

## The Religious Field in Latin America: Autonomy and Fragmentation

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Writing on Latin American religion must take as one of its building blocks the classic distinction between erudite or institutionalized religion and popular religion, which are also distinctive features of Catholicism throughout the Latin world. They are not watertight compartments, but rather different spheres that nevertheless are engaged in a constant dialectic, mutually influencing each other's rituals and symbolism, their heroes and monsters, saints and sinners. The distinctively Catholic character of the popular-erudite dialectic derives from the Church's millennial development of a worldwide hierarchical and institutional apparatus including Holy Orders; educational and charitable institutions; and an omnipresent musical, architectural, and monumental presence, coexisting with an infinity of local saints, festivals, confraternities, shrines, pilgrimages, and superstitions, of which a small number blossom, for probably quite contingent reasons, into regional, national, and even global cults (compare, e.g., Lourdes and Guadalupe). In the words of Daniel Levine, writing in the 1980s

...the institutional and the popular cannot be separated. Popular religion is not an autonomous, somehow "natural" product. Indeed much of the stock of symbol and metaphor, as well as the organizational forms and practices often considered "popular," are historical products, born of the relation of subordinate groups to dominant institutions, among them the churches. The link is constant, for the churches provide legitimacy, support, continuity and a sense of meaning and moral authority to popular religious expression.<sup>1</sup>

Now turn to the following remark by the late Olivia Harris: "To write about practical Christianity [in the Andes in this case] is always to face a

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Levine, "Colombia: The Institutional Church and the Popular," in *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America*, ed. Daniel Levine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 188.

conundrum: what to include and what to exclude?”<sup>2</sup> That is, what counts as Christianity and what does not? As her paper develops, Harris describes the continuing interaction between official and nonofficial practices within Andean Christianity and on its edges – but as she says, there is no consistent line. Five hundred years after the first campaigns of Christian conversion, the relationship between official and unofficial practices, even under the same church roof, continues, especially in regions with a prominent indigenous presence.

In accordance with Pierre Bourdieu, the relationship between the official and the indigenous is one of permanent negotiation. Peasants (Harris avoids calling them ‘*indios*’) attend mass but do not take communion, which has no interest for them, let alone confession; instead, they rush to be sprinkled with holy water. Attendance at life cycle rituals is for the purpose of ensuring health, of “satisfying God’s hunger” with no regard for the idea of a sacrament or of eternal life. For the peasants, payment for a mass is essential because it ensures that an exchange has taken place and thus guarantees the benefit that otherwise would be just a promise. In Harris’s account, Spanish priests schooled in post-conciliar (i.e., post-Vatican II) modernism and social commitment are utterly disconcerted; one of them is described driving away in his overloaded jeep after unwillingly accepting the payments and enduring an interminable mass – interminable no doubt because of the votive offerings, promises, and exchanges that had to be dealt with individually. These payments are not gifts because for those who make them exchange is the essence of their relationship with the supernatural, whether the supernatural being is one of “their” divinities or a Catholic one.

The bemused priest might have recalled the difficulties faced by his colonial predecessors in explaining to the ancestors of those peasants – or at least of their Mexican counterparts – that the effigies of a Virgin or of Jesus were only representations and were not themselves possessed of supernatural powers. In 1525, the Franciscans unleashed a campaign of terror in New Spain, being forced, in Serge Gruzinski’s words, to remove Christian images because “images of Christ and the Virgin had been mingled with the idols and irresistibly absorbed into the autochthonous paganism.”<sup>3</sup> His point is that in Europe itself, no less than in Latin America, images served and continue to serve


2 Olivia Harris, “The Eternal Return of Conversion: Christianity as Contested Domain in Highland Bolivia,” *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 52.




3 Serge Gruzinski, *Images at War: Mexico from Columbus to Blade Runner (1492–2019)*, trans. Heather MacLean (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 61.

many purposes and could not be immunized against magical manipulation any more than the people could be immunized against their own inclinations to imbue certain sorts of venerated objects with magical, supernatural, or indeed contagious qualities, or with powers of pollution. The first generation who conquered Mexico with Cortés thought that they were destroying the indigenous belief system by destroying idols, but they did not understand that supernatural forces were, and maybe still are, ubiquitous, for the indigenous saw the presence of the deities in all sorts of objects. Anthropomorphic representation was not part of their way of grasping the supernatural forces on whose appeasement – with food and human blood – their lives depended. A few years later, Franciscan missionaries – undertaking a campaign similar to those being conducted in Europe at the same time – could not understand how the monotheism they preached, or thought they were preaching, led Indians to attach the names of God and the Virgin Mary to almost any image that crossed their sight.

Popular religion focuses on individuals' life cycles and on the lives of their immediate circle, their locality, or community; it mixes the sacred and the profane, if not in the same ceremony, certainly in the same event – for example, the Saint's Day is also a market day during which the official celebrations are followed by dancing and revelry, a bullfight, a cockfight, and so on. The phrase "and so on" conveys very well the unguarded or unbounded character of popular celebrations and the proliferations of rituals and roles that they can encompass while the idea of exchange conveys the multiple social relationships that are cemented, or ruptured, by popular religious practices. The notion of exchange is derived from Bourdieu as well, and – probably unwittingly – Carlos Brandão, like me, describes what I have called the dialectic of the erudite and the popular, that is, the forever frustrated efforts of the Church to "purify" or subordinate popular celebrations whose protagonists are for their part fulfilling their function as vehicles for the preservation of heritage. The public character of the celebration is not frivolous; in Brandão's words it exhibits a belief that the locality has been cleansed of the dust of sinfulness because it has recognized the majesty of divine judgment.

