



## PASTORAL THEMES

# New Evangelization, Conflicting Missiologies, and New Religious Developments: The Context of Reception of Redemptoris missio in Latin America

*Nova Evangelização, missiologias conflitantes e novos desdobramentos religiosos: o contexto de recepção da Redemptoris missio na América Latina*

*Nueva evangelización, misiologías en conflicto y nuevos desarrollos religiosos: el contexto de recepción de la Redemptoris Missio en América Latina*

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to provide an account of the contentious period surrounding the publication of *Redemptoris missio* in Latin America. Since this study is driven by a theological rather than a historical interest, the focus will be on the divergent, conflicting missiological approaches at play at the time, as well as on the various actors involved. To this end, the analysis of the Santo Domingo Conference will be central. The paper addresses questions including, how Pope John Paul II's New Evangelization project, as articulated in *Redemptoris missio*, was embraced in Latin America; who opposed it and on what grounds; why the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and conservative forces were particularly supported by some Catholic bishops in this context; and what role the New Religious Movements played in this setting. The main argument is that the most significant contribution amid those debates was a heightened sensitivity to the issue of culture.

**Keywords:** *Redemptoris missio*. Santo domingo. New evangelization. Latin American church. Pentecostal movement. Liberation theology.

**Resumo:** O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar um relato do conturbado período em torno da publicação da carta encíclica *Redemptoris missio* no contexto da América Latina. Como este estudo é motivado por um interesse teológico, e não histórico, o foco estará nas abordagens missiológicas divergentes e conflitantes em jogo à época bem como nos vários atores envolvidos. Para tal, a análise da Conferência de Santo Domingo será fundamental. O artigo aborda questões do tipo: como o projeto de Nova Evangelização do Papa João Paulo II, articulado na *Redemptoris missio*, foi recebido e implementado na América Latina; quem se opôs a ele e por que razões; por que a Renovação Carismática Católica e forças conservadoras foram particularmente apoiadas por alguns bispos católicos nesse contexto; e qual foi o papel dos Novos Movimentos Religiosos nesse cenário. Um dos principais argumentos é que um dos frutos mais significativos dos debates desse período foi a emergência de uma sensibilidade mais aguçada no tocante à questão da cultura.

**Palavras-chave:** *Redemptoris missio*. Santo domingo. Nova evangelização. Igreja latino-americana. Movimento pentecostal. Teologia da libertação.

**Resumen:** El objetivo de este artículo es presentar un relato del turbulento período que rodeó la publicación de la encíclica *Redemptoris Missio* en el contexto latinoamericano. Dado que este estudio tiene un interés teológico, más que histórico, se centrará en los enfoques misiológicos divergentes y conflictivos de la época, así como en los diversos actores involucrados. Para ello, será fundamental un análisis de la Conferencia de Santo Domingo. El artículo aborda cuestiones como: cómo se recibió e implementó en Latinoamérica el proyecto de Nueva Evangelización del Papa Juan Pablo II, articulado en *Redemptoris*



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Missio; quiénes se opusieron y por qué razones; por qué la Renovación Carismática Católica y las fuerzas conservadoras recibieron un apoyo particular de algunos obispos católicos en este contexto; y cuál fue el papel de los Nuevos Movimientos Religiosos en este escenario. Uno de los principales argumentos es que uno de los frutos más significativos de los debates de este período fue el surgimiento de una mayor sensibilidad hacia el tema de la cultura.

**Palabras clave:** *Redemptoris missio*. Santo domingo. Nueva evangelización. Iglesia latinoamericana. Movimiento pentecostal. Teología de la liberación.

## 1 Introduction

Assessing and accounting for the impact of *Redemptoris missio* (RM) on the Latin American continent, along with the evangelization project that underlies it, is a challenging task in several respects. The context of reception of this encyclical letter by Pope John Paul II was highly contentious and requires a nuanced account and a comprehensive analysis. By paying close attention to that context, a particular event appears to stand out: the Latin American Bishop's General Conference of Santo Domingo. This general assembly seems to have condensed and epitomized that contentious period. Both in the reports of the conference and in its final document, it is possible to discern the clash between two different missiological models as well as the compromises that needed to be made.

