

DISSIDENCE AND CONFORMISM IN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: WHAT DIFFERENCE – IF ANY
- SEPARATES THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL AND PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES?

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This paper tries to distinguish between religious movements which transform religious life and others which do so to a small or insignificant extent, using the contrast between conformism and dissidence – and emphatically avoiding quasi-political metaphors such as ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’. In outlining the contrast, drawing principally on Brazilian and North American examples, the paper relies on the dialectic between popular and erudite religion, and compares the Charismatic Renewal movement within Catholicism with the Pentecostal movement in search of significant differences, or rather in search of how to understand the differences and the similarities.

Religious institutions are always vulnerable to pressure from below.

The religious field, which to some may appear deeply conservative, is in fact in permanent flux. Indeed, against certain sorts of expectation, religious institutions seem remarkably open – some might say, vulnerable – to external pressure for change. Compared with political institutions for example, they are less able, and on occasion have less desire, to resist the voices of the disempowered, the poor or simply of their rank-and-file followers. The space for change, and for the laity to be a protagonist of change, is most self-evident in secularized societies where the state has detached itself from formal links with the institution of religion, or where, as in the UK, those formal links have lost their compulsory content¹ with regard to observance of religious norms. But even in countries – many Muslim countries apart from Turkey, as well as in Israel – where the links between state and religion are formal and carry some degree of coercive force, the institutions, doctrines and practices of religious life do not stand still, and are subject to multiple pressures from ‘below’. The same could even be said of the Catholic Church. For if the Church has, in the opinion of many, resisted and repulsed what the hierarchy perceived as a threat from the ‘People’s Church’ tendency and certain versions of Liberation Theology, it has in contrast tolerated, and more recently even encouraged, charismatic manifestations which a few decades ago were viewed with much suspicion by all save its sponsor the late Cardinal Suenens.

The Charismatic Renewal is a tendency, perhaps even a movement, which counts itself within Catholicism and which, after some hesitation and various prior stages, received official recognition from the Vatican in September 1993.² Its standard history, or myth of origin, dates its birth quite precisely to a prayer weekend at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh in 1967. (Pentecostals too have a precise date of birth at Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906.) From there a package of practices circulated among groups of Catholics throughout the world which uncannily replicate Pentecostal practices. These are, principally, healing; speaking in tongues; deliverance/exorcism; group prayer meetings under tight lay leadership; invocation and recognition of the concrete objective presence of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives and in prayer meetings; hostility to the permissive society; modesty in dress; male leadership; the central place accorded to a conversion experience. The Charismatics’ relationship with the hierarchy was managed at first by Cardinal Suenens (who retired in the mid-1980s) who continues to be regarded as their father figure and sponsor. Suenens’ seems to have played a careful diplomatic role, sometimes espousing the language of the charismatics wholeheartedly and sometimes seeking to relativize their position in a liberal direction.³

¹ The United Kingdom has a unique regime in which the Church of England is the ‘established’ church with the monarch as its formal head, yet the Church has no secular power and no religious monopoly.

² The precise situation is that on 30 November 1990 the Pontifical Council for the Laity granted recognition to the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships and then in 1993 it recognized the International Catholic Charismatic Service (ICCRS) ‘as a body for the promotion of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal’. This body has its seat in Rome and its president is elected by its Council from nominations approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. The ICCRS is the successor to a body first established in 1978 in Brussels by Cardinal Suenens.

³ Thus in the authoritative Malines Document I (1974), written largely by Killian McDonnell under Suenens’ supervision and sponsorship, there are numerous warnings against excesses, against

Priestly supervision of charismatics is variable, as is charismatic obedience of or search for it, but although one should not expect an absolutely standard package, it is surprising how much coincidence there is among monographic studies at least in the USA.⁴ The reason for this consistency, which is also observed among the highly decentralized Pentecostals, lies not in uniformity of direction or doctrine, but in their common relationship to a concept of frontier: a community is born again, sets itself apart, and then places much power in the hands of a leader. The group meets frequently at fixed hours (thus setting their lifestyle apart); it develops distinctive modes of dress; it regulates members' lives in innumerable very detailed ways.⁵ This emerges from the case studies and also fits with North American Pentecostalism, although it is impossible to know how representative the cases are. In South America, less contaminated by Puritan traditions, discipline seems to be less fierce, although we lack the detailed case studies.

