

The Gastronomical Conquest: Morsels of Christian Thought and History from the Perspective of Hunger

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The Lord walks among the pucheros (potpourri).

Santa Teresa de Jesús

The history of Christian thought, as all human enterprises, is time and space bound; therefore there are as many ways of addressing it as many cultures and generations exist. Some scholars have suggested revisiting the history of Christian thought from the point of view of the history of libraries,¹ of female theologians,² of fear,³ of crime,⁴ of food,⁵ of vegetarianism,⁶ etc.

My task is to approach the subject by dropping some crumbs related to hunger.⁷ This is an open invitation to the *potpourri* (rotten pot) where everybody contributes and everybody eats from a common-pot. This is not a melting-pot treatment of the subject where globalizing powers assimilate globalized cultures. The *potpourri*, or in Spanish: sancocho, cocido, puchero... , cooks new flavors out of many distinctive elements. The *olla podrida*, although originally a soldier's dish in Europe at the dawn of the Middle Ages, has room for cooking it, celebrating the diversity of economic, cultural and religious milieus.

The *potpourri* gets rid of the dichotomy between spiritual and material culture, by doing theology from the guts! The present meal then, is to open your appetite to add cuisine wisdom to the common-pot and bites of Christian thought history to a “theological cuisinature.”

From gastronomical conquest follows two implications: using food as a weapon to exterminate human beings, and to conquer the Other by

¹ Justo L. González, “Devolver lo recibido; la biblioteca de Jorge y Ondina,” *Cuba teológica* 1 (2001).

² Amy Oden, *In Her Words: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

³ Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture 13th-18th Centuries*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

⁴ Karlheinz Deschner, *Historia criminal del cristianismo*, Barcelona: Martínez Roca, 1992.

⁵ Maximiliano Salinas Campos, *Gracias a Dios que comi; el cristianismo en Iberoamérica y el Caribe. Siglos XV-XX*, México, D.F.: Dabar, 2000.

⁶ Colin Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995.

⁷ One attempt is *Hunger in History: Food Shortage, Poverty, and Deprivation*, Lucile F. Newman (ed), Oxford/ Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995. However, I propose to relate the theme particularly to theology.

changing their taste according to the dominant culture and thus making people dependent through their mouths and stomachs.

The menu proposed includes six courses: the role hunger played in the theological discourse throughout the Bible, the Pre-Constantinian Church, Christendom, the dis/encounter of three kitchens, the Green Revolution and the “Free Trade Agreement.”

I. Hunger in the Bible

Famine has existed since the beginning of history, some of it due to natural causes, and the majority, because of human hunger for power. Hunger led Esau to sell his rights as a first-born son in exchange for a plate of lentils (Genesis 25: 32). Hunger as a weapon is also apparent during the Matriarchal and Patriarchal Biblical period when Joseph traded human beings for food (Genesis 47)!

Food terrorism has also been linked to sieges and blockades. The old cities protected themselves with walls but at the same time painted themselves into a corner when they were cut off from food and water. The Hebrew Bible refers quite a number of sieges such as the one of Jerusalem which lasted two years (Jeremiah 52: 4-5).

Natural catastrophes do happen, but still, hunger is not a given, it is produced or used by the elite for insatiable profit. The Syrophoenician Widow’s story refers to a famine season but also informs us about the King’s preoccupation with feeding his horses and mules (I Kings 17: 2; 18: 5)!

The Israelites’ ethical imperative was: “Not one of your people will be poor” (Deuteronomy 15: 4), however this commandment wasn’t obeyed in real life. In the 8th century B.C.E., farmer and prophet Amos raised his thunder against gastronomical heresies:

Hear this, you who trample upon the needy,
and bring the poor of the land to an end,
saying, “When will the new moon be over,
that we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,
that we may offer wheat for sale,
that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and deal deceitfully with false balances,
that we may buy the poor for silver

and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and sell the refuse of the wheat?”
The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
“Surely I will never forget any of their deeds...” (Amos 8: 4-7)

In the desert the Israelites learned Biblical communism from the manna experience: “those who gathered much did not have too much, and those who gathered less did not have too little. Each had gathered just what he needed” (Exodus 16: 18). Nonetheless, food exploitation was the crude reality:

People will build houses and get to live in them
–they will not be used by someone else.
They will plant vineyards and enjoy the wine-
it will not be drunk by others.
Like trees, my people will live long lives.
They will fully enjoy the things
that they have worked for. (Isaiah 65: 21-22)

Prophet Micah preached against a large land-owned state:
How terrible it will be for those
Who lie awake and plan evil!
When morning comes, as soon as
They have the chance, they do the
Evil they planned. When they want
Fields, they seize them; when they
Want houses, they take them. No
Man’s family or property is safe. (Micah 2: 1-2)

Before Jesus started his ministry, he had to face the ‘bread temptation’ (Luke 4: 1-13). To begin with, the Devil questioned Jesus’ identity: “If you really are the Son of God,” meaning ‘if you really are somebody worthy of praise, you have to eat like the lords of the earth, use your power selfishly to gratify your exquisite taste, eat luxurious dishes, show us how you eat, show everybody your class.’

Dorothee Soelle was right in addressing Jesus’ rejection of radical materialism: “human beings can’t live on bread alone, but also on every word that God speaks.”⁸ True, Jesus’ followers, female and male, led a hand-to-mouth life without cares, but, as Soelle argues, from that doesn’t follow the glorification of hunger, or asceticism. “Human beings can’t live on bread alone” constitutes Jesus’ liberating principle. Jesus rebuked the bread-oriented crowd: “you’re looking

⁸ Dorothee Soelle & Louise Schottroff, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press/SPCK, 2002, p. 24.

for me because you ate bread and had all you wanted, not because you understood my miracles” (John 6: 26). The Jesus from the desert and from the feeding of the more than 5,000 people refused to be identified with one who uses bread as a weapon to recruit followers. Jesus not only confronted the crowd, he also cornered his 12 disciples: “And you, would you also like to leave?” (John 6: 67).

Jesus denounced the insensitivity of the upper classes, whose idol is profit: “You can’t serve both, God and riches” (Luke 16: 13); immediately after saying that, the Nazarene referred the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus⁹ (Luke 16: 19-31), which portrays a wealthy man who banqueted every day. Jesus wasn’t impressed by that luxurious table; he did not even refer to the name of the big fish. It was not until the Middle Ages that he was baptized as *Dives*, or “wealthy” in Latin. The hungry beggar, on the contrary, possesses a name, he is somebody: Lazarus, namely, “God has helped.” This parable calls our attention to the corruption of bread into a napkin. Bread, or bits of bread, were destined to wipe with the three fingers of the commensals; once used, they were thrown under the table for the dogs to take care of that. Once the dogs were satisfied, their leftovers were swept into the streets and thrown away where Lazarus picked them up. Corn tortilla is more versatile, it can be used as a plate, a spoon and a napkin, and yet more, a recyclable napkin because it is not thrown away but *eaten* right away. The Rich Man of this Parable is the one who made Lazarus dependent on the dog’s leftovers!

