

95 Theses for the 21st Century

Matthew Fox

1. God is both Mother and Father.
2. At this time in history, God is more Mother than Father because the feminine is most missing and it is important to bring back gender balance.
3. God is always new, always young, and always "in the beginning."
4. God the Punitive Father is not a God worth honoring, but a false god and an idol that serves empire builders. The notion of a punitive, all-male God, is contrary to the full nature of the Godhead, who is as much female and motherly as masculine and fatherly.
5. "All the names we give to God come from an understating of ourselves" (Meister Eckhart). Thus people who worship a Punitive Father are themselves punitive.
6. Theism (the idea that God is "out there" or above and beyond the universe) is false. All things are in God and God is in all things (panentheism).
7. Everyone is born a mystic and a lover who experiences the unity of things, and all are called to keep alive this mystic or lover of life.
8. All are called to be prophets, which is to interfere with injustice.
9. Wisdom is love of Life. (see the Book of Wisdom, "This is wisdom: to love life," and Christ in John's Gospel: "I have come that you may have life and have it in abundance.")
10. God loves all of creation, and science can help us more deeply penetrate and appreciate the mysteries and wisdom of God in creation. Science is no enemy of true religion.
11. Religion is not necessary, but spirituality is.
12. "Jesus does not call us to a new religion, but to life" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). Spirituality is living life at a depth of newness and gratitude, courage and creativity, trust and letting go, compassion and justice.
13. Spirituality and religion are not the same any more than education and learning, law and justice, or commerce and stewardship are the same.
14. Christians must distinguish between God (masculine and history, liberation and salvation) and Godhead (feminine and mystery, being and nonaction).
15. Christians must distinguish between Jesus (a historical figure) and Christ (the experience of God-in-all-things).
16. Christians must distinguish between Jesus and Paul.
17. Jesus, not unlike many spiritual teachers, taught us that we are sons and daughters of God and are to act accordingly by becoming instruments of divine compassion.

18. Eco-justice is a necessity for planetary survival and human ethics; without it we are crucifying the Christ all over again in the form of destruction of forests, waters, species, air, and soil.
19. Sustainability is another word for justice, for what is just is sustainable and what is unjust is not.
20. A preferential option for the poor, as found in the base community movement, is far closer to the teaching and spirit of Jesus than is a preferential option for the rich and powerful, as found, for example, in Opus Dei.
21. Economic justice requires the work of creativity to birth a system of economics that is global, respectful of the health and wealth of the earth systems, and that works for all.
22. Celebration and worship are key to human community and survival, and such reminders of joy deserve new forms that speak in the language of the twenty-first century.
23. Sexuality is a sacred act and a spiritual experience, a theophany (revelation of the Divine), a mystical experience. It is holy and deserves to be honored as such.
24. Creativity is both humanity's greatest gift and its most powerful weapon for evil, and so it ought to be both encouraged and steered to humanity's most God-like activity, which all religions agree is compassion.
25. There is a priesthood of all workers (all who are doing good work are midwives of grace and are therefore priests), and this priesthood ought to be honored as sacred and workers should be instructed in spirituality in order to carry on their ministry effectively.
26. Empire-building is incompatible with Jesus' life and teaching and with Paul's life and teaching and with the teaching of holy religions.
27. Ideology is not theology; ideology endangers the faith because it replaces thinking and obedience and distracts from the responsibility of theology to adapt the wisdom of the past to today's needs. Instead of thinking, it demands loyalty oaths to the past.
28. Loyalty is not a sufficient criterion for ecclesial office—intelligence and proven conscience are.
29. No matter how much the television media fawn over the pope and the papacy because it makes good theater, the pope is not the Church but has a ministry within the Church. *Papalolotry* is a contemporary form of idolatry and must be resisted by all believers.
30. Creating a Church of sycophants is not a holy thing. Sycophants (Webster's Dictionary defines them as "servile, self-seeking flatterers") are not spiritual people, for their only virtue is obedience. A society of sycophants—sycophant clergy; sycophant seminarians; sycophant bishops; sycophant cardinals; sycophant religious orders of Opus Dei, Legionaires for Christ and Communion and Liberation; and the sycophant press—do not represent in any way the teachings or the person of the historical Jesus, who chose to stand up to power rather than amassing it.
31. Vows of pontifical secrecy are a certain way to corruption and cover-up in the Church, as in any human organization.