It is usually accepted that, in contrast to the People's Church tendency, the Charismatic renewal is a middle class phenomenon, but this needs some qualification, even if technically accurate. The same, after all, could be said, and demonstrated, with statistical observations, about the Catholic Church as a whole in Latin America.⁶ Middle class may not mean 'establishment' or elite, especially in the United States. In the case studies already mentioned of the Renewal, followers are of middle class status, but they are not bearers of a heritage of thought or power.⁷ Chesnut's review of a wide range of sources, though not statistical ones, indicates that in Latin America the Charismatic Renewal is acquiring a steadily more 'popular' following and losing some of its middle class bias. Furthermore, and although it might be controversial or disappointing in some quarters to say so, if we look at the social composition and the numbers of its followers in Latin America the Charismatic Renewal merits far more the description of a movement 'from below' (though not precisely 'from the poor'), than the People's Church, which in the final analysis is more a tendency within the world of religious professionals and activists.⁸ On this argument, therefore, 'even' the Catholic Church is receptive to pressures from below.

That word 'below' has many connotations, and they reflect variations in religious culture, political culture, and theology. For some it might refer to the laity in general, for others to the poor and disinherited, and for yet others to the unlettered. Beyond the realm of the faithful, no religious movement or institution – least of all those with a history of dominance in secularized societies – can ignore pressure either from the media or

'fundamentalism' in the interpretation of the Bible (V.C), against 'demonomania' or the obsession with evil spirits (VI.H) – even while the documents recognize that the Bible should be read - and that evil is a real force in the world. Prophecy is described a maturing process, and when necessary should be 'submitted to the discernment of a Bishop' (VI.G) These are all central enthusiasms of the Charismatics, as case studies repeatedly demonstrate, yet the movement's main sponsor is clearly seeking either to domesticate them or to portray a 'moderate' face to the outside world. Malines II (1978) follows a similar path and Malines III (1978) is a set of parallel texts by Cardinal Suenens and one of the most prominent voices of Latin America's voiceless, Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife and Olinda in Brazil. McDonnell, K., Ed. (1980). Presence, Power and Praise: documents on the Charismatic Renewal. Collegetown, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press.

⁴ Basic monographic case studies for the Charismatic Renewal in the USA are: McGuire, M. (1982). Pentecostal Catholics: power, charisma and order in a religious movement. Philadelphia, Temple University Press. , Neitz, M. J. (1987). Charisma and Community: a study of religious commitment within the Charismatic Renewal. New Brunswick, Transaction Books. Csordas, T. (1997). Language, Charisma and Creativity. Berkeley, University of California Press.

⁵ This is much in evidence in the studies by McGuire and by Csordas. Csordas (p.128) describes the disciplines of one community and also of the 'Training Course' which at one time its followers attended (it was too authoritarian and was later dropped.) McGuire (p.98) explains the role of a leader in adding 'discernment' to prophecy so that individuals' prophecies do not get out of hand and disrupt the group.

⁶ Lehmann, D. (1996). Struggle for the spirit: religious transformation and popular culture in Brazil and Latin America, Oxford, Polity Press. pp. 210-214.

⁷ Chesnut, A. (2003 (forthcoming)). A preferential option for the spirit: the Catholic Charismatic renewal in Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy. New York, OUP.

⁸ Hewitt, T. (1991). Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil. London, University of Nebraska Press. Burdick, J. (1994). Looking for God in Brazil, Berkeley, University of California Press.

from the mass of non-observant people who, though they may never set foot in a synagogue, church or mosque, still look to the institution of religion as important and expect religious professionals to observe certain standards of behaviour. This is what Grace Davie calls 'vicarious religion'.⁹ Whatever the precise connotation of the word 'below', the institutions of religion have demonstrated that they can absorb these pressures and survive, without resorting to coercion, to a monopoly on any real political or resource, or indeed in most settings even to a monopoly of salvation and the felicity associated with it. Proponents of the 'rational choice approach', or economic theory of religion, even claim that *less* religious monopoly of itself brings *more* religious participation¹⁰ and point to the US as an illustration of this idea. That may well be an example of how ideological enthusiasm can convert an intelligent insight into an exaggerated (and ethnocentric) claim: nevertheless it is clear that even tired or rigid – or *apparently* rigid - religious monopolies or quasi-monopolies (as in Latin America) still have to respond to pressure from below and from without.

