

‘BEHOLD THE HUMAN BEING’: MESSIANIC ANTHROPOLOGY FOR OUR TIMES

ENRIQUE GÓMEZ GARCÍA

ABSTRACT

Diego Irarrazával says that theology is contextual. European theology too, even if it has been considered a *theologia perennis*. Despite globalisation, there are sociological and cultural traits that are more entrenched in these latitudes than in others, which requires and enables another approach from the sources of revelation. In these pages, we study some of the publications of Xabier Pikaza, Spanish theologian and exegete, focusing on his analysis of the European and Spanish contexts, as well as the possible practical repercussions of this discourse. The approach to his works shows that, over almost half a century of reflection, he has devised a project with which he calls for a way of being and living as humans and as a society that reverses the negative consequences of the neoliberal system that characterises our time, namely: the will to power, violence, wealth, and exclusion. In the light of the history and person of Jesus of Nazareth, the author proposes a messianic anthropology, which strengthens the will to love and moves towards peace, gentleness and universal dialogue.

Keywords

Xabier Pikaza; Messianic anthropology; Gratuitousness; Poverty; Universality

DOI: 10.14712/23363398.2025.2

In the 1960s, the Second Vatican Council took on a dynamic understanding of reality and redesigned an ecclesial configuration that was in keeping with the inculturation of the Gospel. This can be seen in the way in which the Council fathers, as pastors, examine the situation of human beings in today’s world (cf. GS 4–10), which reflects a deep concern for human beings (cf. GS 3), their message distilling Christological personalism.

In the same vein, for Pope Francis, we are witnessing a ‘change of epoch’,¹ in which ‘rapidification’ prevents us from being aware of the change itself (cf. LS 18). Such a scenario leads him to enunciate the Church’s constant concern for each person. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the Italian version of *Fratelli tutti* the word ‘dignity’ appears sixty-four times. However, in this case, conciliar communitarian personalism drifts towards a more holistic proposal, as it includes the ecological perspective, giving birth to what some call an ‘integral humanism’.²

The Spanish context does not escape this situation. It is not appropriate here to unravel the challenges facing the particular churches in this country. I will only mention some of the most common ones: violence, drug addiction, lack of job opportunities, socio-economic inequalities, migration, multiculturalism, religious pluralism, new secularisation, loneliness, climate change, political polarisation, institutionalised lies, etc. In the wake of Vatican II, Spanish theology has been sensitive to these challenges, has been renewed and has developed, among other things, a pastoral (in the conciliar sense) and committed reflection in dialogue with Latin American theologies.³ An example of this is the ‘evangelical’ systematic approach of Xabier Pikaza, a lucid, multifaceted, and original thinker,⁴ a Christian who is concerned with and involved in the pathways of the inhabitants of this geographical area.

In these pages, I will take a closer look at his thought. Specifically, to an exegetical-theological project that he began in the eighties and which, although reoriented, is still valid in his recent publications. With this project, he claims a disposition and a way of situating ourselves as Christians in this changing world that corresponds to our configuration

¹ By way of example, Pope Francis, ‘Address at the meeting with the world of culture (Cagliari, 22 September 2013),’ https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130922_cultura-cagliari.html.

² Cf. Paul Veladier, ‘L’humanisme intégral selon le pape Francisco,’ *Études*, no. 4265 (2019): 79–89.

³ Cf. Juan José Tamayo Acosta, ‘Nuevas teologías y nuevos teólogos en España,’ *Vida Nueva*, no. 1094 (1977): 23–30; Casiano Floristán, ‘La teología española después del Vaticano II,’ *Vida Nueva*, no. 2401 (2003): 23–30; Eloy Bueno de la Fuente, ‘Cincuenta años de Teología en España,’ *Vida Nueva*, no. 2401 (2008): 23–30.

⁴ The richness of his work is shown in Juan Bosch, ‘La teología en España,’ *Vida Nueva*, no. 2199 (1999): 23–31. To the Trinitarian, Christological, Marian, and exegetical references, we must add his contributions to ecclesiology, sacramentology, theology of religious life, positive sciences of religion, history of theology, interreligious dialogue, without forgetting his philosophical thought.

as messianic men and women, in the manner of the Father of the Kingdom, in harmony with the eschatological prophet Jesus of Nazareth, who is impelled by a spirit of gratuity and communion.

I first show that the author outlines a recognisable theological project. I then point out that his proposal denotes a profound anthropological-social (and ecological) concern. I close the article with a description of the messianic anthropology that, according to him, emanates from Jesus and can reverse the imbalances suffered by contemporary society.

1. A Project on the Horizon

Pikaza’s bibliography is considerable. The *Dialnet* publications portal lists 112 monographs, 34 collaborations in collective works and 95 journal articles.⁵ At first glance, there seems to be no comparison between them: varied themes, diverse hermeneutics, and disparate motivations. Even so, they are united according to a thread of argument established in the 1980s, although, with the passage of time, it has undergone reorientations and enrichments. His work *Biblical Anthropology* can serve as a reading key.