Despite its departure from the detail of approved ritual, popular Catholicism has remained subordinate to the official Church and has not developed any kind of dissidence, nor has it produced a distinctive theology. The traditional popular religion that survives, in the context of contemporary massive urbanization and globalization, may now show symptoms of detachment, occasionally reaching the edges of the surreal, as witness the cult of Santísima Muerte, which deploys quasi-Catholic imagery and seems

little different from innumerable other saintly cults, were it not for the macabre skull of its object. In Chesnut's description, the Santa Muerte has the mission of "bestowing blessings of prosperity and abundance" among her adepts and those who, like an "Archbishop" of  in Mexico City who had his recognition as an association with religious purposes withdrawn as a result of pressure from the Church, "traffic in her image." From one point of view, this makes her resemble any other saint, but the scandalous character of her representation, reproduced in niches around Mexico and present also in Argentina, is a symptom of the changing religious field, as we shall see later.

The cult of Santísima Muerte, incorporating motifs from traditional popular religiosity (notably the effigies associated with Mexico's famous and colorful Day of the Dead) illustrates in a small way the need to think about hegemonic change in two ways. One focuses on the now standard observations about  evangelical growth as a religious strand that is cut off from Catholic  the classical Pentecostal churches, dispersed in innumerable small chapels and churches and with at most a skeleton  central organization, do not encroach on the Church's symbolic and ritual territory. Neo-Pentecostals, which are congregations with Pentecostal practices that formed new denominations in the late twentieth century, have very occasionally engaged in skirmishes, as in the famous case of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (*Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* – IURD) and the incident known as the "*chute na Virgem*" ("the kick against the Virgin") in 1995. But this is also one Pentecostal church whose rituals bear explicit Catholic references such as anointing the faithful with oil and adapting the idea of holy water by inviting people to sprinkle "water from the River Jordan" to cleanse their homes of diabolic influences. Surely, this is one of many signs beyond the bald ambition implicit in its name that this organization seeks to supplant Catholic hegemony.

The remainder of this chapter describes and interprets the way in which this relationship was unexpectedly transformed in the late twentieth century, how the popular became independent of the erudite, how Liberation Theology or "*basista*" Catholicism could be seen as yet another – maybe the last – strategy to capture and channel popular religion; how evangelical Christianity became a far more autonomous version of popular religion, cut off from the erudite and shorn of hegemonic potential; and finally (this is the second focus) how devotional movements within Catholicism itself represent perhaps a new stage in the gradual evolution of Catholicism from its centuries-old status as a hegemonic culture toward the conformation of a mere denomination

that can, finally, live with modernity, demonstrating that it is not necessary to be liberal to achieve that, and indeed that in the religious sphere at least the reverse may be the case.

### Toward Institutionalization: Popular Religion before and after Vatican II

In Latin America, the Church hierarchy in the twentieth century undertook various campaigns to make popular religion more orthodox and also to encourage commitment and religious education among more nominal Catholics. The first wave, known as Romanization, occurred in the 1930s and reflected a concerted effort at centralization of power in the Vatican especially power of appointment of bishops without government involvement (after reaching Concordats with various states), as well as involvement in education and some political alliances. In Brazil, it inspired the “neo-Christendom” strategy of Cardinal Leme da Silveira Cintra, who cultivated a cordial relationship with Brazil’s reforming and authoritarian president, Getulio Vargas. The Social Doctrine of the Church as first elaborated by Leo X in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) fed into corporatist ideas of the state and of state regulation of class conflict and industrial relations that inspired labor legislation in Chile in the 1920s (under Arturo Alessandri) and in Vargas’ Estado Novo.

During this period, the Church hierarchy also showed itself adept at mobilizing popular religion in the interests of its own positions. This is graphically described by Alan Knight and also by Mary Kay Vaughan in her account of fierce struggles over education in post-*Cristiada* Mexico under Cárdenas. In the different regions Vaughan studied (Sonora and Puebla), we find the clergy uniting with the more conservative post-revolutionary politicians against the more radically anticlerical and socialist educational initiatives, brandishing the threat that the new teachers would undermine traditional morals and place the virtue of their daughters at risk. In Argentina, reformist elements in the Church established influential Catholic Workers’ Circles to advance the interests of labor under the aegis of the Church. At the same time, the bishops took tighter control of lay organizations such as the **small Círculos Obreros Católicos and the** Acción Católica. But also during this period, the French Catholic public intellectual Jacques Maritain was heralding a change in the religious field in his widely read *Humanisme Intégral* (1936) and elsewhere. Maritain was an advocate of a corporatist arrangement of society in the image of medieval guilds as a way of overcoming the contradictions of capitalism. However, he was also very unpopular in clerical circles on account of his

hostility to Franco during the Spanish Civil War, and he remains a major figure as an advocate of a nonsectarian Catholic politics in the shape of what became Christian Democracy.