The popular and the erudite in religious culture

One reason why even the most 'monolithic' religions change, yet remain in so many ways the same, is the permanent tension between the popular and the erudite within the religious sphere. It is a tension which is never resolved and can never be resolved. Religion is an activity sanctioned by an idea that 'it was always so', just as ritual, without which religion is literally unthinkable, can be defined as an activity which occurs at fixed or pre-ordained moments of an endlessly repeated cycle of years, months, weeks or days. Yet how can the audience, the public, the potential followers or faithful, the laity, be convinced that 'it was always so'? The answer is not that they are convinced by erudite disquisitions marshalling archaeological and other scientific evidence, let alone by theology. Rather they have minds in which certain sequences and certain symbolic evocations seem to have evolved to infer longevity of practices from their symbolic structure. Pascal Boyer describes the resemblance between the fears and motivations driving ritual 'scripts', and the fears and motivations observable in people suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. From this he concludes that since rituals allude to 'precautions against undetectable hazards' they are highly 'attention-grabbing' and 'people feel emotionally bound to perform them in the right way'.¹¹ Analogously, one can imagine how certain combinations of images and symbols can endow a performance with the authority of longevity and authenticity. Take the following imaginary example: if I stand in front of the Duomo in Florence and announce that those who ride their bicycles will be guaranteed eternal happiness, I will attract no attention. Passers-by will be unable to make sense of what I am doing. But if I grow a long white beard and proclaim, in a singsong voice, and repeatedly, 'Repent for the end of the world is nigh', people will at least know what I am talking about. If I brandish a black leather-bound book and describe in a prophetic voice how people might change their lives for ever by pronouncing a few words ('He died that you might be saved!') concerning a prophet said to have lived two thousand years ago, I may even convert some tourists. Indeed, the Jewish Chabad sect have set up offices in the Venice Ghetto where they do precisely that: dressed in their unmistakably Chassidic garb, they accost pensive (and self-evidently Jewish) tourists as the sun goes down, in a square littered with Holocaust memorials, and draw them into a discussion about their roots, their origins and their Jewishness. (Success rates in bringing the tourists 'back' to religious observance are unrecorded.)

If religion is legitimated, *inter alia*, by such choreographed invocations of historical roots, then evidently a monopoly of access to the supernatural is impossible to protect, rendering religious officialdom (erudite religion) constantly vulnerable to discredit. In America, the discredit and re-legitimation process is fuelled by schismatic proliferation and migration of followers between churches, whereby preachers and pastors break away from their churches of origin and try their luck in the marketplace. In Latin American Catholicism, and in Latin Europe, the place of schismatic proliferation is taken by popular religion: a

⁹ Davie, G. (2002). *Europe: the exceptional case: parameters of faith in the modern world*. London, Darton, Longman and Todd. p.19

¹⁰ Iannacone, L. (1997). "Introduction to the economics of religion." *Journal of Economic Literature* 36(3): 1465-1495.

¹¹ Boyer, P. (2001). *Religion explained: the human instincts that fashion gods, spirits and ancestors*. London, Heinemann, pp.275-6

promiscuous mixture of ritual devices and symbolic allusions which wriggles out of doctrinal or ritual orthodoxy without ever going so far as to defy it. Examples could fill many encyclopaedias. The cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the cult of Padre Pío, and the renewed proliferation of pilgrimages, mostly to sites of miraculous appearances of the Virgin Mary, all illustrate the vitality of a religiosity which escapes the direct control of the hierarchy. We also know, in the cases of Guadalupe and of Padre Pío, how the hierarchy has shifted position under pressure from the laity: the recent canonization of the *indio* who is said to have had the vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1536, Juan Diego, has taken place in the face of opposition from scholars who reasoned that there is no evidence that he ever existed, and it is well known that Padre Pío's stigmata were viewed with much scepticism by the Vatican for a long time, until the pressure of the mass support for him and his works became irresistible. Indeed, the tidal wave of canonizations by John Paul II demonstrates his apparent conviction that the revivification of the Church must pass through a more formal recognition of the reality of popular religion than his recent predecessors were prepared to accord. It is reminiscent of the priests who scoured Northern Europe in the wake of the Reformation searching for saintly remains, which were then transported, for example, to Spain and used to 'officialize' feasts and saint's days so as to impose some degree of order on local religious life.¹²

Religious movements and their conceptualization

Religious movements mobilize collectivities in the name of changing the mechanisms of reproduction of particular 'religions', just as social movements in general change the mechanisms of reproduction of the social, economic and political order¹³. (By a particular religion is meant here a set of interlocking ritual practices with an identity, a name, and an institutional expression.) In other words they do not invent a doctrine or liturgy *de novo*, but propagate changes in those religious institutions which exist, in the name of origins, roots, the 'true faith'. To achieve change, though, they have to engage with the mercurial and dialectic relationship between the popular and the erudite or official versions. Religious movements – understood as mobilizing non-officialdom, or in Catholic terms, the laity – must therefore involve a change in the relationship between the popular and erudite forms, rather than a change in the one or the other.