However comprehensive and detailed the analysis of this central event may be, it is not possible to do justice to the debate on the *Redemptoris missio* in Latin America unless a more complete picture of the continent is developed. The sociopolitical context, for example, includes as much the broader picture of the continent's development, modernization, and industrialization as it does the effects of the Cold War and the polarization between liberation, grassroots movements on the one hand and conservative, reactionary forces on the other. As for the religious landscape, it is important to pay close attention to the emergence of the so-called New Religious Movements, the most important of which are Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism.

With this in mind, the present paper seeks to give an account of the contentious period sur-

rounding the publication of *Redemptoris missio* throughout the continent. Given that this investigation is driven by a theological interest, rather than an historical one, the focus will be on the divergent, conflicting missiological approaches at play at that time, as well as on the different actors involved. The paper addresses questions including, how Pope John Paul II's (1990) New Evangelization project, as articulated in *Redemptoris missio*, was embraced in Latin America; who opposed it and on what grounds; why the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and conservative forces were particularly supported by some Catholic bishops in this context; and what role the New Religious Movements played in this setting.

## 2 The context of reception of *Redemptoris missio*

In 1992, two years after the publication of RM, the Latin American bishops assembled in the capital of the Dominican Republic, a Caribbean island in Central America, to celebrate the fourth general conference of the Latin American episcopate (Conferência do Episcopado Latino-Americano, 1992). Commonly known as the "Santo Domingo Conference", this gathering was convened to mark the five hundredth anniversary of the "discovery of the Americas", which reportedly took place in 1492 as Christopher Columbus reached the Caribbean islands. To be geographically close to this event, the Santo Domingo Conference was therefore held in these islands. However, there prevailed an atmosphere of uncertainty as to how it should take place. On the one hand, there was a significant portion of the bishops who, as well as willing to stick to the commitments made in the previous conferences of Medellín and Puebla, wanted to look back upon these five hundred years of evangelization on the continent in a twofold attitude at once: gratitude and repentance (Codina, 1992). They were convinced of the need for asking the various autochthonous, indigenous, and Afro-American peoples across the continent for forgiveness for the Catholic Church's faults along that long-standing journey of evangelization. However, it was only after

overcoming the considerable resistance of a significant group of bishops that this gesture of repentance was possible (Codina, 1992). For they feared that such a public acknowledgment would weaken the Church's image and authority across the continent. The *New York Times* reported this tense atmosphere as follows.

In a brief "Message to the Peoples of Latin America", the bishops in Santo Domingo declared their commitment to the positions taken at those earlier meetings, ending speculation that conservative policies pursued by Pope John Paul II and other Vatican officials might induce the bishops to re-emphasize more traditional doctrinal themes. [...] When the Pope opened the gathering on Oct. 12 during his visit to the Dominican Republic, he resolved many tensions by calling for continuity with the Medellín and Puebla meetings. But some bishops continued to voice fears that the Vatican was reducing the conference's role as an autonomous voice of the church's concerns in the region. Papal officials and appointees controlled the meeting's agenda and procedure and the choice of who would draft documents (Steinfels, 1992).

This description is endorsed by the Jesuit theologian Víctor Codina (1992) who, having been there as a theological adviser, not only depicts the atmosphere along the same lines, but also identifies a theological reason for such a state of affairs:

The Fourth General Assembly experienced a constant tension between two different ecclesiological approaches. One, represented by the Commission for Latin America (CAL), which sought greater centralization under the Roman Curia, and the other, represented by the Latin American bishops and to some extent by CELAM [Episcopal Conference of Latin America] itself, which defended the autonomy and legitimacy of the episcopal conferences at the national and continental levels as an exercise of episcopal collegiality (Codina, 1992, p. 262).

To be sure, these clashes did not come to the participants as a surprise. The tensions between the Latin American episcopate and the Roman Curia had already begun after the Second General Assembly in Medellín and only escalated over the years (Comblin, 2008). A crucial role had

been played, especially during the 1980s, by the several doctrinal disputes between the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and a number of Liberation Theologians, the most prominent cases having been Leonardo Boff's and Jon Sobrino's. As for the conference, there was a clear intention on the part of Pope John Paul II and the Roman Curia to take more control over the whole conference (Comblin, 2008) and, especially, to set a new course for the evangelization in Latin America, which was encapsulated in the pope's concept of New Evangelization (Codina, 1992).