32. Original Sin is an ultimate expression of a Punitive Father God and is not a biblical teaching. But Original Blessing (goodness and grace) is biblical.
33. The term *original wound* better describes the separation humans experience on leaving the womb and entering the world – a world that is often unjust and unwelcoming – than does the term Original Sin.
34. Fascism and the compulsion to control are not the paths of peace or compassion, and those who practice fascism are not fitting models for sainthood. The seizing of the apparatus of canonization to canonize fascists is a stain on the Church.
35. The Spirit of Jesus and other prophets calls people to simple lifestyles in order that “the people may live.”
36. Dance, whose root meaning in many indigenous cultures is the same as *breath* or *spirit*, is a very ancient and appropriate form in which to pray.
37. To honor the ancestors and celebrate the communion of saints does not mean putting heroes on pedestals, but rather honoring them by living out lives of imagination, courage, and compassion in our own time, culture, and historical moment, as they did in theirs.
38. A diversity of interpretation of the Jesus event and the Christ experience is altogether expected and welcome, as it was in the earliest days of the Church.
39. Therefore *unity* of church does not mean *conformity*. There is unity in diversity. Coerced unity is not unity.
40. The Holy Spirit is perfectly capable of working through participatory democracy in church structures; hierarchical and dominating modes of operating can indeed interfere with the work of the Spirit.
41. The body is an awe-filled, sacred Temple of God. This does not mean it is untouchable, but rather that each of its dimensions, well named by the seven chakras, is as holy as the others.
42. Thus our connection with the earth (first chakra) is holy; and our sexuality (second chakra) is holy; and our moral outrage (third chakra) is holy; and our love that stands up to fear (fourth chakra) is holy; and our prophetic voice that speaks out (fifth chakra) is holy; and our intuition and intelligence (sixth chakra) are holy; and our gifts we extend to the community of light beings and ancestors (seventh chakra) are holy.
43. The prejudice of rationalism and the left-brain, located in the head, must be balanced by attention to the lower charkas as equal places for wisdom and truth and Spirit to act.
44. The central chakra, compassion is the test of the health of all the others, which are meant to serve it, for “by their fruits you will know them” (Jesus).
45. “Joy is the human’s noblest act” (Thomas Aquinas). Are our culture and its professions, education, and religion, promoting joy?

46. The human psyche is made for the cosmos and will not be satisfied until the two are reunited and awe, the beginning of wisdom, results from this reunion.
47. The four paths named in the creation spiritual tradition more fully name the mystical/prophetic spiritual journey of Jesus and the Jewish tradition than do the three paths of purgation, illumination and union, which do not derive from the Jewish and biblical tradition.
48. Thus it can be said that God is experienced through ecstasy, joy, wonder, and delight (*via positiva*).
49. God is experienced through darkness, chaos, nothingness, suffering, silence, and in learning to let go and let be (*via negativa*).
50. God is experienced through acts of creativity and co-creation (*via creativa*).
51. All people are born creative. It is spirituality's task to encourage holy imagination, for all are born in the "image and likeness" of the Creative One, and "the fierce power of imagination is a gift from God" (Kabbalah).
52. If you can talk, you can sing; if you can walk, you can dance (African proverb). If you can talk, you are an artist (Native American saying).
53. God is experienced in our struggle for justice, healing, compassion and celebration (*via transformativa*).
54. The Holy Spirit works through all cultures and all spiritual traditions; it "blows where it will" and is not the exclusive domain of any one tradition and never has been.
55. God speaks today, as in the past, through all religions and all cultures and all faith traditions, none of which is perfect and an exclusive avenue to truth, but all of which can learn from each other.
56. Therefore, an interfaith identity or deep ecumenism are necessary parts of spiritual praxis and awareness in our time.
57. Since the number one obstacle to an interfaith identity is "a bad relationship with one's own faith" (The Dalai Lama), it is important that Christians know their own mystical and prophetic tradition, one that is larger than a religion of empire and its Punitive Father images of God.
58. The cosmos is God's holy temple and our holy home.
59. Fourteen billion years of evolution and unfolding of the universe bespeak the intimate sacredness of all that is.
60. All that is is holy and all that is is related, for all beings in our universe began as one being just before the fireball erupted.
61. Interconnectivity is not only a law of physics and of nature, but also forms the basis of community and compassion. Compassion is the working out of our shared interconnectivity, both as to our shared joy and our shared suffering and struggle for justice.