In Latin America one candidate for the status of religious movement might be the 'People's Church' tendency (*Iglesia Popular – Igreja Popular* in Portuguese), most in evidence in Brazil during the era of dictatorship and democratic transition, and in Central America's period of civil wars which lasted from (at least) 1975 to the early 1990s. It is not coterminous with Liberation Theology, which has now given birth to many tendencies of its own, and whose most distinguished exponent, Gustavo Gutierrez, has kept his distance from any engagement with issues of church structure. Born out of a diversity of influences from European Catholic *movimenti* in the inter-war and early post-war periods – the social doctrine, the worker-priests of France, Azione Catolica, Christian Democracy – and above all Vatican II and Liberation Theology, the People's Church consists of a diversity of local groups guided by theologians and activists and linked to the Church through the 'Pastorais'¹⁴ or Ministries catering to the Landless, to Urban Youth, to Women, and other social groups depending on local priorities. At its heart are the activists employed by these organizations and priests and bishops linked to them in various capacities. The activists are in the role of educators – of whom the first were the *promotores* who applied Paulo Freire's ideas about popular education in rural areas. The *base* or grass roots, are the nucleus of a popular intelligentsia, taking a student-like role in base communities (*comunidades de base*), discussion groups and seminars. This movement certainly provided leadership for urban movements of revindication and collective consumption¹⁵, and they were hotbeds of discussion about how the Church itself should change, sometimes supporting the theologian and proponent of radical structural change in the Church, Leonardo Boff¹⁶ in the

¹² Christian, W. (1981). Local religion in sixteenth century Spain. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

¹³ Touraine, A. (1985). "The Return of the Actor." Social Research 52(4). Castells, M. (1997). The Power of Identity. Oxford, Blackwell.

¹⁴ This is Portuguese for Pastoral Missions, or outreach work.

¹⁵ Castells, M. (1997). The Power of Identity. Oxford, Blackwells.

¹⁶ Boff, L. (1985). Church, charism and power. London, SCM Press. Boff is a very learned man who made path-breaking contributions to Liberation Theology. I suspect that he tired of this bookish activity and his

days when he was in conflict with the hierarchy and before he left the priesthood to become an ecological activist. So Catholic *basismo*, as I have termed it¹⁷, has been influential: it provided the cadres of urban mobilization and in Brazil of Lula's Workers' Party (founded in 1979); it provided the beginnings of a philosophy of action for the NGOs which were burgeoning during the dark days of authoritarianism in the 1970s and since then have taken their place in the international development community worldwide. But on the ground, since the late 1980s or early 1990s, observers, and even activists themselves, have been overcome by a sense of retreat or loss. They look back nostalgically to a period, which lasted no more than a decade, during which the triple struggle for human rights, against 'savage capitalism' and for change in the Church itself, commanded a high international profile and widespread legitimacy.

It seems a little cruel to deny to Liberation Theology and the People's Church the title of religious movement, because they have made such a notable contribution to theology, to the life of the Church, to international civil society, to social movements in Latin America and to international development philosophies. Such has been their influence that even those who oppose them have borrowed ideas and methods from them - as witness the production of a 'sanitized' Liberation Theology by the Vatican in the 1980s and the Pope's renewed emphasis on the 'preferential option for the poor' after 1989.

But this is not a properly religious movement, precisely because of its approach to popular religion. Liberation Theology, as part of the modernism associated with Vatican II, first opposed popular religion as a type of superstition and false consciousness. Later many of its protagonists changed their views, but their approach remained too intellectual, they reified and idealized popular religion, so making a theory of it and interrupting the epidemiological patterns of its spread. So we are faced here not so much with a movement as with a sub-culture, best described by the French word *mouvance*, evoking networks, atmosphere, shared meanings, but not proactive multi-levelled interventions producing social change. If they contributed to change it was through their influence beyond the religious field, as I have described.