While the worldwide Church hierarchy was engaged in its project of Romanization and modernization, the first half of the twentieth century also saw some instances of loss of control or emergence of popular religion onto a more political stage, as in the Brazilian conflicts of Canudos, the Contestado, and Juazeiro (where Padre Cicero established a more or less independent politico-ecclesiastical fiefdom from 1911 until his death in 1934). But these were ephemeral episodes, two of which were put down by military force, with various disconnected millenarian, messianic, or simply socio-religious movements. Being popular movements, they were more concerned with traditions than with doctrine. To some extent, Mexico's Cristero War was also such an instance, though in that case a sector of the clergy took an active part in military action, against the judgment, and even the fury, of many bishops and of the Vatican itself. Jean Meyer in his passionate account insists again and again on the betrayal of the Cristero peasants prepared to fight and die for Christ by a hierarchy who looked to the long term, did not believe the Church in Mexico was in mortal danger, and wanted peaceful coexistence with the state. Meyer exalts the popular religion of the Cristeros who accepted implicitly the message that God sent his mother the Virgin of Guadalupe specifically to Mexico and who now took the chance to reach heaven by dying in defense of their faith.

Whereas in Europe the Church was baffled and embattled politically – by socialism in Spain, France, Germany, and Italy, and by fascism in Italy and Germany (though Spanish fascism was in close alliance with the Church) – in Latin America Church leaders were less threatened, even if they were uncomfortable in some cases, notably with Peronism in mid-century Argentina. The Church gained both independence and influence vis-à-vis the state and was under little external pressure to adapt to the permissiveness that had always troubled Church leaders and to the socialist influences that were far more attenuated in Latin America than in Europe. So, the moderately modernizing changes initiated with Romanization continued unperturbed until pressures for change that had built up in Europe (not much in Latin America) eventually came to a head at Vatican II.

A group of Latin American theologians and bishops (Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru, Msgr. Manuel Larráin of Chile, and Msgr. Hélder Câmara of Brazil) had been very active at Vatican II and brought the Council's message back to the continent. The translation of Vatican II into Spanish and Portuguese took

several forms. The most intellectual was Liberation Theology, which took the project of the social doctrine much further by denouncing the Church's posture as an ally of the ruling classes and by questioning the whole idea of a salvation restricted to the next world. Liberation Theology also sought to play down the emphasis of traditional religiosity on an individual's personal relationship with the divine, drawing on the Gospel's teachings to emphasize the relationship with neighbors and with the community, and also shifting the idea of charity – with its connotations of short-term alleviation – toward structural change as a more enduring way of caring for one's neighbor. Liberation Theology was vulnerable to the charge that it represented a version of Marxism, and some followers did indeed eventually “convert” to Marxist parties or movements.

For the most part, however, the defense was that Marxism was a method, and the leading theologian of liberation, Gustavo Gutiérrez, gradually ceased to make any reference to Marxism after the controversy following publication of his first book *Teología de la Liberación: Perspectivas* in 1971. Over time, he came to pay more attention to indigenous and women's issues and looked to the sixteenth-century bishop Bartolomé de las Casas (the “Defender of the Indians”) rather than to modern theology and philosophy as his inspiration. Las Casas, nonetheless, has himself even after five centuries never ceased to attract controversy, and the question of his canonization apparently arose only in the year 2000. Whatever Gutiérrez' own intentions, it was in some ways a challenge to the transcendent in religion because it inspired so much social and political activism in the name of Christianity.

Liberation Theology had broad international appeal and also broad intellectual appeal beyond the frontiers of the Church, of theology, of Catholicism, and even of religion. The range of influence of Liberation Theology, or rather of ideas derived more or less directly and more or less faithfully from Liberation Theology, has been vast: from the Brazilian Landless People's Movement (*Movimento dos Sem Terra* – MST) to some guerrilla ventures in Bolivia, Colombia, and Guatemala (though in this last case, the term “Liberation Theology” was rarely used, *per se*); it also helped to bring the themes of participation and popular education onto the international development agenda, notably because among the Ecclesial Base Communities (*comunidades eclesiales de base* – CEBs), which Liberation Theology inspired, the method of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire gained much acceptance. Liberation Theology made a major contribution to the autonomy of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) field in the sphere of development



policy and practice and to social movements through the work of inspired priests and nuns, which gained support from the Bishops' Conferences, at least in Brazil.

These Bishops' Conferences had not existed as decision-making bodies before Vatican II, but once formally established, they provided a bureaucratic instance and also a channel for external funding for the Pastorals, which now tended to replace what were previously known as Missions. Brazilian examples include the Pastoral da Juventude, the Pastoral do Indígena, and the Pastoral da Terra, and there are similar institutions in other countries. These institutions were staffed mostly by lay activists with a sprinkling of ex-priests. A small amount of Liberation Theology in a depoliticized form was also co-opted into official Vatican doctrine. Under Pope John Paul II, the preferential option for the poor became a focus of the Church, an emphasis that Pope Francis I seems strongly inclined to revive. The CEBs, for their part, have tended to rely on the logistical, educational, and intellectual support of priests and nuns and some bishops for their organization – an observation supported by my own fieldwork and that of others. The influence of Liberation Theology on Catholic schools and universities, whose intake is mostly upper middle class, seems to have been limited, and it has remained a minority phenomenon when compared with devotional movements such as Focolari, Neocatecumenes, and above all, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

At first, Liberation Theology had an ambivalent relationship with popular religion, divided between a disdain for superstition – seen as a distraction from the structural problems of society – and a certain reverence for the true, unblemished religiosity of the oppressed. Under the influence of Liberation Theology's ideas – which I term *basismo* – samba drums might be brought into church, for example, or a pilgrimage that once had celebrated a fiesta would be turned into a celebration of the migrant worker as an emblem of suffering (as in the *Romaria do Migrante*, or Migrant's Pilgrimage, near Campina Grande in the northeast of Brazil). On the whole, though, Liberation Theology and *basismo* had little effect on the rituals and celebrations that punctuate the calendar of many parishes, or on the routine activities of *benzedeiros* and *curandeiros* who make up the fabric of religious life in the Brazilian hinterland. Indeed, some accounts emphasize the middle, or lower-middle, class character of CEB participants and the somewhat academic character of their meetings. In my own studies in Salvador, Bahia, in the early 1990s, the striking feature was that the meetings and discussion groups – known as *Educação Popular* – attracted a core group of faithful participants, but did not treat evangelizing as a priority. The contrast with the expansionary energy of their Pentecostal neighbors



was overwhelming, as was that between the self-financing Pentecostals and the reliance of Educação Popular on international NGO support.