### 3 The Document of Santo Domingo

Compared to the previous Episcopal Conferences (Medellín and Puebla), the Santo Domingo Conference underwent significant changes. One of them became particularly evident in its final document: a change in the method used. In Santo Domingo, the traditional Latin American "see-judge-act" method was given up. This represented a major interruption in the theological tradition of the Latin American Church<sup>2</sup>. Being so, the greatest challenge was to integrate the three main parts of the document, namely "New Evangelization", "Human Promotion", and "Christian Culture", into a coherent theological-pastoral text. This question should not be underestimated, considering that, in the previous documents, the pivotal element bridging between normative Revelation (Scripture, Tradition, etc.), on the one hand, and pastoral application, on the other, had been the first two hermeneutical mediations of the Latin American method, i.e. seeing and judging, the former entailing a socioeconomic analysis of reality and the latter a theological reflection in light of such analysis. As contrasted with this approach, the pivotal integrating element in the document of Santo Domingo was Pope John Paul II's idea of "New Evangelization" (Libanio, 2006). This idea was now intended to function as a guidance to both foster the promotion of the human person and to transform culture from the inside along the lines of a Christian culture. According to Libanio

<sup>2</sup> This tradition may be said to have just been interrupted as it would be resumed in the Conference of Aparecida, in 2007 (Conferência Geral do Episcopado Latino-Americano e do Caribe, 2007).

(2006, p. 201), a critic of this approach,

Evangelization was conceived as acting against modern culture, restoring or creating a new culture. Mistrust towards modernity and the transforming processes of societal reality prevailed. However, without openly polemicizing with modernity, the idea was to create a culture of stable Christian values, informing Latin American culture with them, instead of emphasizing the aspect of social transformation. The initial project aimed at creating a single Christian culture ended up by accepting the fact of the plurality of cultures, yet seeking to impregnate them with absolute Christian values.

In this light, it is not surprising that the document of Santo Domingo begins with a christological-based profession of faith, which functions as a sort of self-assurance, thereby providing an unambiguous common ground for the New Evangelization. As such, it builds less on biblical theology, as the previous Latin American Conferences did, than on dogmatic formulations. In fact, the fashion in which the whole idea of a New Evangelization was introduced and framed in Latin America was in great measure informed by a quest for and affirmation of orthodoxy (Codina, 1992; Vélez Chaverra, 1993).

### 3.1 A Clash of Missiological Approaches

The advancement of orthodoxy clashed with the 'Latin American theological tradition' that had been emerging in those years since the Conference of Medellín. This shift was especially prompted by some bishops who came from the Vatican to attend the conference (Vélez Chaverra, 1993). The clash occurred because, since Medellín, the Latin American understanding of evangelization had been based less on orthodoxy and more on human promotion and social transformation. In Santo Domingo, this ecclesiological approach was voiced, especially, by a group of bishops called the *progresistas*, who made up approximately 20% of the attendees (Vélez Chaverra, 1993). They were convinced that if only the Church's pastoral work

could help Latin American people, especially the poor, to recover or become aware of their dignity as children of God, she would be faithful to and impart the Good News revealed by Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, in its introduction, the document of Medellín programmatically stated the need for moving "from less human situations to more human ones" (Conferência Geral do Episcopado Latino-Americano, 1968, p. 12). This idea built on *Gaudium et spes* (esp. n. 42-43) and *Populorum progressio* (esp. n. 14-15). Also, this is ultimately what underlies the idea of *human promotion* that traverses all Latin American bishop's general assemblies from Medellín on. In addition, the bishops, as well as liberation theologians, argued that the poor, who should be at the center of human promotion, were to become the subjects of evangelization since they would be capable of experiencing and articulating in their own ways the experience of liberation. In those theologies, the latter was perceived to be central to both the Old Testament and Jesus' message<sup>3</sup>.

To be sure, such understanding of the Church's mission was not unique to Latin America. This missiological paradigm, that had been unfolding in various contexts since the 1960's (Schreiter, 2001), was denounced by Pope John Paul II (1990, n. 11) in *Redemptoris missio* as being too horizontal (Schreiter, 2001). The term used by the pope to refer to this development was a "gradual secularization of salvation" (Paul II, 1990, n. 11), which, in his view, ultimately falls short of the transcendent. Now, the solution offered both by the pope and by that group of bishops who came from the Vatican to Santo Domingo – which in turn was supported by several other conservative Latin American bishops – to tackle this problem was emphasize the need for reasserting orthodoxy. Accordingly, an inadequate understanding of mission was to be attributed to an "inadequate grasp of doctrinal issues" (Schreiter, 2001, p. 4). Hence the need, in *Redemptoris missio*, for devoting its first chapter (Paul II, 1990, n. 4-11) to making it clear that the