If Liberation Theology led to more change outside the Church than within, to more change in political culture than in religious culture, the opposite might be true of other movements such as *Comunione e Liberazione*, Schoenstadt, the *Focolari*, and the Charismatic Renewal. Although these have enjoyed a wider mass base and a less complicated affinity with popular religious devotion, they have not developed a project, or promoted the social forces, which are associated with a social movement engaged in the redirection of society or of a major institution such as the Church. *Opus Dei* has a project, but it does not have a mass base or promote social forces; CL had, and the Charismatic Renewal has, the social base, but their projects are of transformation of individuals, not of the institution or of society. (CL, it must be said, committed a similar mistake to the People's Church - throwing its lot in with a political cause, namely the Italian Christian Democratic Party, and one which disintegrated in spectacular fashion.) They are regarded by many as 'conservative', though to affix that label to them is as misleading as to affix the label of 'progressive' to movements inspired by the social doctrine and Liberation Theology. Such labels, drawn from everyday political vocabulary, ignore the specifically religious dimension of religious movements and treat them as if they were political factions.

Dissidence and conformism in religious movements: Charismatic Renewal versus Pentecostalism

It would make better sense, since we are discussing religious movements and not political parties, to think of their *cultural dissidence* or their *cultural conformism* (rather than conservatism). The axis from dissidence to conformism concerns the extent to which, through ritual and symbolic enactments, including choreography of public occasions for example, movements conform to or depart from the habits and traditions conventionally consecrated by hegemonic elites or prevailing structures of power. For example: the Brazilian Universal Church of the Kingdom of God - usually described as neo-Pentecostal because it has innovated in so many ways - has adopted the method of spectacularization, has built its own cathedrals, proclaims unabashedly the millions of dollars it receives from its followers in tithes and donations, and

output and activity from the mid-1980s became more closely tied to the ups and downs of Church politics and Brazilian politics.

¹⁷ Lehmann, D. (1990). Democracy and Development in Latin America: Economics, Politics and Religion in the post-war period, Oxford, Polity Press.

generally offends the intellectual elite and the guardians of media power.¹⁸ (Interestingly, though, its phenomenal popular success has eventually led politicians to befriend it rather than denigrate it as they used to until the late 1990s). This is *cultural* dissidence on a large scale, but hardly *political* dissidence. Conversely, the People's Church, though politically radical, was culturally conformist – adopting the method of studying to improve one's politics, and remaining highly dependent on bishops and priests for its viability. The dissidence of the Universal Church is accentuated by the way it builds on symbols associated with the Catholic Church and longer-established Pentecostal Churches: the use of 'offerings' or 'requests to Jesus' written on pieces of paper and handed to the Pastor, like votive offerings; the use of 'Holy Oil' to 'anoint' people; the use of terms like 'Bishop' and 'Cathedral' which no other Pentecostal Church uses – and which the Brazilian press always puts in inverted commas. These devices are close enough to Catholicism to evoke a sacred association, but deviant enough to shock, on account of their use by a challenger for Catholicism's unique place in the imaginary ordering of society and state.

Devotional movements like Schoenstadt and the Foccolari are conformist because they look for a niche within the established order, and campaign to bring people to themselves and their own styles of devotion. They are not locally rooted, operating rather in transnational networks, and do not exhibit the mercurial adaptability of popular religion. They are highly specialized in particular activities – sometimes charitable, like the 'Legionarios de Cristo', sometimes just creating new spaces and encouraging followers to meet and pray together - and append themselves to one or another fragment of the Church's multifarious apparatus.

The Charismatic Renewal, though, presents a test case which may enable us to draw the line between dissidence and conformism. On the face of it, the wildfire spread of this movement has definitively blurred the boundaries: like Pentecostals, Charismatics receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, speak in tongues, and practice public healing by the Spirit. Written black on white, so to speak, it is hard to distinguish them from Pentecostals. Charismatic groups – with evangelical-sounding names like 'Maranata', 'Sword of the Spirit', 'Word of God', 'Precious Blood'¹⁹ - meet in churches, but (apart from the Mass itself) their celebrations do not follow a liturgical formula, and are led by lay people trained in courses and seminars. In Bahia, Brazil I was told that so long as they meet in the church, the hierarchy feels comfortable with them²⁰ – but the case studies in the US reveal a wide variation in degrees of hierarchical control: Csordas describes cases (from the 1970s through to the early 1990s) in which local leaderships developed ever tighter regimentation over the private lives of small groups of followers, while elaborating ritual performance, especially rituals separating the community from 'the world', in ever more minute detail,²¹ and how these tendencies were moderated by a combination of internal and hierarchical intervention. Both Csordas and McGuire describe mechanisms of certification and confirmation of charisms, especially prophecy, which disempower rank and file participants and empower local leaders.²² These are all to be found, in varying degrees, in Pentecostal churches – as are situations of a different kind, where prophecy runs riot (at a cost to institutional stability). McGuire²³ describes some differences relating to loyalty towards the hierarchy and the encouragement of emotionalism, but given that these differences are few and subject to wide variation in local practice, their significance is open to doubt.