Vatican II, by “opening the windows” for a spring-cleaning (as Pope John XXIII said), did shake the structure of the Catholic Church because of its demographic as well as ideological sequel. A collapse of recruitment to the clergy and religious orders in Latin America, and also in the European countries that supplied so many of them, compounded a wave of departures among the clergy of people who mostly wanted to remain good Catholics but not priests. Pope John Paul II redrew the lines of the religious field for the Church when he decreed a withdrawal from political controversy and party alignment, and undertook a campaign of marginalization against Liberation Theology and basismo. In a campaign of surveillance and personnel shifts during the 1980s, his emissaries went around Latin America removing liberationist theologians from teaching posts and positions of influence and dispatching them to obscure parishes and positions. Like Lenin, his motto could have been “better fewer, but better,” with a focus on personal morality and a tightening of discipline within the structures of the Church. John Paul II also signaled a desire to encourage popular religion, with its focus on local traditions, by promoting and approving record numbers of new beatifications and sanctifications, reversing the traditionally skeptical response of the Vatican to popular beatification campaigns.

### Catholic Devotional and Charismatic Movements at the Turn of the Century

The Pope was also encouraging, more or less discreetly, new types of religious renewal that Liberation Theology had simply not dreamed of and that caught its protagonists off guard. These renewal movements have been visible only since about 1980, but in that short period they have taken part in a multifaceted reshaping of Latin American Catholicism – a reshaping yet to be registered in an academic literature which, *grosso modo*, turned from enthusiasm for Liberation Theology to a fascination for Pentecostalism – and has produced changes that would have seemed inconceivable in the wake of Vatican II.

From one point of view, these changes represent a strategy to resist the pressures to democratize the Church’s hierarchy, to resist the permissive society, and to resist involvement with social movements identified largely with the left by espousing conservative moral values and the religiosity of instant satisfaction and by raising, rather than lowering, the price to pay for religious recognition in terms of personal carnal and financial sacrifice.

However, that point of view is too simplistic and represents little more than an expression of distaste. The movements are too diverse in structure and ethos to be interpreted as a response to a single strategy, and they are far too wealthy, often, for their existence to be explained by Vatican or even episcopal support. This is evident from a list only of a few of them: Opus Dei, the Legionarios de Cristo, the Cursillos de Cristiandad, Focolari, Comunione e Liberazione (mostly Italian), Sodalitium and Schoenstatt, and the biggest of them all, the worldwide quasi-Pentecostal but Catholic movement known as the Charismatic Renewal. They all enjoy some kind of papal recognition, expressed in the numerous titles the pope has at his disposal. Opus is a “personal prelature,” Legionarios a “religious congregation,” and so on. However, none originates in a papal or episcopal initiative, and many are lay-founded and lay-driven. Some of them are quite secretive (especially Opus Dei). Opus’s website says it has 88,000 “*fieles*” (followers) of whom fewer than 2,000 are priests and 77 percent are married men and women. The remainder have taken vows of chastity and of these many live in Opus houses. Opus operates schools and universities in several countries (Universidad de los Andes in Chile; Universidad del Pacífico in Mexico, and the original Universidad de Navarra in Spain) and as of 2010 included several Chilean and Peruvian bishops among its members – notably the Archbishop of Lima. The Legionarios are more of a mass organization; they too operate a network of universities in Chile, and in Mexico under the Anahuac name, as well as schools. According to their website, the Legion has 800 priests and 2,500 seminarians being trained plus a large but unspecified number of followers in its affiliated Regnum Christi movement. In Chile at least, the Legion and Opus run schools that attract the children of the economic elite and have an explicit evangelizing agenda, notably to bring parents to religion through their children. Of Focolari, Schoenstatt, and the Neocatecumene, little is published save on Wikipedia. Comunione e Liberazione had great success setting up student residences in Italian university towns; its ethos is devotional and also encourages students to engage in social work, and until the collapse of Christian Democracy it had a prominent role in Italian politics. Its presence in Latin America seems sketchy. It does run the Universidad Sede Sapientiae in Peru – though to what extent this is intended to spread the Comunione e Liberazione ideology is unclear.

This list does not include the many Jesuit schools and universities, such as the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico that is at the heart of a network of Jesuit institutions of higher education. But the ethos of these institutions is different from those mentioned. Jesuit institutions are not established with a missionary or evangelizing purpose and tend to encourage a liberal atmosphere.