<sup>3</sup> The groundbreaking and reference work in this regard was, and remains, Gustavo Gutiérrez' (1973) *Theology of Liberation*. Therein, he justifies – from a theological perspective and with a social interest – not only the relation between salvation and liberation and the continuity between salvation history and profane history, but also the significance of elements such as development and human agency – which were central in the public discourse of those days (Gutiérrez, 1973) – within that equation.

mission(s) of the Church is to be grounded in a solid Christology. This implies the unique role of Christ in the work of salvation – as “the one Savior” and mediator (Paul II, 1990, n. 5) – and warrants the church’s work as sign and instrument of salvation (Paul II, 1990, n. 9). In this light, it is remarkable that the final document of Santo Domingo also begins with a chapter on Christology, as did *Redemptoris missio*. This chapter expounds the role of both the Church and the Kingdom of God in his economy of salvation, and includes, again, just like the encyclical, a profession of faith to reaffirm doctrine.

### 3.2 A New Sensitivity to Culture and Religious Plurality

The perceived need for these clarifications was partly due to the ongoing discussion on interreligious dialogue and the theology of religions that took place in the 1980s. In this regard, too, the document of Santo Domingo attests to the tensions present during the conference between the different groups of bishops. Whereas the first numbers of chapter three (*Conferência do Episcopado Latino-Americano*, 1992, n. 228-242) testify to the necessity of reasserting the superiority of Christianity vis-à-vis non-Christian religions, the latter ones (*Conferência do Episcopado Latino-Americano*, 1992, n. 243-251) demonstrate Santo Domingo’s innovative approach with regard to the unity and plurality of cultures and religions. Thus, Santo Domingo represents a significant progress, even when compared to the Document of Puebla (*Conferência Geral do Episcopado Latino-Americano*, 1979). For the latter had still emphasized the uniformity of the Latin American culture and the influence of the Catholic substrate across the continent in shaping Latin American culture (*Conferência Geral do Episcopado Latino-Americano*, 1979, n. 412-415; Vélez Chaverra, 1993). By deploying the concept of the “seeds of the word”, Santo Domingo by contrast acknowledges significant human values found in both Afro-American and indigenous cultures (*Conferência do Episcopado Latino-Americano*, 1992, n. 245-46).

At the same time, it should be noted that these pertinent reflections on inculturation offered by Santo Domingo, as well as the recognition of other cultures and religions, were made possible thanks to John Paul II’s (1990) sensitivity to the issue of culture, as expounded in *Redemptoris missio*. This was so important that culture came to be perceived as a further mediation to be taken into consideration alongside the socioanalytical ones (Codina, 1992).

Santo Domingo will go down in history as the Conference of both the inculturation of the gospel and the pastoral among indigenous peoples. Essentially, all the topics arising from the indigenous pastoral were addressed in Santo Domingo. Indeed, one can go so far as to say that it did so with the same freshness of its origins at the grassroots level, even as some did not sufficiently value these topics or have sought to limit their scope (López, 2008, p. 95).

In the academic theology of the 1980s and 1990s, the issue of interreligious dialogue, as well as being extremely soteriocentric, was still strongly focused on the dialogue with the so-called world religions – to the detriment of local, lesser-known ones. Despite its limitations, Santo Domingo prompted a new level of dialogue with and appreciation for indigenous and Afro-descendant cultures. It should be noted, though, that the central idea of that approach did not consist in merely studying these indigenous religions along the lines of an exotic cultural asset equipped with myths, cosmovisions, rites, and customs, but in engaging with these different peoples and traditions as equally recognized subjects of the dialogue (*Conferência do Episcopado Latino-Americano*, 1992, n. 243-251; Vélez Chaverra, 1993).

The Missionary Council for Indigenous Peoples (*Conselho Indigenista Missionário* or CIMI) represents a remarkable instantiation of this approach. Founded in Brazil in 1972, and imbued with the spirit of both the Second Vatican Council and the Conference of Medellín, it aims to implement the exhortation of the Council:

[...] that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, [the sons of the

Church] recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men (Paul VI, *Nostra aetate* Nr. 2, 1965).

Rather than inciting "hasty conversions", these missionaries promote the values of their own religions, as they are essential to offering cultural resistance and preserving identity (Suess, 2002).