¹⁸ Birman, P. and D. Lehmann (1999). "Religion and the media in a battle for ideological hegemony." Bulletin of Latin American Research 18(2): 145-164. Corten, A. (1999). Pentecostalism in Brazil. Basingstoke, Macmillan. Birman, P. (2001). A mirror to the future: the media, evangelicals and politics in Brazil, Paper presented to the seminar on Religion, Media and the Public Sphere, Amsterdam, December.

¹⁹ Maranata is an Aramaic expression, used by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 22 meaning 'Come O Lord' (New English Bible translation). (I am indebted to Alberto Melloni for this information.) The other names are taken from Csordas (op.cit.) and Neitz (op.cit.)

²⁰ Though one parish priest told me he forbade them from using his church on the grounds that 'they believe in the private property of the Holy Spirit and I do not believe in private property'! (Field research, 1991.)

²¹ Csordas, op. cit. pp.84-96 and 100-133

²² MacGuire op. cit. p. 100

²³ op. cit. pp.91-92

Although one might have expected the Charismatic Renewal to spawn breakaway moves by local leaders itching to become independent of the hierarchy and the mainstream, reports of such things are very rare. On the contrary, field observation in Brazil (in 2002), for example, reveals that the mainstream is becoming 'infected' by the capillary spread of charismatic practices such as swaying of hands and cries of 'Hallelujah!'.²⁴ Also, the Charismatic Renewal, not to be outdone by the Pentecostals, with whom it is in more direct competition than the hierarchy itself, is adopting the spectacularization hitherto associated with the Universal Church.²⁵ Certain priests in Brazil – and perhaps elsewhere – are becoming media stars – like Padre Marcelo Rossi of São Paulo, who fills football stadiums with crowds of singing enthusiasts, and makes best-selling CDs in which religious words are set to 'pop' music.

At the grassroots, Pentecostalism appears so different from mainstream Catholicism that Pentecostals in Brazil refer to themselves as 'Christians' but to Catholics as 'not Christian but Catholics' – though this may merely reflect nothing more than their own lack of a religious upbringing. Catholicism – in both its popular and its erudite expressions – depends heavily on the existence of a hierarchy, and that hierarchy attaches great importance to elaborate intellectual structures produced by generations of theologians and 'clercs de l'Eglise'. The popular may be indifferent to their learning, but in Catholicism the existence and the authority of the hierarchy is an integral component of popular religious life, which the bishops and priests may not have formulated, but which they do bless and legitimate though their presence in local celebrations of all kinds. Pentecostal Churches do not have a hierarchy in the same sense, with doctrinal prerogatives and ceremonial paraphernalia, and although the larger ones, such as the Assemblies of God or the Four-Square Gospel Church, do have modern, often highly centralized, apparatuses, these are largely concerned with administrative matters. They are not global bureaucracies, but operate at local or regional level – so in Brazil the Assemblies have totally autonomous State Conventions in each of the country's 26 states, with only a decorative national structure.²⁶ So long as followers of the Charismatic Renewal remain loyal to the hierarchy, perhaps the difference separating them from the Pentecostals will be clear. This however, depends on the hierarchy's response: it may remain uninvolved – as to some extent seems to be the case in North America – or it can look to the renewal as an ally and an evangelizing movement, as seems to be the case in Latin America, where the practice of holding mass meetings gives bishops a chance to demonstrate their support for the movement. The figures propagated by the head office of the International Catholic Charismatic Services in Rome, if reliable, certainly make the movement seem a valuable ally: they show 73 million Catholics in the Charismatic Renewal in Latin America (16 per cent of the total) and 10 million (14 per cent of the total) in North America.²⁷ But the significance of these figures must vary enormously between North and South: in the USA mass meetings for charismatics tend to be run by non-Catholic Pentecostal and Evangelical organizations whereas in Latin America the 'tribal' frontier between the Renewal and the Pentecostals is clearly drawn both locally and in staged mass public events.²⁸

²⁴ One observes similar patterns in Judaism, where ultra-Orthodox practices are penetrating the hitherto highly 'liberal' Reform community.