Food as a weapon comes clearer in the prophetic letter of James 5: 4-6:

You have not paid any wages to
the people who work in your fields.
Listen to their complaints!
The cries of those who gather in your crops
have reached the ears of God, the Lord Almighty.
Your life here on earth has been full of luxury and pleasure.
You have made yourselves fat for the day of slaughter.
You have condemned and murdered innocent people,
and they do not resist you.

In the overly-spiritualized text of I Corinthians 11: 17-34, what takes

place is the manipulation of prestige through a hunger dictatorship. Some are feasting while others are forced to fast. Hunger is the third rider in the book of Revelation (6: 5-6). The black horse witnessed a real famine which injured Asia Minor by the end of 1st century but God took the side of the hungry folks:

A quart of wheat for a day’s wages,
and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages.
But do not damage the olive trees and the vineyards!

II. Pre-Constantinian Church: I-IV C.E.

The original Judeo-Christian message was aimed at the whole person and the whole of creation but eventually shifted into a *fuga mundi* (escape from the world). Consequently, material issues such as hunger and food were minimized and neglected. Here are some isolated examples of the secularization of food.

Lex frumentarium, or the grain law, was instituted by the Roman empire in order to provide meat, wheat and oil, for free or with subsidized prices, to its citizens on a monthly basis. Gaius Gracchus started this “food stamps” program in 123 B.C.E. since hunger had been the main source of social rebellions.

Mary the Hebrew,¹⁰ or Mary the Prophetess (1st century) was a representative of Alexandrian women alchemists whose aim consisted of transforming metals into silver and gold, using kitchen pots and utensils. 21st century cooks still use her technique called *balneum mariae* (baño María) to slowly heat food and keep it on a constant temperature, which was originated for the above cited purposes. Currently there are more sophisticated ways of making gold from the hunger industry.

Through its forerunner Clement (circa 155-220 C.E.), the Christian school of Alexandria has exercised a strong influence up until today in preaching a tasteless Christianity. More faithful to Plato’s *Georgias* and *The Republic*, than to Jesus’ meals, Clement ended up privileging the “spiritual” banquet and an ascetic life. He went as far as recommending an austere diet for children in order to facilitate their spirit’s (*pneuma*) good circulation.¹¹ The sense of taste was associated with the lower faculties of human beings. Cooking, slaughtering, fishing, and related jobs were despised. This way Christians didn’t feel obliged to follow Jesus’ imperative of feeding the hungry.

The oldest Christian church building known to the present is the Syrian

⁹ William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994, p. 114.

¹⁰ Margaret Alic, *El legado de Hipatia: historia de las mujeres en la ciencia desde la Antigüedad hasta fines del siglo XIX*, Mexico, D.F.: Siglo XXI, 1991, p. 51.

¹¹ Clement of Alejandria, *Lo mejor de Clemente de Alejandria*, Barcelona: CLIE, 2001, pp. 123-158.

Dura-Europo (at least 256 C.E.). This temple has an area of 65 m² and there's no evidence of an altar; the most probable theory is that the common table was still in use for the distribution of bread.¹² It was not until the Constantinization of Christianity that the Eucharist replaced it, as is written in the minutes of Laodicea's Synod.¹³ Real food for everybody was subsumed by the mystical body of Christ.

The Silk Road consisted of a network of roads whose traveling merchandise consisted of food as well. However, only the well-to-do could afford edible goodies since transportation was so expensive. For instance, wheat doubled its price every 500 km.¹⁴

III. Christendom: IV-XV C.E.

During the Middle Ages European agricultural productivity was indebted to Near and Far East technologies such as better plowing, three-field husbandry, the yoke of harnessing horses, and the water-mill. The agricultural role of the Benedictines and Cistercians was quite basic as well.¹⁵

In our bites of the history of Christian thought from the point of view of hunger, the water issue runs parallel. The 21st century will see the world water wars. In spite of the fact that without water we can't live more than 4 to 5 days, our docetic theology disenchanting itself of the vital liquid as early as the Second Council of Arles of 452 C.E.:

If in the territory of a bishop, infidels light torches or venerate trees, fountains or stones, and he neglects to abolish this usage, he must know that he is guilty of sacrilege.¹⁶

In 960 C.E. Saxon King Edgar continued in the same trend:

¹² Rafael Aguirre, *Del movimiento de Jesús a la iglesia cristiana; ensayo de exégesis sociológica del cristianismo primitivo*, Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2001, p. 93.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁴ Eduardo Arens, *Asia Menor en tiempos de Pablo, Lucas y Juan; aspectos sociales y económicos para la comprensión del Nuevo Testamento*, Córdoba, España: Almendro, 1995, p. 129.

¹⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York: Academic Press, 1974, quoted by Ulrich Duchrow, *Europe in the World System 1492-1992: Is Justice Possible?* Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992, p. 6.

¹⁶ Janet Bord and Colin Bord, *Sacred Waters: Holy Wells and Water Lore in Britain and Ireland*, London – New York: Granada, 1985, 31. Quoted by Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit*, Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002, p. 136.

every priest industriously advances Christianity, and extinguishes heathenism, and forbids the worship of fountains.¹⁷

From the corruption of water and its reduction to a mere detergent to wash away industry's poisonous substances, follows the current water wars all over the world. In this sense George Bush Jr.'s declaration is symptomatic: "For Texas Now, Water, Not Oil, is Liquid Gold."¹⁸

Doing theology from the stomach has been denied in general; nonetheless, prophetic voices raised their thunder: St. Basil (330-79 C.E.) preached in his Homily against the rich (p. 31): "The bread you keep belongs to the hungry people. The clothes you pile in your closet belongs to the naked." St. Ambrose (339-97 C.E.) commented about Naboth's Vineyard: "Naboth's story is old as a narrative, but modern as related to customs. Which powerful person doesn't want to expel farmers from their ancestral lands? Where is the rich satisfied with what he has and who is not tempted with his neighbor's property? Every day in the world new Ahabs are born and other Naboths die."

Food history has been intertwined with war and the church. This is also the case of cherries. According to Pliny's history, they were taken early by Lucullus, from Kerasos, Pontus, Asia Minor to Europe. However its dissemination was slow, until the Cluny monastery and the entire French town spread it all over Europe.¹⁹ This is also the case of mystic, poet, and writer Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179 C.E.) who has been studied from several perspectives, but her fondness for beer still remains to be addressed (reminding us that mystics are not mystics at all times).