They are expensive, though, and so their students tend to come from the upper middle classes, like those of the institutions operated by Opus and the Legionarios, with the exception of the Jesuits' Ayuuk Intercultural University located in an indigenous community in Oaxaca, Mexico. Another example of such openness is the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (*Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro* – PUC-Rio), whose affirmative action program run in cooperation with EDUCAFRO, a network of courses led by the well-known Franciscan friar Frei Davi helping black and low-income applicants prepare for university entrance exams, has brought a noticeable change in the racial profile of its student body. Frei Davi has become a very prominent and even radical figure, devoted to the advancement of black people in the Brazilian education system

Of these movements, Catholic Charismatic Renewal (*Renovación Carismática Católica* – CCR) is the one that most resembles a mass movement, at least in Latin America (less so in North America, where it operates more like the “small groups” found in Protestant congregations). In the early 1990s, intellectuals linked to or identified with Liberation Theology and the Igreja Popular were contemptuous of what they saw as its conservative focus on personal religiosity and its middle class following, but the fact is that the CCR has grown rapidly and in diverse ways. Unlike Opus or the Legionarios, it is not a tight organization with clear boundaries but rather a movement animated by activists within the clergy and among the laity. It runs, or maybe just inspires, meetings of all sizes, from very small parish-based gatherings to mass meetings in football stadia and spectacles featuring celebrity preachers – like the so-called Singing Priest of São Paulo, Marcelo Rossi. Beyond events carrying the Charismatic label, one also observes Charismatic habits, such as singing with arms outstretched and speaking in tongues, infiltrating services in parish churches. The concern for the Church hierarchy, of course, is to maintain control of the CCR. So, often bishops will name a priest to oversee it, and priests require that meetings must take place in a church, not in other premises.

These movements may or may not reflect a Church institution that has come to terms, finally, with modernity, but they surely reflect the penetration of Catholicism's culture by modernity. Although some find this surprising because they seem so conservative, it is by now widely agreed that many movements whose ethos is deeply conservative with respect to religiosity and personal morality are also modern in their forms of organization and in their independence from inherited structures of religious power. This is recognized by grand theorists like Shmuel Eisenstadt and David Martin with respect to Pentecostals and fundamentalists, but it has yet to be applied to renewal

movements in Catholicism and Anglicanism. The Charismatic Renewal uses phrases such as “being in the world but not of the world, ‘in the media but not of the media’ – in short, ‘to be modern without modernity,’”<sup>4</sup> and this includes a prominent, even equal, role for men and women and the admission of couples in religious communities.

One feature of their modernity is the this-worldly focus on managing one’s well-being, sometimes described as refashioning the self – making the individual responsible for self-transformation as opposed to waiting for supernatural intervention in response to prayer or offerings. They also seem to signify a profound change in the vast and varied institutional apparatus of Catholicism. Although recognized in their different statuses by the papacy or by local bishops, these are mostly movements in which the laity plays a prominent role, deploying substantial resources that are not under the control of bishops and priests. The flexibility of such arrangements stands in contrast to the rigidity and complex procedures of the hierarchy. The larger movements bring quite a different sort of lay involvement from the intimacy of popular religion for these are transnational organizations operating on a different scale, with elaborate formal structures, while the smaller communities seem to be made up of people who are fleeing their social networks rather than embedded within them in the classic location-based style of popular religion. In addition, Opus and the Legionarios are also concerned to gain influence among political and economic elites and in the professions. Opus is the nearest thing to a religious order. Although its members are mostly drawn from the laity, they agree to subject themselves to certain disciplines and adhere to one or more of a range of vows, and the dividing lines between clergy and laity and between men and women are very clearly drawn.

To be sure, St. Ignatius taught the fashioning of the self in the sixteenth century, but the autonomy of the organizations, their focus on gaining influence in and refashioning society, and their inclusion of clergy and laity together are all signs of innovation, of a will to distance themselves from models of the past. The question is how it has happened that out of the laity or from the periphery of the priesthood such powerful movements should grow and should be of the kind that fit well with the posture of the pope.

The redrawing of the religious field can be seen in these projects to create large-scale, global lay organizations. Previously, lay and popular religion had tended to be a local affair and often incorporated rituals, which, though not

4 Brenda Carranza, Cecília Mariz, and Marcelo Ayres Camurça, eds., *Novas comunidades católicas: Em busca de um espaço pós-moderno* (Aparecida, Ideias e Letras, 2009), 52.

strictly approved, were nonetheless tolerated by priests and bishops, as we saw in the Brazilian and Bolivian examples. The hierarchical mind no doubt regarded popular religion as religion for simple folk, which had no theological or structural repercussions. However, the modern organizations mentioned here seem to herald a new departure – albeit one that has been developing gradually over many decades, since Opus was founded before World War II and the Legionarios in 1941. Some (Opus and Legionarios) constitute spaces for parallel or even slightly unorthodox religiosity but always under the watchful eye of priests or bishops. They have elaborate systems of recruitment and training, and presumably also for fund-raising because they do not receive funding from bishops. Indeed, it may well be that these apparently well-endowed organizations can gain influence because they can contribute funds – a subject that is probably impossible to research. All this remains more a research agenda than a set of findings. Just as academic social science ignored the Pentecostals for a decade, paying more attention to the more ideologically and even socially congenial basista Catholicism, so maybe now it is ignoring the devotional movements in Catholicism.

Organizational features apart, it is the religiosity promoted by these different movements that has countered the claim that evangelicals have, so to speak, seized the modernity banner and left Catholicism standing. The Charismatic Renewal promotes the religiosity of instant emotional gratification that is also the trademark of evangelical churches, and although it may not, so far as I know, have adopted the ethos of prosperity theology, parts of the movement must be open to that influence, given the powerful influence already exercised on the CCR by Pentecostalism. Opus and Legionarios are clearly distinct from any charismatic movement on account of their insistence on prolonged and thorough training, education (indoctrination perhaps), and socialization. This is at the antipodes of the quantity-driven dynamic of the CCR.