Both in his ‘Note to the Reader’ and in the ‘Prologue’, the author explains that it is in the same vein as *The Gospel I. The Life and Pass-over of Jesus*.⁶ He devotes a first chapter to what he calls the ‘messianic categories’, with which he condenses the ‘founding anthropology’ that has been sketched out since Jesus of Nazareth in *The Gospel*.⁷ He also acknowledges that he has not yet tackled the second part of *The Gospel*, concerning the core aspects of a biblical Christology, and anticipates a project: this anthropology is to be continued with a *Biblical Ecclesiology*.⁸

According to this statement, the author has set himself a plan: in *The Gospel*, he unravels the Christ event from an exegetical (volume I) and theological (volume II) perspective; this is followed by an approach to

⁵ Cf. ‘Xabier Pikaza Ibarrondo’, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=270333>. Consultation carried out on 1 February 2024.

⁶ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Antropología bíblica. Del árbol del juicio al sepulcro de la pascua* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1993), 11, 14. Although this work has a second edition (2006), I am handling the first for reasons that the reader will perceive.

⁷ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 19.

⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 21.

the ecclesial community that is born of it; and, between the two works, he has inserted a reflection on the human being that is made transparent in Jesus, the prototype of the ecclesial community.

If one looks at *The Gospel*, Pikaza aims to elaborate a *Christian Biblical Theology*. This volume will be followed by *The Gospel II. The Action of Believers*, referring to 'the content of Christ's messianic message', and a 'more theological study, centred on the main aspects of Christology', based on the Gospel of John. This *Biblical Theology* will also include pneumatology, the foundation of later ecclesiology and sacramentology. All this will be preceded by a fundamental theology, which is why *The Gospel* occupies volume 2 of his *Theology*.⁹ There is thus a departure from what was said in *Biblical Anthropology* as regards the object of study of *The Gospel II*, while there is no mention of any anthropology.

On the other hand, between *The Gospel* and *Biblical Anthropology* appears another Christological writing, catalogued by the author as a simple reflection along the lines of *The Gospel*, although elaborated in a freer (less exegetical) way and mixing exegesis with philosophy.¹⁰ He does not allude in the prologue to his project, although he makes it clear that what is dealt with here must be completed with other studies in the collection *The World of the Bible*, especially those dedicated to 'Jesus, Messiah and Lord and The God of Jesus and of the Church'.¹¹ Years later, he published in this collection a manual of theodicy that fits the second reference, in which he invites the reader to encounter the face of the living God of the Gospel, the God of grace.¹²

Shortly afterwards he published an ecclesiology of the Gospel of Mark. In his prologue, Pikaza recalls his *Biblical Christian Theology*, in which he includes elements absent in his first formulation, and omits others. He speaks of anthropology, pneumatology, trinitarian theology and ecclesiology, and specifies that *The Gospel* and *Biblical Anthropology* have already been published.¹³ Moreover, he qualifies that this

⁹ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *El Evangelio I. Vida y pascua Jesús* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1988), 12–15.

¹⁰ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *La figura de Jesús. Profeta, taumaturgo, rabino, mesías* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1992), 10.

¹¹ Pikaza, *La figura*, 11.

¹² Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Dios judío, Dios cristiano. El Dios de la Biblia* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1996).

¹³ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Pan, casa, palabra. La Iglesia en Marcos* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1998), 9.

‘Confessional Ecclesiology (...) in messianic perspective’, continues the logic of *Biblical Anthropology*,¹⁴ from which it can be deduced that perhaps this ecclesial commentary constitutes the ecclesiology of his theological plan; but he does not make this explicit.

Nor does he do so in his latest publication.¹⁵ In it, he does not allude to any previous project,¹⁶ although it is clear that he develops this messianic ecclesiology. Thus, he presents the Church as the group of companions and the association of friends of Jesus, linked by the same love, which, ‘in order to remain faithful to its origins’, ‘must take up its messianic principle (its Gospel), at a time of crisis such as ours’.¹⁷ Hence, he calls it a ‘messianic movement’, inserts it into the person and dynamics of the Messiah, and defines the transformation implied by the Kingdom as its fundamental task, becoming a home, a messianic Church.¹⁸ To this can be added that the argument and structure of the book dates back to 1982,¹⁹ the decade in which his project was forged.

Finally, in the second edition of *Biblical Anthropology*, he explains that his anthropological proposal is in line with his new treatise on theodicy,²⁰ whose common thread, the word and dialogue as expressions of gratuitousness, he takes up again in a recent theology of Scripture.²¹ His initial project is also extended by a new trilogy, once again incomplete. In his prologue to *Theodicy*, he states that his teaching vicissitudes prevented him ‘from writing an overview of the main contents of the subject, centered on God, in a philosophical key (Theodicy), but also of theology (Trinity), and in the perspective of the interior life (Spirituality)’;²²

¹⁴ Cf. Pikaza, *Pan*, 9 and 14 (note 9).