Throughout the Middle Ages the Christian church blessed the dividing wall between rich and poor with the recommendation that the rich be generous with the poor. Within this static view of society bishopric seats were established in strategic agricultural centers even though during the 12th and 13th centuries bishops legitimized the right to steal in favor of hungry people, as long as robbing had the purpose of feeding themselves.²⁰

Spanish cuisine is what it is thanks to the Muslim rich culinary tradition. During eight centuries of colonization, they shared their gastronomic culture such

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *New York Times*, April 6, 2001, front page.

¹⁹ Álvaro, Cunqueiro, *La cocina cristiana de Occidente*, Barcelona: Tusquets, 1999, p. 229.

²⁰ Marcelo de Barros/José Luis Caravias, *Teología de la tierra*, Madrid: Paulinas, 1988, p. 306.

as the stuffing of vegetables, the production of candies, and of course, the introduction of sugar cane. Some years their harvest was so abundant that Muslims were not the exception in burning cereals to keep the “right price.” It is an open secret that Muslims in Spain didn’t obey the Koran’s prohibition of alcoholic beverages. They were experts in growing vineyards and also olives. Regarding olive oil, it was all spread out through Al-Andalusia. In fact you can state that Muslim expansion in the Iberian Peninsula stopped where agrarian conditions were adverse to the growing of olives!²¹

The Crusades were food wars as well. Sugar, lemons, oranges, dates, peaches, Saracen wheat, among other goodies, were stolen by Europeans. Tarragon (little dragon) was another spice which traveled under these circumstances. Centuries later the French Revolution attempted to popularize it as the most valuable aromatic plant but in spite of those efforts, tarragon remained among the elite and the connoisseurs.²²

Coming from a long Christian and Greek tradition which rejected bodily pleasures, being a cook was something despicable. However, some sources propose that when the papacy moved to Avignon, Pope John XXII (1244-1334 C.E.), a mustard lover, inaugurated the high white caps on his cooks.²³ French prestigious culinary history, on the other hand, has led a food historian to assert that the British kitchen was consolidated during the Hundred Year War (1337-1453 C.E.) against the Gauls.²⁴

Although Italians would never agree, in the 14th century Marco Polo took pasta edibles from China, and eventually they became national dishes of his home country.

Prince Henry the Navigator in the 15th century sponsored a series of trips to find a water route to India. The Portuguese empire wanted to avoid Venice and Genoa intermediaries in the acquisition of spices and fruits such as cinnamon, ginger, mustard, pepper, mangoes, etc. However, the circumnavigation of the African continent as a route to India was not accomplished until 1499 C.E. with Vasco da Gama. It was also through Henry the Navigator’s auspice that the

bizcocho (a kind of bread) was born. The *bi* (= two *coctus*), which means boiled two times, prolonged the life expectancy of bread, and alongside, avoided the burden of transporting extra water and fuel for their preparation. Elitist bakers also created the distinction between *pambazo* (*pan baixo, pan bajo*), a lower kind of bread for the poor, and *la baguette*, a fancy French name for a long bread for people with taste.

IV. Dis/Encounter of Three Kitchens: XVI-XX C.E.

*El vino, de plátano; y si sale agrio, ¡es nuestro vino!*²⁵

José Martí

*The Pope as the vicar of God commanded the world, as if it were a tool in his hands; the pope, supported by the canonists, considered the world as his property to be disposed according to his will.*²⁶

Modernity, capitalism, colonialism or globalization started at the end of the 15th and at the beginning of the 16th century, with the dis-encounter of three kitchens: Africa, Americas and Europe. Later on other kitchens would join the *potpourri*, or the community pot. On this fourth course, I’ll invest some time on a gastronomical spirituality by telling short stories of several edibles and drinkables particularly related to my Mexican background.

In the USA, the saying “the rich buy steak and the poor get cheese,” shows how food is culturally embedded. Taste conquest is in sight when a thick piece of red meat is the criterion to determine group identity, regardless of the fact that 25% of the world’s grain harvest is destined to feed cattle in the rich countries.²⁷

Although, to be fair, with few exceptions like the Arab culture of vegetables, the vast majority associate food with meat and not with vegetables, like Proverbs 15: 17: “Better to eat vegetables with people you love than to eat the finest meat where there is hate.” Obviously, this proverb was written by a well fed hand! Actually there is an equation between eating meat and orthodoxy. There has been a link between heresy and vegetarianism because

²¹ Reyna Pastor de Togneri, *Del Islam al cristianismo: en las fronteras de dos formaciones económico-sociales*, Barcelona: Península, 1985, p. 69.

²² Alberto Monin, *Chacinados caseros*, Buenos Aires: Albatros, 1996, p. 57.

²³ Álvaro, Cunqueiro, *La cocina cristiana de Occidente*, Barcelona: Tusquets, 1999, p. 153.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

²⁵ José Martí, *Obras completas; edición popular conmemorativa de su muerte*. Vol. 2, Tomo 1, La Habana, Ed. Lex, 1948, p. 110.

²⁶ Quoted by Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*, Boston, MA: South End Press, 1997, p. 1.

²⁷ Janet M. Fitchen, “Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in the Contemporary United States,” in Carole Counihan & Penny van Esterik, *Food and Culture: A Reader*, New York and London: Routledge, 1997, p. 399.

vegetarians are always on guard against taste conquest. Currently they resist the McDomination or McDonaldization and Coca-colonization of taste.

Needless to say, Jesus was culinarily bound. In the Upper Room he chose to share food and drinks from his culture. In the same way Japanese Christians celebrate the Eucharist with sushi. Unfortunately, the fusion between Christianity and Western culture resulting in food hegemony over other cultures.

Bartolomé Ledesma (1525-1604) taught at the University of Mexico that the Eucharist must be celebrated with bread and wine from Europe and not from the Indians.²⁸ A 17th century catechism promotes the taste conquest:

Q. What is the Eucharist?

A. It is the consecrated species of bread and wine which contain the true body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Q. Of what kind are those species made?

A. Of true bread made out of wheat flour and water, and of true wine made out of grapes."²⁹

Martin Luther was also oblivious regarding Gastronomical Otherness, or the legitimacy of other food and drinks in celebrating communion. In his *Tischreden* he is asked about an alternative drink:

One shouldn't use anything other than wine. If a person can't tolerate wine, omit the sacrament altogether in order that no innovation may be made or introduced.³⁰

Francisco de Jerez, notary and secretary of Francisco Pizarro, the invader of Peru, wrote in his official history that Spaniards "feed each other with the beastly food of those who have never heard about bread and wine... and in spite of that, they have conquered all that is known by the entire world."³¹ The bestial character of the Indians, according to European writers originated not only because of their illiteracy but also because of their inferior food.

