

The use of religion in terra nostra by carlos fuentes

[Religion](#)



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In the past, religion was the central aspect of human life. It was the controller of human life and the reason for their survival. In fact, life in itself was sacred and religious. Religion still holds greater importance to modern society as it did since the beginning of human civilization. Religion had both beneficial and exploitative influence on people. Religious leaders performed several rituals that meant to cleanse, protect, appease and thank gods for protection, children, agricultural produce and withholding other gods from harming them as it was the case in the ancient Mesoamerican society. Nonetheless, religion claimed human life through sacrifices during their rituals. Today religion still plays an important role in humanity. Several groups of people gain the hope of life after death just because of their religious beliefs. In his novel *Terra Nostra*, Carlos Fuentes describes religions around his people and their use. This paper shall discuss on different uses of religion in the society in relation to Carlos Fuentes's novel *Terra Nostra* and the society of today.

In Carlos Fuentes novel, religion is the tool that protects humanity from wraths of the gods and the goddesses. In this book religion plays a major role in reconciling humanity with the gods (Coover 14). Various spiritual leaders take bold steps in protecting humanity from suffering through their religious festivals. For instance, through the Pilgrim's journey in *Terra Nostra*, one can see the locals collecting red ochre for many days, which will be painted on the slave that awaits sacrifice to the gods on the day of the lizards. In one instance, the Lord of the crest counsels the scribe on collecting a good number of people who await the sacrifice. He also feels that because of the failure to give enough sacrifice on the day of lizards, the

entire world will bleed. Thus, to prevent this, religion does the duty of collecting prisoners and slaves to sacrifice in order to protect the coastal people from god's anger. Consequently, religion achieves its role of protecting humanity from the wraths of gods (Coover 13).

Religion also plays a major role in defining lifestyle of people within the community. This is because it determines what people think and how they behave or live with one another. For instance, Christianity defines the way Felipe leads his life. El Senor decides not to have children because he wishes to end the curses he inherited from his ancestors. He does not want his descendants to inherit his family sins. This is clear when the nuns say, "Is that why our senor doesn't have children, because he inherited the malady... but have fears for he will transmit the infection?" (Fuentes 102). Here, one needs to evaluate where he has got the notion that one can inherit sins from the ancestors. It is from his Christian background that he learns that one can inherit curses and sins. Therefore, Christianity defines the way Felipe leads his life. Apart from Felipe, traditional religion also defines the way the coastal inhabitants should lead their lives. They grow crops and trade depending on the blessings and presence of the gods. Religion also determines when the inhabitants shall celebrate and when they can give thanks to their gods. The villagers' way of life evolves across their religion in one way or the other; they follow the rules and legislations that their religion has formulated (Fuentes 90). Those who fail to do so meet dire consequences like wrath of the gods. Some characters also lead their lives depending on their call to religion. For instance, Lady of Butterflies has her lips marked with some

images to match her duty in religion. Therefore, religion plays very important role in defining the characters' behavior and their way of life.

The ultimate role of religion was instillation of hope and redemption of humanity. Since the birth of messiah, Christianity has promised the failed humanity, restoration of life, even after leading a sinful life while still alive. At least every human will have a second chance if he/she repents his/her sins. Religion promised humans better life after this life. This is why Felipe spent some of his days with the nuns praying. Consequently, religion plays an important role in instillation of the hope to humanity even after failed life in this world.

Religion also plays an important role as an advocate of people before their government. Despite religion collecting tributes for the government, it displays its ability to defend the rights of the people. Christianity is on the forerun in defending the rights of individuals of the new world (Cesar 99). Religion supports groups like homosexuals in challenging Felipe's absolutism. Christianity also feels that plurality and the world of diversity is the rightful place for human survival. This is evident when Felipe rises to say his speech and express his feelings about humanity and human life; Pilgrim challenges him in a religious stand as a representative of the people. This is evident when Apart from Christianity, the traditional religions also have a feeling that, property may not belong to everybody but words are for everyone. This means that everybody has a freedom of speech even when poor people lack access to wealth (Michael 108). Therefore, religion plays major role in advocating for rights of different groups.

On the other hand, religion also exploited humanity through irrational claim of human life. The traditional leaders felt that holding a man, his daughter, son, mother or any relative slave or prisoner, ripping their chest off, taking away their hearts and giving to the gods was an honorable act. They could not understand the suffering these people went through and importance of fearing human life as sacred. Apart from sacrifices, the traditional leaders also used religion to collect tributes from people. Michael (103) contends that through pilgrim's monologue one understands how wrong this was to take away wealth from humanity and kill it; he felt how useless it was to return the coins to the dead. Therefore, the priests and leaders of the ancient religions failed humanity through using religion to exploit humankind.

In conclusion, religion is useful to the people though; there were moments that it failed humanity but with intent to save the humanity from suffering. God's people perished those days due to lack of knowledge and fear of the unknown. This was during the dark ages of human civilization when gods and goddesses were the rulers of the universe. However, change is also an important aspect of human civilization and when it came, religion was not an exception.

In Terra Nostra, the characters have used religion to do their people right through protection of their rights, advocating for diversity and instillation of hope. However, in some instances, religion has also done wrong to the humanity, especially after taking human wealth and life. In the past, religion granted humanity a sense of security through making them believe that

religion was protecting humanity from harm of gods and evil spirits that hovered around human sphere. Hence, religion was important, though in some instances it failed humanity. Overall, Carlos Fuentes in his novel Terra Nostra predicts that in the new world religion is useful because it promises much better life to humanity that is free from the troubles of this old world.