62. The universe does not suffer from the shortage of grace, and no religious institution is to see its task as rationing grace. Grace is abundant in God's universe.
63. Creation, incarnation, and resurrection are continuously happening on a cosmic as well as a personal scale. So too are life, death, and resurrection (regeneration and reincarnation) happening on a cosmic scale as well as a personal one.
64. *Biophilia*, or love of life, is everyone's daily task.
65. *Necrophilia*, or love of death, is to be opposed in self and society in all its forms.
66. Evil can happen through every people, every nation, every tribe, and every individual human, and so vigilance and self-criticism and institutional criticism are always called for.
67. Not all who call themselves Christian deserve that name just as "not all who say 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Jesus).
68. Pedophilia is a terrible wrong, but its cover-up by hierarchy is even more despicable.
69. Loyalty and obedience are never greater virtues than conscience and justice.
70. Jesus said nothing about condoms, birth control, or homosexuality.
71. A church that is more preoccupied with sexual wrongs than with wrongs of injustice is itself sick.
72. Since homosexuality is found among 494 species and in 8 percent of any given human population, it is altogether natural, for those who are born that way are a gift from God and nature to the greater community.
73. Homophobia in any form is a serious sin against love of neighbor, a sin of ignorance of the richness and diversity of God's creation, and a sin of exclusion.
74. Racism, sexism and militarism are also serious sins.
75. Poverty for the many and luxury for the few are not right or sustainable.
76. Consumerism is today's version of gluttony and needs to be confronted by creating an economic system that works for all peoples and all earth's creatures.
77. Seminaries as we know them, with their excessive emphasis on left-brain work, often kill and corrupt the mystical soul of the young instead of encouraging the mysticism and prophetic consciousness that is there. They should be replaced by wisdom schools.
78. Inner work is required of all. Therefore, spiritual practices of meditation should be available to all, and this helps in calming the reptilian brain. Silence or contemplation and learning to be still can and ought to be taught to all children and adults.

79. Outer work needs to flow from our inner work, just as action flows from nonaction and true action from being.
80. A wise test of right action is this: What is the effect of this action on people seven generations from today?
81. Another test of right action is this: Is what I am doing, is what we are doing, beautiful or not?
82. *Eros*, the passion for living, is a virtue that combats *acedia*, or the lack of energy to begin new things, also expressed as depression, cynicism, or sloth (and also known as *couchpotatoitis*).
83. The dark night of the soul descends on us all and the proper response is not addiction, such as shopping, alcohol, drugs, TV, sex or religion, but rather to be with the darkness and learn from it.
84. The dark night of the soul is a learning place of great depth. Stillness is required.
85. Not only is there a dark night of the soul, but also a dark night of society and a dark night of our species.
86. Chaos is a friend and a teacher and an integral part or prelude to new birth. Therefore, it is not to be feared or compulsively controlled.
87. Authentic science can and must be one of humanity's sources of wisdom, for it is a source of sacred awe, childlike wonder, and truth.
88. When science teaches that matter is "frozen light" (physicist David Bohm), it is freeing human thought from scapegoating flesh as something evil and instead reassuring us that all things are light. This same teaching is found in the Christian gospels (Christ is the light of all things) and in Buddhist teaching (the Buddha nature is in all things). Therefore, flesh does not sin; it is our choices that are sometimes off center.
89. The proper objects of the human heart are truth and justice (Thomas Aquinas), and all people have a right to these through healthy education and healthy government.
90. God is only one name for the Divine One; there are an infinite number of names for God and the Godhead, and still God "has no name and will never be given a name" (Meister Eckhart).
91. Three highways into the heart are silence and love and grief.
92. The grief in the human heart needs to be attended to by rituals and practices that, when practiced, will lessen anger and allow creativity to flow anew.
93. Two highways out of the heart are creativity and acts of justice and compassion.
94. Since angels learn exclusively by intuition, when we develop our powers of intuition, we can expect to meet angels along the way.
95. True intelligence includes feeling, sensitivity, beauty, the gift of nourishment, and humor, which is a gift of the Spirit (paradox being its sister).