¹⁵ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Compañeros y amigos de Jesús. La Iglesia antes de Pablo* (Maliaño: Sal Terrae, 2024).

¹⁶ The author does propose a later project: the present volume will deal with the ecclesial communities up to the year 35, leaving for a second volume ‘the identity and history of the first Churches in the writings of the NT’, i.e. from Paul and the Gospels onwards (cf. 11, 13).

¹⁷ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 9–11.

¹⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 297, 166–176, 180, 236–256. It is striking that at no point in this ‘ecclesiology of Jesus’ (240) does he refer to his work *Pan, casa, palabra*.

¹⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 13, 406.

²⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología bíblica. Tiempos de gracia* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2006), 15. He refers to *Dios es palabra. Teodicea cristiana* (Maliaño: Sal Terrae, 2003).

²¹ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *La palabra se hizo carne. Teología de la Biblia* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2020).

²² Xabier Pikaza, *Teodicea. Del hombre a Dios* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2013), 8.

once he retired, he wrote this trilogy. The *Theodicy-Trinity*, an open itinerary,²³ corresponds to the promised treatise on God, while *Spirituality* brings to mind his pneumatology, still to be elaborated.

2. Changing Times, Concern for the Human

In the declaration of intentions of *Biblical Anthropology*, one can perceive the centrality of the historical person of Jesus for Pikaza: it is the starting point and illuminates his entire programme.²⁴ The relevance of his concern for the human is equally clear, since ‘he is interested in man and I want to specify the main elements of his history’. To this end, he presents ‘the figure of man from Christ’, recognising that he integrates Christology ‘in a more extensive perspective in theological anthropology’.²⁵

This interest in the human has been with him for a long time. In the second edition of the work, he acknowledges that he had been ‘almost thirty years’ thinking about this reflection, ‘under the influence of two types of biblical understanding of the human being’: that of Cullmann (which emphasises gratuitousness) and that of Bultmann (which emphasises freedom).²⁶ Later on, he reiterates that ‘the contributions and questions’ outlined in this book have accompanied him throughout his life and ‘have been the starting point for various publications linked to man and violence’.²⁷

Elsewhere he expresses this request by paraphrasing the famous Kantian questions (although he personalises *What is the human being?*) as follows: Who am I? Where do I come from? What must I do

²³ Cf. Pikaza, *Teodicea*, 18; Pikaza, *Trinidad. Itinerario de Dios al hombre* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2015), 7; Enrique Gómez García, ‘Proyecto a manera de legado: convergencia de itinerarios,’ *Estudios Trinitarios*, no. 2 (2016): 407–441.

²⁴ In both *La figura de Jesús* and *La nueva figura de Jesús* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2003), the author analyses the life and work of Jesus, opting for a historical approach, although he deals with elements that go beyond the historical (cf. Pikaza, *La nueva figura*, 5). The same logic, perhaps more theologised, is to be found in Pikaza, *Compañeros*.

²⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 15.

²⁶ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 13.

²⁷ Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 14. Although his publications have an anthropological connection, on this subject I would highlight *Para comprender hombre y mujer en las religiones* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1996), with which he wants to help us to feel and value the human being; and *Sistema, libertad, iglesia. Instituciones del Nuevo Testamento* (Madrid: Trotta, 2001), his social anthropology, reworked in *La novedad de Jesús. Aportación y legado* (Madrid: Fe Adulta, 2019) and in *Compañeros*.

to be happy? How can I love and be loved? In what can I hope? How can and must we behave, so that we do not destroy ourselves by annihilating life on earth?²⁸ These questions show that, although they concern the great human questions of all times, they are historicised in our own time, as revealed by violence on a global scale (nuclear war and globalised capitalism) and the destruction of all life (ecological crisis).²⁹

In fact, his writings are full of references to today's society, which he describes as globalised, secular, and pluralistic, both culturally and religiously, rather than offering detailed analyses. He summarises the former with the symbol of the system. With regard to the second, he approaches Jesus more historically than confessionally, so that both believers and unbelievers have access to his figure, and his proposal is in no way understood as an indoctrination or subjugation of the latter.³⁰ As for the third point, his position as a professor of history and phenomenology of religions endorses his view.³¹ I would also highlight his identification with the defence of women and his commitment to a feminism of identity as well as to sexual diversity.³²

He also describes our times as a ‘change of era’, full of contrasts: we are witnessing socio-economic and cultural globalisation (neo-liberal system), but individualism and selfishness abound, which elevate a few and exclude the majority; personal rights and freedom are absolutised, but a slave structure is supported, which imposes the will of a few and prevents the vast majority from enjoying them.³³

At all times, the author avoids Manichean commentary. He knows that the current situation should not be demonised, given that it harbours values and has an appreciable creative capacity. The system, he says, is neutral. If it is currently ‘negative in its application and deadly in its political concreteness’,³⁴ it is because, instead of exploiting the possibilities of creativity and the reasons for gratuitousness and

²⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Teodicea*, 12.

²⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 21; Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 311–312; Pikaza, *Teodicea*, 13.

³⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *La nueva figura*, 5; Pikaza, *La novedad*, 13; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 12.

³¹ Because of the context in which he writes, he deploys interreligious dialogue with Judaism and Islam. From his extensive bibliography, suffice it to mention his *Diccionario de las tres religiones: judaísmo, cristianismo, islam* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2009). His interest in interculturality is reflected, for example, in Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 28.

³² Cf. Pikaza, *Para comprender*, 5–8; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 30–32, 356–368.

³³ Cf. Pikaza, *Sistema*, 15, 17–18, 26–34, 35–48.

³⁴ Pikaza, *Sistema*, 39.

dialogue that it carries, it is opting for the will to power that lurks in every system and its repercussions: violence, wealth, and exclusion.

He frequently deals with violence and consequent death, especially since his dialogue with René Girard. This is expressed in *Biblical Anthropology*:

In the last third of the twentieth century, I discovered more and more about the influence that violence had and still has in the unfolding of life, according to the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, and I wanted to write a work entitled, more or less, *The Bible, Book of War*. However, I also discovered that the theme was deeper, that war is inseparable from the whole of a history that is torn between the search for a future and the eternal return of the same thing.⁵⁵

Linked to this aspect is his ecological sensitivity, given that the crisis that afflicts the world today in this area stems from the violence generated by human beings dominating the earth in the name of power.⁵⁶

The second risk arises from wealth, along with its inherent iniquity and injustice. Influenced by Latin American theologians and Scripture, Pikaza makes the duality of Mammon and the God of the Kingdom one of his central themes, though he has only recently begun to systematically address the issue. As with his perception of the system, he qualifies that money is not sinful in itself, since it is possible to foster 'a type of economy that is life-enhancing for the whole of humanity'.⁵⁷ The problem arises when neoliberal society becomes fetishistic, idolises money, and turns having into a vehicle of domination, exploitation, and slavery because it serves money instead of using it to live.⁵⁸ In this way, the system bows to the anti-trinity constituted by capital (the father, the origin of the system), the company (the son, at the service of the first), and the market (the spirit, the meeting place of capital and company).⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 14. The work referred to is *El Señor de los ejércitos. Historia y teología de la guerra* (Madrid: PPC, 1996), a logic taken up in *Violencia y religión en la historia de Occidente* (Valencia: Tirant Editorial, 2005).

⁵⁶ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *El desafío ecológico: creación bíblica y bomba atómica* (Madrid: PPC, 2004); Xabier Pikaza, 'Dominad la tierra... (Gén 1,28). Relato bíblico de la creación y ecología,' in *Ética del medio ambiente: problema, perspectivas, historia*, coord. José M.^a García-Heras (Madrid: Tecnos, 2001), 207–222.

⁵⁷ Xabier Pikaza, *Dios o el dinero* (Maliaño: Sal Terrae, 2019), 7; cf. 557–559.

⁵⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Dios o el dinero*, 8; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 215–220.

⁵⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 291–294.

The result of this social fetishisation is not long in coming: ‘an intense crisis of human identity and social injustice’.⁴⁰

The third risk results from the absolutisation of wealth: exclusion and the particularisation of possibilities. Only a social minority, judged to be creative, ‘arrogant bandits’, steers the destinies of history in the name of all. In this way, human beings are ‘burdened and perplexed by questions of the oppression of money’. Alongside this slavery, there is iniquity, an ‘unequal dominion...’, which favours some and expels and marginalises the majority’.⁴¹ Faced with such a situation, what can be expected, can anything be done, or do we allow ourselves to be overcome by the imperative of powerlessness?

3. The Face of the Full Human Being

3.1 On the Path to a Messianic Anthropology

In accordance with this analysis, in *Biblical Anthropology*, Pikaza seeks to ‘elaborate the figure of man from Christ’. However, Christ does not cease to be the new Adam, the ‘messiah of history’. This idea could perhaps be further refined: his theological project is motivated by getting to know Jesus better in order to make possible, through the encounter with him, the conversion of the human being, so that he becomes ‘human in the most intense (messianic) sense’.⁴² For the author, therefore, the solution to the challenges posed lies in the fact that all people, not only Christians, live the features of this messianic humanity. In more recent language, they refer to the ‘messianic mutation’ of which Jesus was the messenger and promoter; they are a ‘miracle’, that is to say, a sign of gratuitousness, a song of life and a principle of freedom.⁴³

This desideratum is also evident in one of his re-readings of the (messianic) story of Jesus, through which he wants to reach out to believers and non-believers because all must work in unison to achieve a truly human society, this being the messianic future towards which the image of Christ tends. It is expressed in these terms:

⁴⁰ Pikaza, *Teodicea*, 10.

⁴¹ Pikaza, *Sistema*, 40; cf. Pikaza, *Teodicea*, 9.