### Churches and Politics

The re-democratization of the late twentieth century also seems to have helped the Church hierarchy to achieve a degree of political influence that may exceed anything it has enjoyed since the high tide of Romanization. The wave of constitution making has opened up spaces for non-Catholics to various degrees and enabled evangelical churches to gain access to resources and positions in the state. In Brazil, the opening is probably greatest because to open a church (with accompanying tax exemptions) it is not necessary to be recognized as a religious body. In Argentina, semiformal mechanisms and

registration requirements remain an obstacle to the achievement of their full recognition and special status has been retained by the Catholic Church, which is exempt from the requirement of registration and receives subsidies to the salaries of some higher clergy. In Mexico, a religious body must be recognized by the state's register of associations with religious purposes. In Peru, in accordance with the 1980 Concordat, the Catholic Church has a special status as an institution of public benefit and receives exemptions and benefits including personal financial benefits for some bishops that are not counted as salaries and so are not taxed. Pentecostal churches are not subject to legal discrimination, and some of them, especially the wealthy and fastest growing neo-Pentecostals, may operate in a shady fiscal niche.

The pattern and purpose of evangelical involvement in politics, which should certainly be seen as a shift in the boundaries of the religious field, differs markedly from that of the Catholic Church. Catholic bishops do not put up candidates nor do they any longer support particular parties or create parties of their own, but as in the past they do regard intervention on issues of policy and principle as a legitimate activity. Evangelical custom, in stark contrast, is to respect the ruler, and they take up principled positions on only a very restricted range of issues (e.g., against the death penalty, against privileges for the Catholic Church, and against same-sex marriage); but in many cases they have drifted away from political invisibility to follow strategies to gain representation and influence. Evangelical churches need channels to the state because, for example, they want to operate TV and radio stations, they want to obtain subsidies for social projects such as drug rehabilitation, and they want access to potential converts in prison. They also want to place their own people in parliaments, though they are often little interested in ideology or big-picture politics. Felipe Vázquez Palacios describes Mexican evangelical churches as having “not yet created a widespread social impact” and quotes Patricia Fortuny as saying that Mexican evangelical churches “lack a clear political project, oscillating according to the space the political system permits them.”<sup>5</sup> The churches I have studied in Brazil support their own members who stand as candidates for various parties, which are presumably pleased to receive blocks of votes guaranteed by the pastors' prestige, although elected evangelicals (like other regional politicians) are apt to switch party affiliations for strategic reasons.

5 Felipe Vázquez Palacios, “Democratic Activity and Religious Practices of Evangelicals,” in *Mexico. Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Paul Freston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59–60.



Brazilian Pentecostalism seems to be projecting itself effectively and in an institutionalized manner beyond its own boundaries, in contrast with the more common tendency of evangelical churches to keep to their own flock and draw thick boundaries around them. There are organized evangelical groups for athletes, entrepreneurs, students, police officers, and the military, and Pentecostal churches have also offered platforms for black activism and for a range of political ideas. However, it may be a tendency peculiar to Brazil where Pentecostalism seems to have acquired the epidemiological characteristics of a social movement, penetrating into unfamiliar groups and institutional niches.

Pentecostal churches until quite recently were mostly creating institutions for their own growth and their own followers, what Robert Putnam has called “bonding social capital,” but there are signs that this might be changing. The Catholic Church has played a major historical role in creating and contributing to the social capital that makes Western societies function through the modern state, medical care, social welfare, schools, universities, and numerous other institutions. This is what Putnam calls bridging social capital. Maybe Pentecostal churches are beginning to look beyond their own, but it will take a long time. The IURD’s charitable arm, the *Associação Beneficente Cristã* (ABC), seems to have a patchy record and social scientists familiar with it say it tends to be active in places where the Church itself has a political or evangelistic interest; it also tends to move its head office from place to place. Indications that Pentecostals remain entrenched in the clientelist habits of Brazilian politics are not hard to find. For example, during the tenure of the evangelical Garotinho couple as governors of the state of Rio de Janeiro (Anthony Garotinho was succeeded as governor by his wife Rosângela Matheus in 2002), an income-support program for the elderly called “*cheque-cidadão*” was distributed largely through evangelical church networks.

### From Popular Religion to Mass Culture: Restructuring the Field

The institutional and political changes do signal a redrawing of the religious field, but the underlying changes in the locus of popular religion and its replacement by another form of mass religiosity take us deeper into the culture and imaginary of societies that are going through massive changes. The change that is particularly worthy of note in the context of the development of Pentecostalism is the expansion of the middle and lower middle classes – those located in the second to the fifth decile of income strata – which has

grown at an unprecedented rate in the early 2000s. According to Marcelo Neri the “middle class,” defined in income terms rather than in decile terms, increased by 30 million people in Brazil between 2003 and 2009 – from 38 percent to 50 percent of the population, and in absolute numbers by 34.3 percent. Separate research by Neri also shows that the “Classe C” (lower middle) increased its share of Brazilian Pentecostals from 12.27 percent to 12.84 percent between 2003 and 2009, which appears to be a marginal increase but is seen to be less so when the vertiginous growth of the C class itself is taken into account. The relationship between social mobility, income growth, and religious affiliation invites more detailed research, but it is worth juxtaposing these numbers.