²⁵ Birman, P. (2001). A mirror to the future: the media, evangelicals and politics in Brazil, Paper presented to the seminar on Religion, Media and the Public Sphere, Amsterdam, December. Birman, P. and D. Lehmann (1999). "Religion and the media in a battle for ideological hegemony." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 18(2): 145-164.

²⁶ To underline the autonomy of these Conventions, I have been told that they have no compunction in extending their evangelizing into each other's notional territory. In other words, the state Convention is the highest level of management for Brazilian Assemblies.

²⁷ See the www.iccrs.org website, which reproduces these figures from a 'World Christian Encyclopaedia' by David Barratt and Todd Johnson.

²⁸ It is interesting in this connection to reflect on contrasting connotations of the word 'ecumenical'. In Csordas' book it is used to describe cooperation between charismatics and Pentecostals, yet in cosmopolitan parlance ecumenism is a liberal outlook which is utterly out of sympathy with charismatic and fundamentalist movements. In Latin America the followers of the People's Church would be highly ecumenical, having no problems in cooperating with Lutherans, Methodists etc. who tend to be theologically open-minded and anti-fundamentalist. Pentecostals and followers of the Charismatic Renewal in Latin America would regard ecumenism with extreme distrust.

An illustration of the extent to which the episcopate can control and even use the Charismatic Renewal for their institutional purposes is found in Guadalajara – Mexico’s premier diocese, with a reputation for great devotion, and where 32 per cent of the country’s training centers for priests and religious are to be found, as well as an estimated 150,000 active lay participants in Catholic organizations and movements.²⁹ Here, by the 1980s, the episcopate were somewhat taken aback by the rapid growth and above all the autonomy of the Charismatic Renewal, especially with respect to ‘ecstatic demonstrations... the miraculous and extraordinary nature of their rituals, and . . . the recognition of charisms’.³⁰ It seems that only in the early stages, in the 1970s, had the Guadalajara Renewal participated in assemblies with Pentecostals and Evangelicals, but still the hierarchy took the situation in hand in the mid-1980s, and proceeded, despite some resistance, to ‘standardize and bureaucratize’, ‘exercising institutional control over the charismatic power developed by lay people who questioned and threatened the specialized, hierarchical order of the Church’. It remains to be seen whether this pattern of conflict and co-optation prevails throughout the region, or whether deeper rifts will appear. De la Torre sees this is one of many instances demonstration the ‘transversal’ nature of a Catholic Church which is highly permeable, as I said at the outset, to influences from without.

We have for long become aware that it would be mistaken to believe that a ‘progressive’ post-Conciliar message, emphasizing the struggle against ‘structural sin’ and institutionalized violence, and advocating the preferential option for the poor, has a special attraction for poor people, just as we know that the high proportion of dispossessed among Pentecostals does not make them progressive in political outlook. The individualism of the Charismatic Renewal is not necessarily a symptom of a bias towards certain socio-economic groups, but may reflect rather its appeal, like that of the Pentecostals, to people with two characteristics: those who, though nominally Catholic, have had almost no religious formation at all, independent of their socio-economic status, and those who have no connection with local popular religion and so find one in these more synthetic (but no less real) communities. In this connection the account by Csordas³¹ of an attempt to relocate followers and make them live in close communities is instructive. The project did not succeed in creating a physical community out of disparate multi-generation households.

These brief remarks do not enable us to draw a clear line of distinction between Pentecostals and the Charismatic Renewal. The ritual routines which mark their time cycles and the boundaries of their community, and the symbolic apparatus which accompanies them are too similar. What then of the erudite aspect?

Movements of religious transformation and the role of the erudite.

The erudite aspect enables a religion to build and perpetuate a tradition. Re-enactment of tradition, the successful and legitimate invocation of tradition, contributes to the creation of the imaginary universal community to which local religious practices must relate if they are to be anything other than contingent and ephemeral gatherings, and indeed if their performances are to carry any meaning. If you ask a *mãe de santo* – a priestess in a Brazilian possession cult – what is the *meaning* of rituals she performs, she will not understand the question. She may be able to state their *purpose* and their *motive* but not their meaning. (Interestingly, since French anthropologists - notably Roger Bastide - developed a theory on their behalf of their African origins, these practitioners have tried to identify themselves in terms of faithfulness to a tradition³² and have even tried to create an institution which would define an orthodoxy.³³) So her religious practices cannot be a movement, endowed with a project of transformation of either the religious institution or of the world. Likewise, popular religion is not capable of transforming religion or society, and the Charismatic Renewal likewise. It is not by accident that when Pascal Boyer’s book reaches the theme of institutionalized religion he abandons the cognitive and evolutionary approaches which he has used to

²⁹ de la Torre, R. (2002). "The Catholic diocese: a transversalized institution." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 17(3): 303-316.