#### 4 New Evangelization in Latin America

After examining the importance of the concept of New Evangelization in both *Redemptoris Missio* and the Santo Domingo document, the question arises as to what the implementation of this evangelization project might have looked like or, more fundamentally, whether it could be realized at all in Latin America. To better grasp the *Sitz im Leben* of this project, this inquiry will be framed as a question: What circumstances might have prompted a significant number of bishops, supposedly guided by the Roman Curia, to join efforts to advance this idea of New Evangelization during the general assembly of Santo Domingo and beyond? It is important to highlight that the factors and circumstances presented below might have not been inherent in Pope John Paul II's (1990) concept of New Evangelization, as articulated in *Redemptoris missio*. Rather, they played a major role, as it appears, in the conception and planning of this project in the face of the Latin American religious and sociopolitical landscape of those days.

##### 4.1 The Architecture of the New Evangelization Project

According to the Belgian sociologist François Houtart (2002), with the New Evangelization project, the Catholic Church aimed to strategically operate on two fronts: a renewed influence on politics and society by means of elites, on the one hand, and the enthusiasm of the masses through the Charismatic Catholic Renewal, on the other. For the achievement of the former, the personal prelature *Opus Dei* played a central role. It allowed the Catholic Church to win over the intellectual, political, economic, and spiritual elites of the con-

continent in order to strengthen her influence, especially in the field of morality and the family (Haller, 2008). The second strategy – the enthusiasm of the masses – in turn included the massive use of communication media in the evangelization work, the promotion of charismatic, so-called "singing priests", televangelism, the introduction of the Catholic charismatic movement in dioceses by bishops, a greater sensitivity to popular religiosity, popular culture, and popular music, spontaneity and emotionality in liturgical celebrations, and the promotion of a "more conformist theology", among other things (Haller, 2008).

It is worth noting that all those strategies are ultimately engaging with or responding to the image of "the modern Areopagus", famously employed by John Paul II (1990) in *Redemptoris missio* 37. Moreover, there is a link between the modern Areopagus and the third group of addressees of the evangelization, i.e. the baptized who "have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel" (Paul II, 1990, *Redemptoris missio* 33). It was precisely this segment of the Latin American population that was to be reached through the New Areopagoi, that is, through radio programs, TV preachers, singing priests, religious spectacles in football stadiums, etc.

A paradigmatic example of this new development was the creation of the Catholic organization "Lumen 2000". Founded in 1986 in Dallas (USA) with the aim of spreading the Christian message in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, it set out to invest heavily in the professionalization of the production of religious programs on radio, television, and cassettes (Hemels, 1991). With partners in more than fifty countries, mostly in the Global South, it did not just connect them via satellite (Carranza, 2020). It also invested in training professionals and producing programs and documentaries in several languages to supply its partners (Hemels, 1991). As far as Latin America is concerned, Lumen 2000 funded, for example, an entire faculty of communication media at the Catholic University of Colombia, in Bogota (Hemels, 1991). Most of

the organization's financial resources originated from donations from conservative millionaires who not only wanted to propagate the official doctrine of the Catholic Church, but who were also closely and actively involved in some of the Vatican's organs and committees (Hemels, 1991). This being the case, the question arises what might have been the reasons for such a massive investment in communication.

#### *4.2 The Latin American Context*

The continent was undergoing a process of industrialization, which led to a massive rural exodus into major cities. As a result, the latter half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of large cities such as São Paulo, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Lima, and Bogotá, to cite a few, all of which have today populations of more than ten million inhabitants. Thus, the Latin American continent was impacted not only by the very fact that it went through a massive urbanization process, but also by the force and speed of such development (Bastian, 1997; Eckholt; Silber, 2014). The case of Brazil is emblematic in this regard and can be cited to illustrate it. While, in the 1970s, 20% of its population lived in urban centers and 80% in rural areas, less than half a century later, the distribution of the population has been completely reversed. Today, 80% live in urban centers, and only 20% of the population in rural areas (Agência IBGE Notícias, 2007).