⁴² Pikaza, *Antropología*, 16.

⁴³ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 351–356 and 174, respectively.

He wants to expose the newness of Jesus without palliatives or patches, in a line of gratuitousness and option for the marginalised, of overcoming judgement and personal healing, overcoming social and sacral structures that try to impose themselves on men.⁴⁴

The backdrop of his theological programme, therefore, is given by the explicit expression in the history of a form of humanity capable of reversing the current system, built, as we have seen, on a will to power that relies on violence to impose the principles of merit, wealth, and exclusion. This messianic modulation of the human transmutes this will into the will to want, understood ‘in the key of personal dialogue: I have been given life and I can give it, share it’.⁴⁵

This discourse highlights the importance of the title ‘Son of Man’ for Pikaza.⁴⁶ Among the various interpretations of this Christological title, the author equates it with ‘human’: that Jesus identifies himself with the ‘Son of Man’ signifies that ‘a person has already arrived, someone who knows how to realise humanity on earth’,⁴⁷ who reveals ‘the full content of the human (...). It seems that, at the heart of all his actions and discourse, Jesus has sought to define himself simply as a man.’⁴⁸ From this, it follows that Jesus was the messiah by ‘being a simple human being, son of man, linked to all human beings and to the history and destiny of nature itself (of the earth)’,⁴⁹ and that his messianism places us at the origin of the founding humanity, as Paul expresses it.⁵⁰

The author is no stranger to the discussion on messianism in Jesus’ time.⁵¹ But, in any case, messianic hope represents ‘creative imagination, at the service of the new humanity’.⁵² The distinctiveness of Jesus’

⁴⁴ Pikaza, *La nueva figura*, (7)–8.

⁴⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 24–25.

⁴⁶ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Hermanos de Jesús, servidores de los más pequeños* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1984), 89–127; Pikaza, *La figura*, 33–36; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 233–236; Pikaza, *Este es el hombre* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1997), 213–221. It is not arbitrary that he titles this manual with the quotation from Jn 19:5, for in it Jesus is presented as ‘the true man’ (cf. p. 9).

⁴⁷ Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 23.

⁴⁸ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 27–28.

⁴⁹ Xabier Pikaza, *Hijo de hombre. Historia de Jesús Galileo* (Valencia: Tirant Editorial, 2007), 13.

⁵⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 25.

⁵¹ The hypothesis that, according to Mt 2:22–23, Jesus is a messianic *Nazoreo* serves as an example (cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Historia de Jesús* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2013), 13–14, 107, 111–112, 575–577).

⁵² Cf. Pikaza, *La novedad*, 50–54.

messianism is that its quest for human fulfilment carries an obvious eschatological and subversive charge. The eschatological involves an existential, dynamic, and realisational understanding of the human being, in keeping with the role of history in the author’s work as the realm of the revelation of God’s gratuitousness and the place of the unfolding of the human, for the person is a *faciendum*, not *factum*.⁵³ Messianism, then, is the possibility, the consummation, or the final view of what the human being is, insofar as he is in the hands of God – who will culminate his original action by fulfilling his promises – and insofar as he has been endowed with responsible creativity. Hence ‘messianism is the experience of finding ourselves in the process of humanisation: we tend towards the true man (the son of man)’; it is the ‘expression of the final truth of man’,⁵⁴ which in his last reflection he summarises as that they should be happy, heal and live free.⁵⁵

Subversion, for its part, can be seen in the discrepancy between the messianic hopes of his countrymen and the realisation of this human messianism experienced by Jesus. Messianism thus implies a radical change in the way of being human where the only thing that could be expected is condemnation and annihilation.⁵⁶ Therefore, as we shall see, the messianic anthropology illuminated by Jesus reverses the model imposed by the will to power of the current ideology.

3.2 Messianic Flesh

Having explored the relationship between messianism and ‘new humanity’, I can present the categories that make the messianic human being concrete. These are revealed in the ‘flesh’ of Jesus; that is to say, they are those proper to the incarnation of God in history, as the author deduces from Lk 15,11–32; 10,25–37; Mt 20,1–16 or 25,31–46.⁵⁷

⁵³ Cf. Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 21.

⁵⁴ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 29 and 25, respectively.

⁵⁵ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 129–166.

⁵⁶ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 34, 45.

⁵⁷ The importance of the flesh is expressed in his last work: If the Church does not want to become a gnosis and an incarnated community, the story of Jesus with his friends before the resurrection and the link of the women, which allows ‘the identification of the risen Christ with the Jesus of the flesh’, must be vindicated. Christianity must always safeguard the ‘identity (and difference) between the Jesus of the flesh, who dies (...), and the Christ the Son of God, who rises’, as Mark was able to perceive (cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 338–341).

In fact, they ‘condense the whole Gospel’,⁵⁸ running through the pages of *The Gospel* and of its most recent synthesis.⁵⁹ Pikaza systematically notes them in his first edition of *Biblical Anthropology*,⁶⁰ albeit in a paradoxical way.