The Spanish granted the honorific title of *gente de razón*, "reasonable persons," to those who knew how to eat properly, read: European style!³² A Mexican author

elaborated a whole treatise on culinary predestination; according to that, rice and corn cultures were pre-ordained to be subservient to wheat cultures.³³

Martin Luther blamed the demons for his chronic constipation. He wasn't aware that it was due to his diet poor in vegetables. He didn't realize that his slow metabolism, which was the worst sickness in the Middle Ages, was also a consequence of his excessive consumption of bread.³⁴

As the economy became more monetary based, farmers were more dependent on the owners of capital, resulting in a series of agricultural revolts. Thomas Munzer the champion of the peasant wars, is a valuable contribution of the Protestant Reform in terms of land justice. However, they were bloodily devastated in the Peasant War of 1525.

"Spice Islands" or Muluccas (*Maluku*) articulated food with war as well. The Indonesian group of islands was invaded by Muslims, by Portugal (1512) by French during several inroads, and by Dutch (XIX century). The empires' agenda was to make business with the secret tree of nutmeg, *musk* (Persian), *muscum* (Latin), *nuez moscada* (Spanish), among other spices.

Coffee was a controversial drink. Since the Arabs introduced it probably from Africa to Europe, after a while Pope Clement VIII (1536-1605) solved the ethical-theological problem of whether or not to drink a Mohammedan drink. This Pope drank it right away arguing that such a delicious drink shouldn't be exclusively in the hands of the infidels! Eventually coffee was planted in French Guyana and Martinique.

Christopher Columbus intended to arrive in India through an alternative water route. His task was to obtain spices without the mediation of the Turks who dominated the Mediterranean Sea and the city of Constantinople. The Genoan navigator only had one requirement for his crew: their capacity to eat very little.³⁵

The Aztecs terrorized conquered towns with a tribute, which was paid with a significant amount of food, such as the 20,000 tons of amaranth. Besides that they literally used food as a weapon when they burned chili peppers, and with the help of heavy smoke they defeated their opponents. Hot peppers were also tools for torture and punishment among Incas, Mayans and Aztecs.

²⁸ Maximiliano Salinas Campos, *Gracias a Dios que comí; el cristianismo en Iberoamérica y el Caribe s.XVI-XX*, (México, D.F.: Dabar, 2000), p. 144.

²⁹ Manuel Gutiérrez de Arce, *Apéndice a El Sínodo Diocesano de Santiago de León de Caracas 1687*, (Academia Nacional de Historia, 1975, v. 125), p. 58.

³⁰ Theodore G. Tapper (ed.), *Luther's Works 54: Table Talk*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967, p. 438.

³¹ Jerez, *Verdadera relación de la conquista del Perú*, pp. 59-60.

³² Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *¡Vivan los tamales!* México, D.F.: Ciesas, CONACULTA, Ediciones de la Reina Roja, 2001, p.142.

³³ Quoted by Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *¡Vivan los tamales!* México, D.F.: Ciesas, CONACULTA, Ediciones de la Reina Roja, 2001, p. 119.

³⁴ Sonia Corcuera Mancera, *Entre gula y templanza: un aspecto de la historia mexicana*, Mexico City: FCE, 1999, p. 53.

³⁵ Maria Leonor de Macedo Soares Leal, *A história da gastronomia*, Rio de Janeiro: Senac, 2002, p. 37.

Mexican ancestors themselves later on suffered food and water terrorism under the Spanish siege of Tenochtitlan for several months, until August 13, 1521, when Cortes took over. According to Mayan time, Sunday mass was a direct attack upon their agricultural cycle. The Incas' conquest began through their stomachs by shifting their agricultural economy into a gold-oriented economy. Southern countries and entire continents have been impoverished during the last five centuries by shifting small farms, subsistence agriculture for a one crop agriculture: sugar cane, cotton, coffee, rubber, banana, etc. In other words, changing subsistence agriculture for exporting agriculture. In Brazil cassava had to be cultivated clandestinely in far reaching places, since the best lands were exclusively for sugar cane plantations.

The Spanish defeated the Aztecs through their stomachs. During the harvest feasts they used to make images of their main deity Huitzilopochtli out of *huautli* or amaranth, and eat it. The Spanish established the capital punishment for planting, selling or eating this staple grain. By satanizing amaranth, the miracle grain which is superior to the rest of cereals, Indians lost a source of strength. As time went by, the Indians would recuperate this tradition through the *Pan de muerto* (bread of the dead), which in spite of the sign of the cross and their wheat ingredients, could very well signify their own old worship to Huitzilopochtli.

The racist European stomach didn't tolerate eating the savages' food, therefore they solved the problem by "transubstantiating" what was considered "wild" edibles, changing their original names through re-baptism:

Brazilian *cajú* for *nuez de la India*, Indian nuts.

Brazilian corn for Portuguese ear.

Camotli (Náhuatl) *batata*, sweet potato. It is well known how Napoleon's wife, Empress Josephine, cultivated them in her nursing home as she used to see it in her native Martinique.

Ananá (Taíno), *Piña* (Spain), *abacaxí* (Portugal), pineapple. Columbus became acquainted with it in Guadeloupe. It was discredited for a while as a source of cholera, but eventually nobody resisted Puerto Rican "Piña Colada."

Ahuacátl (Náhuatl: testicles tree), *Palta* (Quechua) = avocado pear or alligator pear (England).

Fresa: strawberry. Their home was Southern Chile: fraises du Chili. In 1712 the marine official Freize, went back to England, took some with him and taught

them to eat them with cream. Linnaeus ate them to treat his gout disease.

Xa-nat (Totonac), *Tlixochitl* (Náhuatl, black flower) = vanilla. Edmond Albius³⁶ was a slave who in the mid 19th century won his freedom by teaching the tropical planters that, in the absence of "meliponas" bugs, vanilla flowers had to be pollinated by hand and one a time. Vanilla, originated in Papantla, México; however, this Veracruz town was dethroned by the planting of bananas and oranges, and by the greediness of Mexican Secretary of Agriculture and its premature harvesting.³⁷

Maguey (Antillianism), from *Mayahuel*, the Goddess of 400 breasts represented food and fertility. The juice of this cactus fed children with its sacred liquid *aguamiel* before fermentation and *pulque* as an alcoholic beverage to make adults merry. This sacred drink became a source for escaping reality after the invasion of Europeans.

Ají (Taíno or Quechua) or *chili* (Náhuatl), Turkey pepper, pepperoni, pimento. Paprika is the Hungarian name for *chile* and it is a basic ingredient of its national dish called *goulash*, which literally means "soldiers' food." In the same Hungary is well respected because of its *pâté* or *foie gras* made of goose liver. According to tradition *pâté* traveled to the Gauls inside the Roman soldier's shields!³⁸ Some recipes of mayonnaise include paprika reminds us of the controversial origin of this sauce. France is of the idea that French cooks of Duke Richelieu created it while fighting against British troops in 1756. Other versions credited mayonnaise to the indulgences of Toulouse; others linked it with the mules of the Pope at Avignon; and still others trace its origin to a siege of a French castle during the religion wars of the 16th and 17th centuries.³⁹ USA's Tabasco hot sauce is also chained to military history when Edmund Mellhenny took the plant from the Mexican state on his return to Louisiana in 1868. After the USA invasion, Mexico lost more than half of its territory.