The 1990s witnessed the first impacts of these profound transformations. The outskirts of major industrial cities had to absorb and accommodate the masses of migrants coming from rural areas all over Latin America in search of work. Having lost their family bonds and all their social capital, these people had to cope with a complete lack of infrastructure and basic living conditions and were forced to lead an atomized, anonymous life in such inhospitable environments. Due to shortage of clergy and an outdated pastoral concept for parishes and communities – which was no longer up to the new challenges posed by the emerging metropolitan centers – the Catholic Church could not maintain her presence in

those milieus, with the consequence that these populations remained abandoned to their fate. It is precisely in this context that Pentecostal and evangelical churches appear on the scene. Not only were they able to reach out to these people in need of assistance of all kinds on the fringes of society. The pastoral work, theology, and services offered by these churches were also very appealing. More importantly, by deregulating the religious marketplace on the continent, they challenged the dominance of the Catholic Church (Bastian, 1997). This breakthrough was crucial for these churches to achieve demographic growth, in the first place, followed by social and, more recently, political influence (Pérez Guadalupe; Carranza, 2021).

#### *4.3 The Catholic Charismatic Renewal*

Having recognized the challenges that these new religious movements – Pentecostalism and evangelicalism – posed to the Latin American religious landscape, one of the Catholic Church's response was to foster the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (Carranza, 2011). In a way, she thus mirrored the spirituality of those new religious actors. Accordingly, just like Pentecostal megachurches, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal began to make use of mass media, such as radio and television, as well as religious and secular magazines, to organize big religious events in football stadiums or open-air venues, and, most particularly, to encourage so-called "singing priests". These were key to popularizing, in Catholic circles, their own version of the evangelical "gospel culture", which has been termed "Catholic Gospel" (Carranza, 2020). All these new Areopagoi were regarded as privileged means of evangelization (Carranza, 2011, 2020). To this end, new Catholic actors, such as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Communities of Life and of Alliance made every effort to raise resources to fund the purchase of TV and radio stations. To attain it, they employed tools from the business world and organized nationwide fundraising campaigns (Carranza, 2020). This shift in turn implied an option for the middle class, the consequent neglect of the poor and,

more importantly, the segmentation of the faithful according to their own preferences. Therefore, Catholic Charismatics resemble Pentecostals not only from a theological perspective – for example, regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit – but also from a phenomenological and performative one (Carranza, 2020; Oro; Alves, 2016).

It is worth noting that the acceptance of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, particularly within the Catholic hierarchy, was anything but smooth or uncontested. On the one hand, progressive sectors of the Church offered fierce resistance to their establishing, as both their discourse and practice were perceived as neoliberal, intimiste, and not committed to the structural transformations that those sectors deemed necessary. Also, they could not endorse the movement's theology, particularly its "magic vision of the world". On the other hand, many Catholic leaders had recognized that the movement "offered pragmatic and successful answers to the needs of popular Catholicism" (Carranza, 2020, p. 394-395). On that account, many bishops made efforts to establish the movement in their dioceses.

This state of affairs begs the question, how it was possible to maintain unity within the Catholic Church, given that the Charismatic Renewal distinguished itself from mainstream Catholicism in various ways. What factors might have prevented a major rupture within the Church, not least because at the heart of the New Evangelization project was a great zeal for orthodoxy? To the Brazilian sociologist Cecília Mariz (2003, p. 173), the key to understanding this intricate question lies in the fact that, unlike Protestant and evangelical churches, the Catholic Church has mechanisms "that allow for controlled diversity". As a consequence, she is able to incorporate subgroups and even autonomous, distinct communities, regardless of divergencies. Following this line of argument, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal could become an autonomous and, to certain extent, even parallel religious movement within the Catholic Church. Like other similar movements or groups within the Church, it has enjoyed certain privileges and concessions in exchange for loyalty (Mariz, 2003).

However, this solution could secure a privileged place for the movement within the Church.

The second question that arises in the face of this development concerns the actors or subjects of evangelization. Are they the poor, as argued for by Liberation Theology, or the elites, as defended by certain conservative groups, or all the baptized, as determined by the Second Vatican Council and originally envisaged by the Charismatic Renewal, or the clergy, as intended by certain conservative clerical circles? This is a very multifaceted question that allows for different answers. However, taking the broader picture of the whole development into consideration, it is possible to affirm that to the same extent that the New Evangelization project opposed the ecclesiological model of Liberation Theology in Latin America, it ultimately promoted clericalism and consolidated established hierarchies. This is the corollary of the mechanisms in place in the Catholic Church that allowed for the integration of the Charismatic Movement into her institution, as put forward above. It is important to note that the Charismatic Renewal, like Pentecostalism, was originally a lay movement with a project of renewal for the whole Church, with the laity as protagonists. However, in order to remain a Catholic movement, it had to make compromises on its ideals. Had it remained faithful to its original ideals and genuine Pentecostal theology, there would probably have been a rupture with the Catholic Church (Carranza, 2020; Mariz, 2003).