They do indeed summarise the story of Jesus, but their exposition seems unnecessary. The author acknowledges that one can begin his work with the second chapter. Even so, he presents them in order to offer ‘the bases or assumptions of my founding anthropological vision’.⁶¹ In the second edition of this work, he dispenses with these pages and begins with the development of the origins of the human being. For my part, I consider them essential to understanding the author’s proposal. I begin his presentation with the following synthetic formulation:

The whole book is interpreted on the basis of the grace of God, who loves the poor (sinners) and through them offers us a path of universal hope, of inter-human union.⁶²

According to this summary, the first category is gratuitousness, as opposed to the schemes of action, merit, and judgment that reign in our efficient society.⁶³ Grace underlines that, ‘more than what I do, what matters is what they do to me: I am because they love me’,⁶⁴ in the context of the will to want. The human being is grace: ‘He is born by grace and by grace becomes human (...), always being more than an object that can be manufactured or organised by law and introduced into a system.’⁶⁵

Here we see the link between gratuitousness and the renunciation of self-realisation, but also with the word and communication: at the beginning is the power of the creative word, which calls from love and for love, and transforms from within what is called, generating

⁵⁸ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 16.

⁵⁹ Indeed, he describes as the goal of *Compañeros* that we can all ‘love and be loved... through as yet unexplored expressions of freedom, gratuitousness and communion of life’ (12).

⁶⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 30–47, 522–525.

⁶¹ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 19.

⁶² Pikaza, *Antropología*, 16.

⁶³ On grace as opposed to judgement, cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 17, 20; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 199–205.

⁶⁴ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 24.

⁶⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 14.

a new beginning, as expressed in the recreating forgiveness and resurrection.⁶⁶ It is up to human beings to remember this history of grace, for to forget it would mean to corrupt their life in the world, believing themselves to be the lord and master of all that exists.⁶⁷

One can perceive here the influence of personalism;⁶⁸ but, above all, a certain rereading of Scripture, since gratuitousness is based on the being of the Father to whom Jesus refers. The author describes him as a creative energy that ‘calls and dialogues with men’; a force of freedom that does not impose itself and that forgives, that breaks the moulds of the system; a Father who ‘loves us and does not need to count for his love’.⁶⁹ From this divine perspective, gratuitousness differs from arbitrariness and is scandalous: it is based solely on the Father’s will, without imposing conditions or demanding conversion or repentance, as the beatitudes show.⁷⁰

Likewise, from the Father, messianic gratuitousness transcends passivity and is full of creativity – creativity based on the creative power of self-giving, in the style of Jesus: aware that I am a gift and that everything has been given to me, I feel impelled to give myself, to open myself to others and to make it possible for them to be at my side.⁷¹ In this way, gratuitousness and responsibility are two sides of the same coin; gratuitousness extends to my responsibility to commit myself to those in need – of ‘dubious persons: socially and legally impure, liberated women, children without families and sick people of various kinds’.⁷² Grace, therefore, is opposed to evasion.⁷³

Thus we come to the second characteristic: poverty. Jesus of Nazareth expresses his messianism by announcing, as gospel, the gratuitousness

⁶⁶ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 25, 32, 35, 445–474; Pikaza, *La novedad*, 125–143; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 227–229, 189–193, 349–351.

⁶⁷ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 14.

⁶⁸ More specifically, the Mounierian re-reading of Carlos Díaz, *Soy amado, luego existo* (Bilbao: DDB, 1999–2000), 4 vols; *La persona como don* (Bilbao: DDB, 2001); *Del hay al doy, ¡Ay, si nadie diera!* (Salamanca: San Esteban, 2013).

⁶⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 36; Pikaza, *La figura*, 55–67; Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 309–369; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 177–193.

⁷⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 48; Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 61, 67–80; Pikaza, *La figura*, 156; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 135–139.

⁷¹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 24, 523; Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 320; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 332–336.

⁷² Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 111.

⁷³ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 36.

of the Father to the marginalised and by welcoming the lost of his time; he expresses it in this way because he was poor, an artisan, a peasant without a field, 'a worker of the people, at the mercy of others'.⁷⁴ Thus, in the light of his counter-cultural rabbinism, the poor man emerges as one who recognises that he can expect nothing of himself because he is on the margins of the productive system, not finding for himself a place to live.⁷⁵ To be poor implies, therefore, 'to assume in gratuitousness the whole existence',⁷⁶ connoting a receptive dimension, linked to the full trust in the creative force of the other.