Ayotl (Náhuatl), *Zucco of Syria* and then zucchini (Italians), Berengen of India. The English language keeps the Massachusetts Algonquian Indian name *askootasquash*.

Ayacotl (Náhuatl), *Purutu* (Quechua poroto), *haricot* (France). Spaniards

³⁶ Juana Barria, *El otro oro de América; los alimentos y la cocina del Nuevo Mundo*, Buenos Aires: Albatros, 1992, p. 360.

³⁷ Manuel Mejido, *México amargo*, México D. F.: Siglo XXI, 1973, p. 49.

³⁸ Tina Alarcón, *Escritores en cubiertos*, México, D.F.: Aguilar, 2003, pp. 140-141.

³⁹ Álvaro Cunheiro, "La mesa del rey en Francia," in *La cocina cristiana de Occidente*, Barcelona: Los 5 Sentidos, 1999.

found a similitude with the Roman fava, so they rebaptized it as fesoles and from there, come the Spanish frijoles. The British found a similarity with the insect called bean *weevi* and from there, originates the name beans.

Xitomatl, (Náhuatl, belly bottom), *pomodoro* (Golden Apples, Italy). Europeans at first feared that tomatoes were poisonous, and their leaves smelled too strong for their taste, so it was confined for decoration. For many years it was eaten only by the poor. In the 20th century, the USA made juice out of tomato and also mixed it up with spirits to continue the European-created need for alcoholic beverages.

Huexolotl (Náhuatl), *Jesuits* (France), *pavo* (Spain thought it was related with Asian “pavo real” peacock), turkey (England).

Mahís (Taíno, maíz), *Centéotl* (Náhuatl), Corn Goddess is the divinity who fights hunger. Also known as Indian wheat, grain of Turkey (Italy). *Momochtli* (Náhuatl), Pop-Corn, Flowered Wheat. Even though this grain saved Europe’s animal population from hunger, it was not until 1906 that Seventh Day Adventist Will Keith Kellogg made corn attractive for North American consumption in the form of flakes. American Indians developed the techniques to preserve corn, peppers, meat and potatoes by drying and grinding them. Corn powder or *pinolli* (Náhuatl), then facilitated people and armies to move around in big distances.

Papa (Quechua), *Kartoffeln* (Germany), *pommes de terre* (France), *patata* (Spain). The English word potato comes from the Spanish *patata*, which originally was the Taino Indian’s *batata*, referring to sweet potato. Pirate Sir Francis Drake took it to England in the 16th century, but it was considered food for poor people until the hunger crisis of the next centuries. In 1667, the Old Believers even broke with the Russian Orthodox Church for food dogmas. The followers of Patriarch Nikon considered vegetables not mentioned in the Bible such as the potato an abomination or a “botanical form of incest,”⁴⁰ a “Devil’s Plant,” a source of leprosy. Russians eventually ended up creating Vodka out of potatoes! According to Denis Diderot, the potato was a cause of excessive flatulence. This dishonorable vegetable saved the European population from several severe famines. Pirate Sir Walter Raleigh planted this it in his property of Myrtle Grove, saving his country fellows from hunger once the millet soup

⁴⁰ Quoted by Sidney W. Mintz, *Tasting Food*, p. 76.

(*sopa boba*) from the monasteries was extinguished.

Tlalcacahuatl (Náhuatl, soil cacao) *maní* (Taíno), peanut. It had to be by the initiative of canonical Francisco Torres de Ulloa that Spain began cultivating this cereal during the 18th century. USA soldiers disseminated it after the Secession War in 1865 since before that time it was confined to Virginia plantations. Peanut butter has become a symbol of USA identity in spite of the fact that originally peanut was a cheap edible for their slaves.⁴¹

Cacahuatl (náhuatl) cocoa (USA), chocolate. When Hernán Cortés in 1523 requested that the Aztecs take him where they hid their treasures, the Indians showed him a mountain of cacao seeds! In some places it was used as currency up until the 19th. Since liquids don’t break fasting (*Liquidum non frangit jejunum*), after almost a century of disputes, Pope Pío V (1504-72) declared that as long as it is prepared with water one can drink it while fasting. In the 18th century, when Holland took over the monopoly of this seed from Spain, the Dutch also exchanged New Amsterdam (New York) for Surinam with England, and began a cacao plantation. The British cultivated this plant in Curacao a century before. Sugar soon was added to chocolate since Europeans’ prone to sweetness had a co-relation to the Caribbean sugar plantations,⁴² and the homogenization of taste through sweetness began. In World War II, chocolate bars became the USA G.I. icon of power and might.

The racist European kitchen omits the contribution of the black continent.⁴³ European tendency to whiteness combated African-Brazilian *dendé* palm oil which tainted all with a golden color. Thanks to *dendé* oil slaves got their vitamins to keep on living.⁴⁴

Culinary sexism, classism and racism can be observed throughout the history of bread. Poor people were not allowed to eat white or wheat bread but rye, corn, millet, only colored bread. *Moros y cristianos*, or white rice with black beans still reminds us of the discriminatory dishes. On the other hand, bread in Europe eventually became a symbol of status also in the sense that only poor people eat it three times a day, as silverware and in order to get

⁴¹ Juana Barría, *El otro oro de América; los alimentos y la cocina del Nuevo Mundo*, Buenos Aires: Albatros, 1992, p. 51.

⁴² Sidney W. Mintz, *Dulzura y poder; el lugar del azúcar en la historia moderna*, México, D.F.: Siglo XXI, 1996.

⁴³ Even an excellent food critic fails to honor Africa’s Kitchen: Paco Ignacio Taibo I, *Encuentro de dos fogones; tránsito de sabores e invento de gozos Vol. I y II*, México, D.F.: Promoción e Imagen, 1992.

⁴⁴ Josué de Castro, *La alimentación en los trópicos*, México, D.F.: FCE, 1946, p. 129.

satisfied with the little something they put in it. Well-fed people's diet, such as the rich and the religious orders, usually included lots of meat, some vegetables, and less soup.

Bread and war also go hand and glove. In 1638, during the second siege of Vienna by the Turks, bakers heard in the middle of the night how the Turks were excavating a tunnel. The bakers made everybody alert and Vienna frustrated the surprise attack. As a reward to the bakers, they were allowed to create a new type of bread: an Arab half moon, in order to remember that the holy Cross defeated the Arab half moon, the name of that bread was Croix Sainte or cross saint, better known as *Croissant*.

The pre-Columbian Mexican national dish, "mole" (spicy green, red or black sauce) was de-indianized by crediting it to the late invention of a nun from Puebla city. As we have seen, the category of *gente de razón* (reasonable people) was created in order to point to people who eat European style,⁴⁵ who eat "civilized food," or to distinguish folks who have embraced the holy European culinary trinity: wheat bread, wine and olive oil.