Within the religious field the scandalous character of the Pentecostals (above all of the neo-Pentecostals), the uncertainties surrounding what counts as a religion (would it include the *ayahuasca*-consuming cult known as Santo Daime?) and who counts as an authority in deciding that question, the shift in protagonism and initiative within Catholicism from the hierarchy to devotional movements, and the Pentecostalization of some of Catholicism’s most dynamic sectors are all symptoms of a field which is undergoing deep structural change and perhaps spawning new fields. One can think of the emerging pattern in terms of two dividing lines: on one hand, the Pentecostalization that encompasses the classical Pentecostalism of small chapels and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and on the other hand neo-Pentecostalism as an apparently dominant trend setter in global Pentecostalism. Whether neo-Pentecostal methods of organization, ritual practices, and followings are quantitatively dominant is less relevant to this claim than its high profile in politics, in the media, and in the urban landscape. Furthermore, one observes the infiltration of neo-Pentecostal habits in previous classical Pentecostal churches such as the Assemblies of God.

In explaining how he came upon the usage of “habitus” (drawn from the art historian Erwin Panofsky as he readily tells us), Pierre Bourdieu says he was inspired by the world of haute couture, which led him to the realization that one of the most fundamental features of all fields of production was “the truly magical logic of the production of the producer and the product as fetishes.”<sup>6</sup> Earlier on, in his account of the creation of the literary field in nineteenth-century France, he had explained that a field could not be said to have achieved autonomy unless it contained a social universe that “is instituted

6 Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l’Art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 257.

at once in the objective structures of a universe governed by social rules and in the mental structures of those living within it, who thus take for granted the imperatives inscribed in the immanent logic of its operation.<sup>77</sup> In other words, the autonomous field imbues those who operate within it with a sense that its procedures and mental structures (or perhaps modes of thought) are self-evident and require no discussion or explanation. Note here how logic and magic seem almost indistinguishable. It is not entirely surprising that he invokes the fashion industry in this oxymoron. Haute couture has a magical way of creating itself and its ways of doing things. An autonomous field is one in which the deeply rooted logic of its operation has penetrated the unconscious assumptions that govern everyday life. The “logic” is not really logical at all; it is magical because it is so hard to understand what it is that brings and holds a subculture together, and it has a logic in the sense that it has a dynamic of its own, determined by rules of its own.

Evangelical Christianity has today gradually created a world with its own magical logic. It presents us with an array of habits and rituals that have come together with, broadly speaking, two structures, namely the Pentecostal and the neo-Pentecostal. The culture of the classical Pentecostals spread from place to place and country to country, born mostly by local preachers and pastors with only limited initial input from foreign missionaries and without a controlling center, and yet it has reproduced a similar ethos, rituals, dress codes, techniques of organization, and public speaking from Africa to Latin America to Asia. The neo-Pentecostals are more managerial, having much larger organizations and training systems, but their style also seems to spread by mimesis or osmosis with little visible communication or transmission. Like the “magic” of Bourdieu’s internal logic, the common features of Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism spread across the globe yet are very hard to explain in terms of a power struggle or an organizational strategy. Nonetheless, they reflect the creation of an autonomous field, marking a radical departure not just in religious style and creed but also in what it means to adhere to a religion, in modes of religious socialization, in ideas about religious authority, and the legitimate administration of the supernatural.

Classical Pentecostalism, which still accounts for the majority of Pentecostals in Latin America and worldwide, has been exhaustively described by a distinguished sequence of monographs in Latin America, Africa, and Europe following in the wake of David Martin’s *Tongues of Fire*. That wave, which in Latin America started in the first years of the twentieth century but

7 Ibid., 93–94.

~~did not take off~~ until mid-century, already brought profound changes in the relationship between popular and erudite religion, essentially by transcending the mutual dependence between them and fashioning a this-worldly religiosity of self-discipline, family values, and an acute awareness of the threat of evil in a person's life. This was radically different from a Catholic culture of exchange in which good fortune could be sought through exchanges with saints and bad behavior could be redeemed by offerings and confessions while annual celebrations would exalt the collective faith and purge the community of past wrongdoings. Pentecostals are held personally to account and have no magical way out. The term neo-Pentecostalism was coined in the 1990s when observers noticed some important changes including the global reach of the churches, centralized management, and the open and unashamed promise of riches joined with appeals for donations. In Brazil, there was also an inordinate insistence on the threat of the diabolic and possession in people's lives. Although classical Pentecostalism also contains these themes, the point is that it contains them and handles them discreetly, not least because the diabolic is dangerous. However, neo-Pentecostalism put them at the forefront and made much of the drama of possession and healing and of enrichment. This is evident in the contrast between the participatory bands and choirs of classical Pentecostalism and the interminable backup music of neo-Pentecostal music that is used to manipulate emotions as volunteers patrol the aisles watching out for those in need of succor or a quick mini-exorcism.

Pentecostal churches do not have a liturgy in the sense of a fixed ritual sequence repeated at fixed times of the day, the week, or the year. They consist of addresses from preachers interspersed with songs or hymns that congregations often sing from memory. Some odds and ends of Catholic ritual have been incorporated, such as a version of the Holy Communion in which small beakers of grape juice are distributed with a wafer, although this is certainly not meant to be a ritual of transubstantiation and participation may be conditional on payment of monthly dues. But where the small chapels with their choirs and bands are extremely spare with any kind of ritual, neo-Pentecostal churches have engaged in what I have come to call "ritual promiscuity." They adopt ritual procedures and later drop them and move on to something else. These procedures have to be recognized as ritual, however, so they cannot be totally new. They have to strike a chord in the collective memory. Thus, in Brazil, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God places an imitation Ark of the Covenant and a seven-branched candelabra in many of its churches and anoints followers with oil. ~~It also practices~~ exorcisms in a simulacrum of the procedures of the possession cults (Umbanda and Candomblé) ~~that are a~~

widely cherished feature of Brazilian cultural heritage. These ideas are also exported by the Universal Church to its branches in Mozambique, Angola, and South Africa. Recently, the introduction of Jewish ritual paraphernalia including shofars, matzo bread, and prayer shawls has been prevalent in Pentecostal churches around Latin America.