Echoing the criticism of liberation theologies regarding the 'canonisation of poverty',⁷⁷ Pikaza explains that the poor reveal divine gratuitousness 'in a peculiar and more intense way'⁷⁸ and mediate the salvation that comes from gratuitousness, not by the moral perfection of being poor or by being free from the will to power and violence, for they too must be converted,⁷⁹ but by the goodness of the Father. Because they are poor, they are lost, they can do nothing and they need everything to the utmost degree, making them the best place where God reveals his love for human beings and his joy in 'giving life in abundance'.⁸⁰ In the divine logic, therefore, the poor are not worthwhile because they are poor but because they are loved by God and 'because, in their own lack, they are in the hands of others. It is precisely where they neither demand nor impose themselves that they come to show themselves to the world as the seed of grace'⁸¹ that carries the 'messianic gene'.⁸²

Now, from Jesus' point of view, poverty also acquires a creative dimension. The poor person, experiencing himself as grace, opens himself to give everything, even unto death, in order to enrich those around him with his creative strength (donation).⁸³ In the messianic claim of Jesus, poverty is not only a socio-economic fact but a planned fundamental choice, which is exposed to crucifixion and death. It is

⁷⁴ Cf. Pikaza, *La novedad*, 62–69; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 98–101.

⁷⁵ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 492.

⁷⁶ Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 99.

⁷⁷ Cf. Adolfo González Montes, 'Los pobres como sujeto histórico-salvífico,' *Salmanticensis*, no. 2 (1984): 207–224.

⁷⁸ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 40.

⁷⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 488.

⁸⁰ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 39.

⁸¹ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 45.

⁸² Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 355.

⁸³ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 530.

linked to selflessness and generosity. In this way, ‘by sharing what they have and welcoming what is offered to them, the poor open a space of communication and hope for all’;⁸⁴ they generate, within an unjust and excluding society, a space of solidarity and shared life. Because of their receptive power, the poor focus on the actions of others: they call them to solidarity and initiate the path of giving.⁸⁵

The third feature concerns universal openness. The human being is a universal living being, called to encounter and communion. The developments of gratuitousness and poverty suggest this. As he expresses on a certain occasion:

This (Christian) universalism can only emerge where grace and poverty intersect and become fruitful. Where grace becomes poverty, by offering what it has; where poverty accepts all that is offered to it: there arises shared life and experience.⁸⁶

From the above argumentation, it follows that poverty is the sphere where solidarity is founded: that relationship of mutuality through which one gives and welcomes. Solidarity therefore marks the path of ‘free communication’ of life, which facilitates insertion into the divine logic of loving: ‘We can only know and love each other if we know and love others and allow them to know and love us.’⁸⁷ Universal communion then takes place.

This is how it is perceived in Jesus, founder and guarantor of the ‘universal openness of the human being’.⁸⁸ He proclaims a gospel of grace destined for all, placing himself on the other side of history: if the grace of the Father reaches the margins of the system, this means that no one is excluded.⁸⁹ This universal openness can be seen in the communion of the table with the lost but also in the pro-existential practice with those in need of life, in the role of therapist and liberator. Through healing and exorcisms, Jesus breaks down the walls that prevent the

⁸⁴ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 523; cf. Pikaza, *La figura*, 152–153.

⁸⁵ Note the parallel with Jon Sobrino, ‘Redención de la globalización. Las víctimas,’ *Concilium*, no. 293 (2001): 805–810.

⁸⁶ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 524, cf. 43; Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 95, 101.

⁸⁷ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 525.

⁸⁸ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 18.

⁸⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Hermanos*, 431–444.

excluded from being integrated into the human community and opens up a space for universal interpersonal communication.⁹⁰

It is through the mercy of the Kingdom that authentic universality is consummated because in this practice every human being assumes his or her poverty and places at the service of the excluded what he or she is and can be.⁹¹ In this way, the poor are ‘the first sign of grace and are then the promoters of a path on which the rich themselves can be integrated (already transformed and reconciled) and become servants of gratuitousness’.⁹² In conclusion, because God wills it, the poor become ‘the measure and foundation of the new human edifice’,⁹³ from which no one will be excluded.

3.3 The Goal of the Messianic Family

Throughout these pages, it has been affirmed that, in the beginning, there is the founding grace of God, expressed through the creative word. Subsequently, the itinerary of human activity has been traced through gratuitousness, poverty, and universality. Finally, Pikaza points out the horizon of his messianic anthropology: to invert the logic of power, characterised by violence, in order to build a messianic family, in which peace and meekness reign. He concretises this horizon in the experience of fraternal dialogue.⁹⁴

But how is this dialogue to be understood from the point of view of Jesus’ existence? On a certain occasion, the author states: ‘To dialogue means to let oneself be killed: It is to speak to others without imposing our ideas on them with violence; it is to listen to what they tell us without wanting to demand something from them for it (without revenge)’.⁹⁵ According to this, the messianic human being is the one who dialogues, knowing that sometimes this dialogic reason is achieved by giving one’s life.

⁹⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *La figura*, 103–107. Note the importance he attaches in his last work about exorcisms, in addition to healings (cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 156–166, 394–399).

⁹¹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 44.

⁹² Pikaza, *Antropología*, 46.

⁹³ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 46 and 44, respectively. Again the parallel with Jon Sobrino, *Jesucristo liberador* (Madrid: Trotta, 1991), 170.