More recently, Episcopal Pastor, Thomas Robert Malthus, in his *Essay on Population Principle* (1798), explained hunger and epidemics as "nature's wisdom" in order to maintain the equilibrium of world population. He blamed the poor for being responsible for their misery due to their "irrational propensity to proliferate." For him hunger is a natural disaster about which we can't do anything at all. This social Darwinism contrasts with the one of Josué de Castro (1908-73), a passionate Brazilian anthropologist, physician, geographer, diplomat, writer and sociologist who fought hunger his entire life. For him, hunger: "is not a natural phenomenon, on the contrary, it is an artificial product of wrong economic systems: it is a human product and therefore, it can be eradicated through the creative capacity of human beings." Still clearer, his research led him to conclude that overpopulation is the result of hunger. Human beings and animals that don't have enough access to proteins are very prolific.⁴⁶ Malthus also hid the zoological answer to hunger, particularly European immigration to other continents. He didn't live to see how during the second half of 19th century, 52 million Europeans immigrated to Southern countries as food-refugees.

The French Enlightenment cooked a war against condiments, particularly to the detriment of chili. French cooking supremacists encouraged their civilizing gastronomic mission in Mexico. It is well known how Remontel's Tacubaya Cake House (1832) was assaulted by General Santa Ana's soldiers and how Remontel's complaints submitted a huge amount of damages which ended up in the perfect excuse for the French invasion through Veracruz (1838) called: "The War of the Cakes."

In 1910 a series of banquets were offered in commemoration of the first centenary of the Mexican revolution. Those fancy meals were in charge of chef Sylvain Daumont.⁴⁷ The "cuisine française" won the food battle at least at the elite level. During those years people like Fernando Pimentel y Fagoaga were of the opinion that even non-Mexican cows were more civilized!⁴⁸

In the same year, on the occasion of the commemoration of the first centenary of Chilean independence, the government offered a dinner at downtown Saint Lucia Park, the orchestra played classical music to accompany the French cuisine.

Napoleon Bonaparte linked food to his war strategies. In order to have a strong army he sponsored new technology to preserve meals for a longer period of time. From that followed the bottling which eventually evolved into the canning industry.⁴⁹ In 1795 the French emperor offered 12,000 francs in gold and Appert was the recipient of such a reward.

At the dawn of the 19th century Henry Rose invented the barbed wire and Joseph Glidden patented it. Its original task was double: to protect plants from animals and to protect some animals from others. From the very outset some Christians considered this technology the "Devil's Rope" and "the work of the devil," but soon it became the global agricultural fashion. Still more, barbed wire became the war technology to keep ostracized civilian and military population in countless concentration camps, as well as during the two world wars.⁵⁰

The Nazis orchestrated a policy of "organized hunger." German nutritional discrimination divided Europe into four categories: well-fed, under-fed, hungry and starving. Some people were only provided with 500 to 1000 calories daily since, according to Robert Ley, the one responsible for Reich labor:

⁴⁷ Salvador Novo, *Cocina mexicana; historia gastronómica de la ciudad de México*, México, D.F.: Porrúa, 2002, p. 141.

⁴⁸ Gustavo Esteva, "El vaivén de ilusiones y realidades," en *Sin maíz: no hay país*, México, D.F.: Conaculta/MNCP, 2003, p. 186.

⁴⁹ María Leonor de Macedo Soares Leal, *A história da gastronomia*, Rio de Janeiro: Senac, 2002, p. 50.

⁵⁰ John Perry, *Food for Thought: Catholic Insights into the Modified Food Debate*, Ontario: Novalis, 2002, p. 21.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *¡Vivan los tamales!* México, D.F.: Ciesas, CONACULTA, Ediciones de la Reina Roja, 2001, p.142.

⁴⁶ Josué de Castro, *The Geography of Hunger*, Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1952, pp. 70-71.

“a lower race needs less room, less clothing, less food.”⁵¹

“DDT” and other pesticides were the result of destroying human beings and harvest during the Second World War as well.⁵² Official statistics currently report 220,000 yearly human deaths and 3 million people suffering strong intoxications due to the use of insecticides.

Inuits were conquered through their stomachs, too. Their food habits were shifted by the USA importing white wheat flour and white sugar.⁵³ Native Americans got a mortal punch with the killing of buffalos and the destruction of Wild Rice, which is neither wild, nor rice! Between the two world wars, Puerto Rico was forced to “predestine” 240,000 acres to sugar cane plantation; 190,000 to coffee; and more than 50,000 to tobacco. The rest, 160,000 was designated to corn, beans, sweet potato and cassava, all together.⁵⁴

Mexico, during the “foot-and-mouth disease” epidemic (1946-51), witnessed the killing of half a million of each species: pig, sheep, cows, and goats.⁵⁵ This campaign took place during the USA’s enterprise of farm colonization: 1945-59. After World War II the northern country invested 35 million dollars, 2,000 men and 1,500 machines⁵⁶ in order to “exterminate the plague.” To wash their image, both governments distributed 22,000 mules. That insulted Mexican peasants who knew mules are useless on uneven fields.

Canons of taste include drinks. The emergence of Coca-Cola was linked with Christian temperance movement. Asa Griggs Candler, a convinced Methodist, bought the formula created by John Styth Pemberton in Atlanta in 1886. The name was created from the Andean coca leaves and the kola African nut. Candler proposed this alternative drink, naming it “Holy Water of the South” although its dark color hid alcohol very well, just in case! While a Southern soft drink (and covertly spirited), it was not until the Second World War that Coke became the national and global drink. The right to drink Coca-Cola was added as one their rights to fight for freedom.⁵⁷ Currently availability of Coca-Cola and scarcity of water has forced maquiladoras of Mexico’s workers and their children to drink

this product as it is offered in 195 countries with a religious zeal:

All of us in the Coca-Cola family wake up each morning knowing that every single one of the world’s 5.6 billion people will get thirsty that day. If we make it impossible for these 5.6 billion people to escape Coca-Cola, then we assure our future success for many years to come. Doing anything else is not an option.⁵⁸

Water treaties, such as the one of the Rio Bravo, signed between Mexico and USA in 1906 by Joaquín D. Casasús and Elihu Root, shows who is in control by granting USA 95% of the river.⁵⁹

V. The Green Revolution: 1950’s to the Present

If you’re looking for the best way to make people dependent, it seems to me that food dependence is excellent.

H. Humphrey, Vice-president of the USA

With the vast technology applied to agriculture in the 1950’s emerged the “Green Revolution” built on the same colonialist enterprise but on a bigger scale: the globalization of one kind of food to the detriment of the diversity and sustainability of local staple edibles.