#### *4.4 The Pentecostal Movement*

Finally, one more question needs to be addressed. It concerns the reasons for the attractiveness of both Pentecostalism and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Latin America, given their demographic growth and sociocultural influence. While several factors of different kinds may account for its popularity – and dealing with them would lie outside the scope of this paper – it is important to emphasize that both movements have made inroads into essential levels of social and individual life. These layers are: the demographic, the pastoral, the cultural, the aesthetic,

the moral, the political, and the theological.<sup>4</sup> Due to want of space and bearing in mind the scope of this paper, it appears appropriate to concentrate attention on the cultural level—for a brief yet in-depth analysis of these levels, see Pérez Guadalupe and Carranza (2021); as for the pastoral level, see Eckholt and Valenzuela (2019). This delimitation is especially warranted by the observation that the Pentecostal/charismatic movement has exerted profound influence on Latin American culture, especially over the past three decades. It also resonates well with Pope John Paul II's invitation to explore the aspect of culture. It is by penetrating the universe of culture that one is granted access to and influence on people's behavior, on human agency, on people's *habitus* (P. Bourdieu). In fact, according to the German sociologist Andreas Reckwitz (2020), culture is the decisive factor for properly understanding what might have been at the core of the shift to late modernity. As opposed to instrumental rationality, one of the core principles of modernity, the post-industrial culture machine, as he calls it, adds value to every product, to ideas, to lifestyles etc. Things and ideas are not valued or recognized by their utility, but rather on account of their (cultural) status (Reckwitz, 2020). In his view, even the classic idea of social class is to be thought through along those lines. Everything and everyone has been culturalized, as it were, and is valued, recognized in those terms. In his latest work, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2015) goes so far as to say that the only possible access to being from an ontological perspective is by means of bodiliness or, to be more precise, through the way one uses one's own body. To put it crudely, "Tell me what you do to or with your body, and I will tell you who you truly are". Therefore, even ontologically, the trope of corporeality acquires profound, theoretical significance. In addition, there is no access to the dimension of culture without paying close

attention to the body.

To come back to Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality, it is important to note that in many studies of this phenomenon, the emphasis on bodiliness is often mistakenly equated with letting one's emotionality out, with an overemphasis of one's world of experience. However, contrary to orthodoxy, as seen above, this is about doing, is about performance. In fact, the body offers the believer, by means of feelings, affects, and materiality, the necessary "epistemological security" that confirms one in faith and attests to the action of the Holy Spirit. The notion of epistemological security is borrowed here from the Canadian political sciences scholar Ruth Marshall (2009), who also introduced the concepts of normative and ontological security. In times of crisis for political and religious institutions, epistemological security becomes an important resource for individuals seeking meaning and orientation. From a Pentecostal perspective, the body can offer epistemological security, insofar as knowledge of God requires, as well as the intellect and the will, religious affections. In effect, in the Pentecostal movement, orthopathy acquires particular significance. Also, this shift brings in its train a shift in the sources of authority: away from the classical loci of authority such as the Bible, the Magisterium, Tradition, etc., to the believer. For orthopathy empowered and authorized believers to challenge traditional sources of authority and, at the same time, to discern the motions and action of the Holy Spirit in his/her own body. Christianity is thus envisioned as a community of prophets (Stronstad, 1999).

However, the ontological and soteriological importance of orthopathy is not limited to being a key component for accessing the Absolute. Its relevance also lies in it being understood as an integrating center of the human person, the locus where understanding and will can be brought into unity as well as transformed (Castelo, 2020;

<sup>4</sup> Pentecostal, evangelical, and some Catholic Christians have made joint efforts in different contexts to conquer and then dominate what they have called the seven mountains. They are: family, religion, education, media, entertainment, business and government. Accordingly, no fundamental societal transformation is likely to occur unless significant influence is exerted on these *layers of culture* (as opposed to the image of spheres). This is part of the grammar of a specific theology termed *Dominion Theology*, which is becoming increasingly widespread worldwide, especially on the megachurch scene. For more details, see Heuser (2023).

