. Franzen A., *Breve storia della Chiesa*, Brescia, Queriniana, 2017, p. 18-50; 70-82; 118-133. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
32. «Christ in truth was not so much a prophet as the mouth of God. For God, through the mind of Christ [...] revealed certain things to the human race [...] and no doubt from the fact that God revealed Himself to Christ, that is, to His mind, immediately, and not - as to the prophets - by means of words and images, we cannot understand except that Christ truly perceived, that is, understood, the things revealed. For a thing is understood when it is perceived precisely with the pure mind, without words or images.» Spinoza B., *Baruch Spinoza. Tutte le opere*, a cura di Andrea Sangiacomo, *Trattato Teologico Politico*, IV, 10, p. 749. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
33. For a good summary of the life and thought of Joachim of Fiore, see the introduction to the text on the Scriptures and the Christian life written by Gian Luca Potestà. Cfr. Da Fiore G., *Concordia del Nuovo e dell’Antico Testamento. Libri I-IV*, a cura di Gian Luca Potestà, Roma, Viella libreria editrice, 2022, p. 7-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
34. Da Fiore G., *Concordia del Nuovo e dell’Antico Testamento. Libri I-IV*, a cura di Gian Luca Potestà, Roma, Viella libreria editrice, 2022, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
35. Da Fiore G., *Concordia del Nuovo e dell’Antico Testamento. Libri I-IV*, a cura di Gian Luca Potestà, Roma, Viella libreria editrice, 2022, p. 59-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
36. Cfr. Arregi J., *La parola “dio” tra l’ambiguità e il silenzio*, [Adista Documenti n° 40 del 23/11/2024](https://www.adista.it/edizione/5243). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
37. Arregi J., *La parola “dio” tra l’ambiguità e il silenzio*, [Adista Documenti n° 40 del 23/11/2024](https://www.adista.it/edizione/5243). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
38. This term should certainly be abolished because of the images, dynamics and many contents it still carries and which do not facilitate an evolutionary transition. This term should be replaced with something that, rather than the asymmetrical and domineering “shepherd-flock” relationship, evokes “accompaniment” rather than “guidance”, “presence” rather than “influence”, “being” rather than “doing”. For example, in this radically renewed context, the evangelical image of being leaven (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20-21) certainly finds more space and assonance. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
39. Cfr. Mori B., *Per un cristianesimo senza religione. Ritrovare la “via” di Gesù di Nazaret*, San Pietro in Cariano (VR), Gabrielli, 2022; Mori B., *L’implosione di una religione. Verso la crisi dei dogmi, dei sacramenti e del sacerdozio nella Chiesa cattolica*, San Pietro in Cariano (VR), Gabrielli, 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
40. Just think of the experiences and what is offered by the Italians Gamberini SJ and P. Scquizzato, but also others such as the Camaldolese Bede Griffiths OSB, Willigis Jäger, Charles M. Bidwell and all the experiences within the movement called Progressive Christianity and the experience of many Comunità cristiane di base (CdB) in the West. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
41. Cfr. AA.VV., *Theologie anders orten. Aufbrüche einer jungen Generation von Theologinnen und Theologen*, a cura di Andreas Feige (Hg.), Würzburg, Echter Verlag, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
42. This issue, as important as it is in all monotheistic religious systems, most closely affects Catholics who have made “unity” a myth to conceal other dynamics that are not at all evangelical, often prevaricating and always undemocratic. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
43. Particularly significant in this regard is the text and thought of Prof. Luigi Lombardi Vallauri. He was full professor of Philosophy of Law at the University of Florence from 1970 to 2011. He taught the same subject at the Catholic University of Milan, from which he was dismissed in 1998 for heterodoxy, with a measure declared illegitimate by the European Court in Strasbourg in 2010. Cfr. Lombardi Vallauri L., *Meditare in Occidente. Corso di mistica laica*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
44. Reverend Charles Bidwell PhD (deceased 22 November 2022) was an ordained minister of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in Edmonton, Canada. Beginning in 1978, he was active in the defence of the LGBT community by advancing these demands within religious organisations. Since the early 1990s, Bidwell has been active at St. Stephen's College in Alberta. As a lecturer, he taught courses on important topics such as sexuality and spirituality and coordinated several workshops involving local religious communities. For more than a decade (2006-2018), Bidwell was one of the few who worked to collect a number of non-theistic liturgical resources. For St. Stephen's College of Alberta, he led the Theological Studies Committee (1997-2021), was a valued member of the Honours and Honours Degrees Committee (2005-2022), as well as a member of the Academic Senate (2001-2021; president 2005-2018) and served on the Board of Governors (2005-2022).

    <https://www.ualberta.ca/en/st-stephens/news/2022/november/st.-stephens-mourns-and-celebrates-the-life-of-rev.-dr.-charles-bidwell.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
45. <https://progressivechristianity.org/about-us/> [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
46. AA.VV., *Non-Theistic Liturgy Resources*, Alberta (Canada), St. Stephen’s College, 2018, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
47. Lenaers R., *Cristiani nel XXI secolo? Una ri-lettura radicale del Credo*, Trapani, Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2018, p. 57-58; Lenaers R., *Il sogno di Nabucodonosor. Fine della Chiesa medievale*, Bolsena (VT), Massari editore, 2009, p. 361. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
48. Versione della preghiera del Padre nostro scritta da Charles M. Bidwell. AA.VV., *Non-Theistic Liturgy Resources*, Alberta (Canada), St. Stephen’s College, 2018, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)