In 1910, 45% of Americans lived in the countryside. In 1935 there were 6.8 million active farm people in the country; currently there are approximately 1.9 million. With the post-war, through the “Green Revolution” a shift from agriculture to agribusiness took place. Big corporations and banks took over small properties transforming fields into factories. Earl Butz, USA Secretary of Agriculture, told farmers repeatedly: “get big or get out.”⁶⁰ To mention just one example, in 1920, 925,000 African-Americans operated farms; by 1980 less than 40,000 remained.⁶¹ Before the Second World War the majority of the food consumed by cities was obtained within a 50 mile radius; the new food era with its vacuum packing, heavy advertising, long distance transportation, made cities dependent.⁶² The terror consequences of agri-power, or of the “food diplomacy”

⁵¹ Josué de Castro, *The Geography of Hunger*, Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1952, p. 250.

⁵² “La agricultura de Guerra,” *Brecha*, 13 agosto, 2002.

⁵³ Richard Watson, *La dieta del filósofo; adelgace y, de paso, descubra el sentido de la vida*, Barcelona: Urano, 1999, p. 35.

⁵⁴ Josué de Castro, *The Geography of Hunger*, Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1952, p. 123.

⁵⁵ José Rogelio Álvarez (ed). *Enciclopedia de México*, México, SEP, 1987, p. 3156.

⁵⁶ Paul Friggens, “Fracasa la lucha contra la aftosa en México,” en *Selecciones de Readers Digest*, julio 1948, pp. 39-41.

⁵⁷ Sidney W. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, pp. 26-28.

⁵⁸ Quoted by Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit*, Cambridge, MA, South End Press, 2002, p. 99.

⁵⁹ Manuel Mejido, *México amargo*, México D. E.: Siglo XXI, 1973, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Jack A. Nelson, *Hunger for Justice: the Politics of Food and Faith*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980, p. 137.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

were lucidly grasped by Wendell Berry:

The concept of food-as-weapon is not surprisingly the doctrine of a Department of Agriculture that is being used as an instrument of foreign political and economic speculation. This militarizing of food is the greatest threat so far raised against the farmland and the farm communities of this country. If present attitudes continue, we may expect government policies that still encourage the destruction, by overuse, of farmland. This, of course, has already begun. To answer the official call for more production – evidently to be used to bait or bribe foreign countries – farmers are plowing their waterways and permanent pastures; lands that ought to remain in grass are being planted in row crops. Contour plowing, crop rotation, and other conservation measures seem to have gone out of favor of fashion in official circles and are practiced less and less on the farm. This exclusive emphasis on production will accelerate the mechanization and chemicalization of farming, increase the price of land, increase overhead and operating cost, and thereby further diminish the farm population. Thus the tendency, if not the intention, of Mr. Butz's confusion of farming and war, is to complete the deliverance of American agriculture into the hands of corporations.⁶⁵

In the United States, the fortunate 'Lazarus' is given food stamps as a means to create dependency. Government assistance food programs also are instrumental in controlling of their recipients: What to eat, how often they give, who they choose, with what kind of qualifications, where they distribute the edibles.⁶⁴ The Food Stamp Program, among other food giveaway organizations is subordinated to the policies of the producers, processors and distributors of food. In many cases they follow the wealthy Dives' principle: "feeding the poor our leftovers," sometimes on a "first-come-first-serve" basis, which includes not only the hungry but the well-fed as well. Fitchen rightly synthesizes the foodstuffs given:

They represent the overproduction that threatens to bring down the price received by the producer/processor, the "surplus" purchased by the federal government to keep it off the market. The real objectives of the commodity distribution program, it appears, are to reduce the supply reaching the market, to dispose of government-owned surplus commodities in a way that obviates long-term storage costs, and to reduce embarrassment over surplus in the face of reportedly growing hunger.⁶⁵

Since "food is power," international food aid leads also to a convenient

dependence for the donors. In 1975 Earl Butz, USA Secretary of Agriculture, pointed out: "Food is a weapon. It is now one of the principal tools in our negotiating kit."⁶⁶

John Block, USA Secretary of Agriculture 1981-85, was of the conviction that "the effort of some developing countries to become self-sufficient in terms of food production should be a memory of old times. Those countries must save money by importing food from the United States."⁶⁷

Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz was committed to land reform no matter what. In 1954, the United Fruit Company boycotted the presidential project with a coup d'état.

In the 1970's pediatrician and Chilean president Salvador Allende, was committed to provide half a liter of milk to each child of his country. Nestle, the second food corporation in the world boycotted the project.⁶⁸

VI. The "Free Trade Agreement": 1994 to the Present

Agriculture is important to our nation, to feed our people. Can you imagine a country incapable of producing enough food to feed its population? It would be a nation exposed to international pressures. It would be a vulnerable nation. That's why when we talk about American agriculture, actually we're talking about national security.

George Bush Jr., July 27, 2001, Washington.

The "Bull of Donation" of Pope Alexander VI, issued on April 17, 1492 was the culmination of a series of bulls where the *Dominus Orbi* or the universal lordship of the papacy granted Spain and Portugal all the lands "discovered and to be discovered, one hundred leagues to the West and South of the Azores towards India." As time went by new forms of expropriation were articulated especially through the patents war. In this way even the most spiritual, i.e., the ideas were turned into merchandize by being considered "intellectual property," as the British Monopoly Statues (1623) and the System of Industrial Patents (1883) illustrates it. From 1781 to 1999, in the USA

⁶⁵ Quoted in *Ibid*, pp. 151-152.

⁶⁴ Janet M. Fitchen, "Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in the Contemporary United States," in Carole Counihan & Penny van Esterik, *Food and Culture, A Reader*, New York and London: Routledge, 1997, p.399.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 398.

⁶⁶ *New York Times*, 17 March, 1975.

⁶⁷ Luis Hernández Navarro, "La guerra de los alimentos," *La Jornada*.

⁶⁸ Jean Ziegler, *El hambre en el mundo explicada a mi hijo*, Barcelona: Muchnik, 2000, p. 67.

only, there were 6 million patents and there were 3 more million waiting to be patented. It is expected that by 2005 there is going to be one billion dollars of income through the IPR (intellectual property rights).⁶⁹ The patent business has extended its monopolization to the patenting of animals, microbes, living organisms, human cells, plants and popular knowledge of ancient indigenous cultures.

The new millennium has already started with the “green gold” or the genetically manipulated seeds. Transgenic seeds produce bigger plants, more resistant to barren lands, to insects. The final products last longer in the fridge, and resist more rotteness. Nonetheless, instead of fighting hunger of two thirds of the world population, the profit seeking mentality has in mind to control seeds and harvest of the 1.5 billion farmers of the world. Through the terminator or suicide seeds, besides the patents of plants and animals, the big agribusiness corporations are more serious in continuing to use food as a mortal weapon.