³⁰ Ibid. P. 312

³¹ Op. cit. pp. 114-124.

³² Dantas, B. G. (1988). *Vovó Nagô e Papai Branco*. Rio de Janeiro, Graal.

³³ A failed attempt is described in Boyer-Araujo, V. (1993). *Femmes et cultes de possession au Brésil: les compagnons invisibles*. Paris, L'Harmattan.

explain why we engage in ritual and why we believe in spirits, and adopts an institutional rational-choice approach in which religion is a strategic institution, pursuing political aims in the broad sense of the word, and thus requiring doctrines and an intellectual apparatus.

Now a movement is something which brings about major change – in the institutions and culture of a religion, or in a society, or sometimes both. But to bring about change a project of transformation is needed, and this is what the Renewal lacks, and it explains why despite their millions of followers, they have had fewer historical consequences than the small band of the People's Church and Liberation Theology. World religions have doctrines which define the meaning of their core rituals. These may not define what the rituals signify in practice to most of their followers most of the time, but they do contribute to the institutional project, and the institutional project has real historical consequences. Religious change therefore involves firstly changing or conceivably replacing tradition-bearing institutions, and thus conferring legitimacy on the new which is presented as a better version of the old. But religious change also means rearranging the relationship between these institutions, with their universal vocation, and the popular, with its local roots.

The Charismatic Renewal remains within the realm of the popular. It does not propound change in erudite Catholicism, or in the institutions or doctrines of the Church. It remains within the Church both physically and metaphorically. Even the most mediatic Padre is still a Padre, linked to the hierarchy. Obviously, the crowd-pulling performances of the singing priests have made some bishops uneasy, but that unease is rapidly dissipated by the sight of the crowds they attract. The Renewal therefore could be seen as an addition to Catholicism's repertoire of popular religion, adapted to a more global context and to a highly secularized laity possessing almost zero religious formation, but sharing the cultural conformism of popular religion generally.

Now, in posing the same question of Pentecostalism in Latin America, we can see the relevance of the links between the Pentecostal imaginary and indigenous religion and possession cults (in Brazil and Africa). Pentecostalism clearly represents a cultural dissidence – and this can hardly be due to any explicit political message – a message which, insofar as it exists, is broadly conservative and rarely explicitly formulated. Rather the Pentecostal claim to dissidence is due to their redrawing of boundaries both between traditions and also between the popular and the erudite. Pentecostals clearly and loudly distance themselves from Catholic popular religion – regarding Patron Saints and pilgrimages as a type of idolatry. They also have a very different relationship with possession cults in both Brazil and Africa.³⁴ Catholicism for its part has a history of coexistence with the cults, at least in Brazil, occasionally denouncing them as 'paganism', but more usually turning a blind eye. Pentecostals, however, while denouncing the cults comprehensively as paganism and the work of the devil, give much credence to their efficacy and borrow much symbolism and imagery from them, above all ideas of possession and of forces of evil, and of the ever-present threat to the integrity of our persons posed by those forces and by those who are in league with them. This is not just verbal denunciation: it involves symbolic identification of possession cults with the devil and pervasive practice of rituals of deliverance (a word I prefer to exorcism because of the routine, almost perfunctory, character the ritual has acquired among the Pentecostals). This emphasis on the devil, on the forces of darkness, the *maligno* etc. is especially prominent in neo-Pentecostal churches, but the same applies to Pentecostals generally, except that they tend to evoke the forces of evil with more discretion.

The same on paper, but different in spirit

The case studies of the Charismatic Renewal in the USA certainly show close affinity with Pentecostalism in the USA. The texts read and sung by followers of the Charismatic Renewal in Latin America also show close affinity with Pentecostal texts. But when we place these movements in the public sphere and in relation to the popular erudite dialectic, and also when we place them in the context of Catholicism's informal monopoly, we can see that in Latin America Pentecostalism is a cultural dissidence, while the

³⁴ Lehmann, D. (2001). "Charisma and possession in Africa and Brazil." *Theory, Culture and Society* 18(5): 45-74.

Charismatic Renewal is not. It should however be noted that cultural dissidence is not social or religious transformation: whether Pentecostalism can achieve that is another question.