In Pentecostalism, and especially neo-Pentecostalism, religious life is detached from heritage and a sense of continuity with ancestral practices rooted to locality. In neo-Pentecostal churches, religion becomes a path to prosperity and, for church leaders, to political power. The personal link between followers and preachers is often absent, and the place of worship or prayer can acquire the characteristics of a service center that provides counseling, legal advice, and, in the case of large-scale structures, leisure areas. The rituals of neo-Pentecostalism sometimes have the appearance of pastiche. Their exorcisms are summary procedures in contrast to the elaborate procedures of the possession cults; their version of the communion is artless. The Universal Church's temples often have a uniform neoclassical porch with the same plastic columns as if produced by the church's own factory, and finally the ultimate example of pastiche is the construction of the grandiose "Third Temple of Solomon" in the Braz district of São Paulo ~~that will be~~ fifty-three meters high, faced with stone brought from Israel, and designed in accordance with the proportions foreseen in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel.

The pastiche is to some extent replicated in the ritual promiscuity where ancient practices of donation have been surrounded by the ritual of the religious service or the celebrations of annual fiestas. In these churches they are the subject of prolonged and insistent preaching but also form part of a personal bargain with divine power that giving will lead to receiving. Attendees are expected to give 10 percent of their pretax monthly income plus extra donations as contributions to the church, but also as contributions to their own wellbeing. Sometimes a verse from St. Paul is invoked to justify asking people to give even what they do not have and cannot afford. Simon Coleman, observing these practices in a Swedish Church, reported stories of fantastic, unexpected windfalls received by people who had given freely and who interpreted free giving as a way of transmitting charismatic force from person to person, or "investing according to the laws of spiritual increase."<sup>8</sup>

Neo-Pentecostal exchange requires the faithful to make sacrifices and also to take control of their lives. If someone asks for help in overcoming life's

<sup>8</sup> Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 203.

problems – drink, drugs, depression, and so forth – the preacher will help but also will expect that person also to make an effort. The preacher will not endlessly offer prayers in vain. In another register, when the preacher exhorts followers to aim high and have big ambitions to achieve self-realization, they also are expected to make the effort. I am therefore not trying to contrast this modern, materialistic and individualistic ethos with a purportedly idealized former pattern of exchange in Catholic popular religion. Catholics also petition for all sorts of very concrete favors in which *votos* and *ex votos* play a prominent role. Rather, it is the unrehearsed character of Pentecostal exchange that needs emphasis, its detachment from time-honored procedure and the decorum that accompanies the rituals of popular religion. Much as this religiosity is still popular in the sense that it belongs to the *pueblo/povo*, its gestures mark a completely new configuration of religious practice, because the erudite counterpart is no longer recognized. Indeed, the leader of the Universal Church regards theology as the work of the devil, invented to lead the untutored astray and distract them from the real business of warding off or extracting diabolic forces and pursuing prosperity and health.

There is also a strong streak of mimesis, bordering on kitsch. The Universal Church builds vast cathedrals purposefully, sometimes in high-profile locations, to mimic and compete with the Catholic Church. Like all Pentecostal Churches it uses the same Bible, although many Pentecostals tend to eschew the modern translations that are now standard in Catholic and Anglican churches in favor of older versions with their archaic vocabulary. The Universal Church also has half-borrowed its logo – the white dove against the background of a red heart – from the Catholic image of the Sacred Heart, combining it with the classic symbol of the Holy Spirit. And of course, in radical contrast to classical Pentecostals, it has created a hierarchy of authority, with hundreds of bishops and the founder-leader Edir Macedo at the summit. Similar remarks apply to other neo-Pentecostal churches.

The Pentecostal field recombines elements from the established field of Latin American religion, dominated by power of the Catholic Church as well as by Catholic understandings of what religion is. The “mainstream” of religion was moving in a liberal, quasi-secular direction and had long discarded explicit references to the action of the supernatural in daily life, to ideas about evil and possession, while at the same time retaining the apparatus of power that had evolved to administer the supernatural over centuries. Now the neo-Pentecostals challenge those definitions and assumptions by restoring the action of the supernatural in daily life while adopting a completely different model of organization, revolving around the cult of personality of their



leaders and dispensing with extended periods of theological education and priestly formation.

In this perspective, classical Pentecostalism, despite its massive quantitative presence, can be thought of as not achieving the autonomy necessary to command great influence. Although neo-Pentecostals have obviously drawn on their older cousins for basic ideas about conversion, about mission, about the uses of the Bible, they have gone much further by engaging in open competition with Catholicism for prestige, for the conquest of public space, the conquest of the media, for the conquest of political power, and for the capacity to legitimately define what counts as religion in the public sphere. Within the Catholic Church, by comparison, we have seen the beginnings of a reshaping of the field after several decades of attempts first to achieve a liberal modernization (Vatican II and Liberation Theology), then to roll the liberalization backwards, all the while preserving the structures of power. Now, however, we observe new structures of religious activism that also share some features with Pentecostalism.

So, the field of religion is being reshaped. The power to define what is religion is passing into new hands. The relationship between religion and politics is also changing, as is the relationship between the apparatuses of power and the administration of the supernatural. The one thing that is clear is that even ten, let alone twenty, years ago few would have predicted the developments described here.

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