Little wonder two American experts in world hunger conclude: “the most important step Americans can take to end hunger is to remove U.S. support – financial, diplomatic, and military – from regimes determined to resist the changes necessary to end hunger.”⁷⁰

In 2004 the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) between Mexico, USA and Canada has reached its first decade. This is an open declaration of war against farmers. Mexican Carlos Hank Gonzalez, in his task to emulate big agribusiness of northern countries declared in 1991: “It is my duty as Secretary of Agriculture to expel from their farms 10,000 peasants.” When a journalist asked him what were the plans for those evacuated farmers the politician said: “That’s not my area of work.”⁷¹ He just wanted for Mexico to “modernize” following the example of only 2% of USA farmers who produce enough food for their country and for export, too.

Mexico, with the temporary exception of beans, powdered milk, sugar

⁶⁹ Jorge Riechmann, *Qué son los alimentos transgénicos; ¿Cómo va a influir en la economía mundial? ¿Cuáles son los riesgos para la salud humana? ¿Para qué se producen?*, Barcelona: Integral, 2002, p. 56.

⁷⁰ Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins, “Beyond the Myths of Hunger: What Can We Do?,” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, New York/London: Routledge, 1997, p. 403.

⁷¹ Gustavo Esteva, “El vaivén de ilusiones y realidades,” en *Sin maíz no hay país*, México, D.F.: Conaculta/MNCP, 2003, p. 204.

and corn, in 2003 eliminated international barriers to trade with more than 40 plants and animal products from the USA. This asymmetric relationship is already jeopardizing Mexican food sovereignty. USA and Canada subsidize farmers whereas 70% of the 25 million Mexican farmers live in poverty, and more than 20% in misery. In the USA and Canada there are 384 tractors per 1000 peasants, while in Mexico there are only 20 tractors per 1000 peasants. Since the 1970’s, Mexico, the land of corn, imports it from USA, and by 2008 the 2000 mile-border will be open to tax-free corn from the USA. Still more, since the year 2000 transgenic corn, not approved for human consumption, has been found in the corn tortillas of “Taco Bell” made in Mexico.⁷²

After ten years of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), it is clear that food terrorism is what it means. Mexico buys staple food and sells cheap labor and raw materials. It is no accident that the new political party in power PAN (Party of National Action) was originated to oppose President Lázaro Cárdenas’ land reform in support of the poor landless farmers and peasants.

Within this chain of events we have to place the Neo-Zapatista movement protest since January 1, 1994 with Sub-Comandante Marcos. This philosopher and land activist inserts his fight with agrarian revolutionary Maximiliano Zapata and his heir, Methodist pastor and martyr Rubén Jaramillo.⁷³ Land and life were articulated by two peasants from Chiapas: “The free trade agreement is a death certificate for the Indian peoples of Mexico,” and “Don’t test us, because Zapatistas could appear all over the country.”⁷⁴

Soybean totalitarianism is at hand. Argentina, is a country that has the capacity to feed 300 million people, produce 70 million tons of grain and 90 million tons of agricultural products. It is the fourth world producer of grains and a well respected producer of fine meat. Nevertheless, 55% of its population lives in a poverty level and 25% in misery. In addition, this country is shifting its production to soybeans, being already the third world

⁷² Jorge Riechmann, *¿Qué son los alimentos transgénicos?; ¿cómo van a influir en la economía mundial?*, Barcelona: Integral, 2002, p. 49.

⁷³ Carlos Fuentes, *Tiempo mexicano*, Mexico, D.F.: Joaquín Mortiz, 1978, p. 109.

⁷⁴ Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*, Boston, MA: South End Press, 1997, p. 114.

producer after USA and Brazil, which will make it more dependent.

India is under the tyranny of soybeans as well, by shifting their taste, distracting their fields from polycultures to industrial monocultures. World Bank propaganda of replacing “food-first” for “exporting-first” has to do with their war against self-sufficiency or the growing of food locally. The imperial media of free trade argues that “the earnings from exports of farmed shrimp, flowers, and meat will finance imports of food.”⁷⁵ Soybeans are at war against India’s mustard which is useful for therapeutic massages, for muscular and joint problems, as a repellent, as oil, as a pest control and environment purifier and it is the very symbol of Spring.

A Bitter-Sweet Dessert

Only one thing matters on earth: the revolution which will provide food for the entire world. Simone Weil⁷⁶

I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about as freely as possible, but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. Gandhi

The well known French female philosophers Simone Weil (1909-43) and Simone de Beauvoir met at the Sorbonne. Sartre’s “significant other” was intrigued by the weary clothes and sharp mind of her namesake. Furthermore, Beauvoir was drawn to Weil when she heard that the Christian, Marxist and Mystic started crying when she heard the news of a big famine in China. Beauvoir just felt overwhelmed with the philosopher, whose heart pumped for the entire creation, so an encounter was propitiated. Weil immediately stopped her colleague: “Only one thing matters on earth: the revolution which will provide food for the entire world.” Beauvoir strongly disagreed: “the main problem is not to find happiness for human beings; but to find the sense of being.” “It is clear that you have never ever been hungry,” concluded Simone Weil.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: the Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, Cambridge MA: South End Press, 2000, p. 15.

⁷⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *Memorias de una joven formal*, Barcelona: EDHASA, 1987, p. 242.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

In this dinner, I have been providing my commensals with some morsels of the history of Christian thought from the angle of hunger. My aim has been to draw the attention of the church at large, to consider hunger as a theological dogma. A holistic soteriology involves soul and body and the entire creation. From that follows the right to eat, the right to have access to food, as the most basic human right. Consequently, we have to address the eradication of hunger as a matter of *Status Confessionis*.⁷⁸

At the rise of the third millennium globalizers still hold to the concept of earth as something inert, as a Terra Nullius, (land of nobody), read: land of the five agro-business corporations which monopolize the grain of the globalized world. We have seen how the capitalization and militarization of agriculture has led us to the homogenization of agricultural systems and thus to the gastronomical conquest. The Other, s/he who eats differently runs the risk of being swallowed by the McDomination and Coca-Colonization of taste.

In our task of democratizing food we need to recuperate the prophetic vocation of Christianity. Prophets and prophetesses throughout Judeo-Christian tradition have subscribed to Hebrew Scriptures imperative: “Not one of your people will be poor” (Deuteronomy 15: 4). The epistemological, ecclesiological, and soteriological place to meet Jesus Christ in disguise is, not surprisingly, in the hungry people (Matthew 25: 31-46).

Here we are then, sitting at the table nearby the *Potpourri*, the symbol of diversity in the midst of the assimilating melting-pot of agro-industries; the symbol of self-sufficiency and self-determination, in front of food terrorism of the modern Josephs who trade with human beings.

Potpourri is an open invitation to fight gastronomical conquest. To celebrate diversity, to re-create life through free access to food for everybody; to do theology from the guts through a theological cuisinature.

Bon Appetite!

⁷⁸ Craig L. Nesson, *Give Us Today A Lutheran Proposal for Ending World Hunger*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.