Solivan, 1998; Trementozzi, 2018). More importantly, it makes possible the "conversion of one's heart" and the "transformation of one's behavior" (Trementozzi, 2018, p. 241). It transforms human action, thereby changing culture, too. To take up what was affirmed above on the connection between bodiliness and ontology, one could sum it up by saying that behavior (*habitus*) is, in a way, that which one does with/through one's body. It is that which can be changed by the motion/work of the Holy Spirit on one's affects in the first place, and then on the intellect and the will.

The questions of *habitus* and orthopraxy in turn relate to the field of performativity. Performances shape and transform culture not only to the extent that they create reality (Austin, 1962), but also because they "[index] the traumatic pangs society goes through as its new realities are being birthed" (Adelakun, 2021, p. 41). They are responses to and conversations with "the spirit and the sensibility" (Adelakun, 2021, p. 41) of a given epoch. However, it is not about a friendly, tolerant interaction. By virtue of its architecture, Pentecostalism is designed to constantly be at war with the world, as well as culture, because Pentecostals live by the Spirit. They claim to know what is beyond phenomenal reality. "The spirituality of Nigerian Pentecostals seeks to raise self-conscious subjects who can do something to themselves in order to access the noumenal realm for knowledge. They do not believe that subjects are locked in the phenomenal realm" (Wariboko, 2014, p. 42). To achieve this state of enlightenment, Pentecostals have to submit themselves to self-discipline (e.g. all-night prayer vigils and long periods of fasting) and techniques of self-fashioning (Marshall, 2009). This spirituality is embraced "with the dedication of war" (Wariboko, 2014, p. 35). Pentecostal influential performances vary from warfare prayer, to exorcisms, healings, and prophecies, to supernatural miracles. Even if considered by some analysts as a religious anomaly (Vondey, 2010) these performances have indeed changed Latin America's demographic, religious, and sociopolitical landscape. Indeed, many studies have demonstrated that perfor-

mance has been much more effective in shaping and transforming culture in the twentieth-first century than critical analysis. "Performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth, that is, an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge" (McKenzie, 2001, p. 18).

In fact, it was through concrete practices, through repeated rehearsals of imagined realities performed by the body that the Pentecostal movement succeeded in "disciplining" faithful believers and shaping Latin American culture. This raises doubts on missiological approaches that excessively rely on preaching, verbal discourse, and theological reflection. These approaches tend to undervalue not only the symbolic and liturgical dimensions of faith, but also the performative, corporeal ones. For even thinking about, reflecting upon one's faith is not possible without passing through one's body.

## 5 Concluding Remarks

In the face of the historical developments of their continent, Latin Americans are still struggling to come to terms with a long and painful colonial, racist, violent, wounded past that reaches to this day. Often enough, though not always, the Christian faith has been the only resource available to them to overcome social and racial walls of exclusion, to promote peace, unity, and reconciliation, to advance human rights and the value of human dignity. More than ever – not least on account of the polarized and violent current atmosphere in their countries – they seem to require such resources in order to overcome a wide range of challenges that overwhelm the political and public sphere (Wariboko, 2014). Christians can still play a crucial role in these societies as they have not yet exhausted their resources for meaning.

However, this is just one side of the coin. Not always have Christians succeeded in permeating the culture of their time by means of the gospel's message, thereby shaping the behavior and attitude of their contemporaries. Especially in times of polarizations such as now, it appears highly

unlikely that the Christian faith can be primarily and reliably articulated through discursive verbal channels alone, so important as they are. To reach the very heart of culture, as *Redemptoris missio* and the Document of Santo Domingo suggested, remains a real challenge. For every culture does need transformation, purification, liberation, redemption.

In this modest contribution particular attention was devoted to the performative channels of proclaiming the gospel, conceivably, even without words. In addition to being symbolic, a fundamental characteristic of performativity is that it creates reality, it does not only interpret or criticize it. On that account, from a theological viewpoint, it tends to be ascribed to the realm of prophecy. Hence the need for re-imagining, in the light Christian eschatology, new ways of being, new forms of living together, new ways of shaping multiple relations (with other human beings, with our Common House, with God etc.). The world needs visions, visions which can only spring from processes of dialogue with different actors, Christian and non-Christian, in the Spirit. Visions that are to be eschatologically performed to fill the gaps of meaning and to function as seeds and ferment in need of the power and the dynamics of the Spirit in order to grow and serve the world.

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