⁹⁴ Cf. Pikaza, *Este es el hombre*, 21–22; Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 290–299; 338–342; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 221–229.

⁹⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 480.

So far it would seem that this messianic anthropology looks at the individual human being. However, Pikaza outlines a social anthropology, with the aim of embracing the whole of humanity, whether or not it believes in the creative founding force of the Father. In this framework, he writes about the messianic family, which assumes and travels personally and communally the itinerary of the grace of the Kingdom.⁹⁶ Its nucleus is the followers of Jesus, the Church in our day, as a universal sacrament of gratuitousness, which serves the communion of the Kingdom, witnesses to and mediates a salvation which surpasses it and on which it cannot impose conditions.⁹⁷

It is precisely this that becomes the object of study in his latest publication – a reflection yet to be completed. In the light of John 15:15, Pikaza conceives of the Church as a group of companions and friends of Jesus, bound by the same love and committed to the transformation implied by the Kingdom.⁹⁸ Underneath this simple description are hidden the messianic categories outlined above, now applied to a social group: affective communion, a reflection of grace, which makes possible the communication of life, tending towards universality, and economic communion, proper to poverty and solidarity, are emphasised. In this way, the signs of ecclesial identity are given by the grace of not judging and loving the enemy; the mutual love proper to the fraternity/sorority of those who share the bread; and the salutary and exorcising forgiveness, both social and religious, which make of the Church ‘experience and space of coexistence, resurrection of one in another’, without any walls.⁹⁹

It is within this widening of the space of messianic humanity that the meaning and purpose of the task of discipleship are understood (Mt 28,18): ‘It is not that the people of the world have to become disciples in the process of personal change or conversion of habits (...) It is the disciples of Christ (...) who must offer to others (...) the life and communion they have received, the grace and experience of their discipleship.’¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Cf. Pikaza, *La novedad*, 144–167; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 123–125, 175, 236–256.

⁹⁷ Cf. Pikaza, *La figura*, 168.

⁹⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 9–10, 151.

⁹⁹ Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 322; cf. 166–176, 188–193, 199–220, 245, 248, 250.

¹⁰⁰ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 466.

4. By Way of Conclusion: Tell Me Which God and I Will Tell You Which Human

This approach to Pikaza's theological project as a response to the challenges of European and Spanish society shows that the author follows the path marked out by Vatican II: Jesus is the new man who reveals to human beings the meaning of their humanity (cf. GS 22). In this perspective, his anthropology reflects a clear Christological density; but it enriches by far the relationship between theological anthropology and Christology traced in the 20th century.¹⁰¹

His Christological concentration is not self-enclosed, as is the case when the creativity with which God endows the human creature is subsumed under the parameters of Christ. Expressing himself in terms of messianic anthropology, against the background of Jesus' messianic claim and his own relativity, the author stresses that the ultimate foundation and paradigm of human formality is given by the God revealed and incarnated in him. At the end of his *Biblical Anthropology*, he explains that the messianic categories correspond to the 'primordial or foundational properties of the divine being himself'.¹⁰² In this way, his anthropological itinerary is identified with a God who is universal communion or shared life. It can be said, in this sense, that messianic anthropology is configured trinitarily.

Indeed, God is first and foremost a founding gift, a grace in himself; because he is such in a radical way, he can be called the Father. To be the Father implies donation, self-giving; in him, we see the dialectic *Deus semper maior et semper minor*: because he has everything, he can empty himself completely by giving himself to the other. In this sense, God is poverty, the Son who gives everything in 'original generosity' and absolute trust in the Father. But this dynamism of magnanimity only takes place in the personal sphere of universal communication that facilitates 'original grace' and 'original generosity': the Holy Spirit.

At this point, we come to that part of Pikaza's project yet to be developed: his pneumatology. In part, he has already hinted at it in other writings;¹⁰³ but his messianic anthropology will only be understood if it

¹⁰¹ Cf. Luis F Ladaria, *Introducción a la antropología teológica* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1993), 70–79; *Jesucristo, salvación de todos* (Madrid: San Pablo, 2007), 31–41.

¹⁰² Pikaza, *Antropología*, 444; cf. 527–532.

¹⁰³ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Dios como espíritu y persona* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1989), 189–270, 353–435; 'Espíritu Santo,' *Iglesia viva*, no. 130–131 (1987): 429–454;

is prolonged as a pneumatic or charismatic anthropology, which allows itself to be configured by that Spirit of grace and universal communication in diversity from particularity, as he hints at by placing the gift of the Spirit as the first significant feature of the messianic family.

*Faculty of Theology
Universidad Loyola Andalucía
Calle Prof. Vicente Callao, 15, Beiro
18011 Granada
Spain
E-mail: egomez@uloyola.es*

‘El Espíritu Santo en la Iglesia y en la historia,’ *Isidorianum*, no. 16 (1999): 403–456; *Creo en el Espíritu Santo* (Madrid: San Pablo, Madrid 2001).