



## The new religious map of Latin America: causes and social effects.

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The end of Catholic monopoly and religious diversification in Latin America are the necessary conditions for religious modernity.

Dozens of different religious groups are emerging in every country in Latin America, an unprecedented development after five centuries of Catholic monopoly. The religious field in Latin America has become completely decontrolled, leaving the symbolic good of salvation open to the competition of the market. Because of this change, struggles for power are mobilizing previously subsidiary religious actors who are beginning to defy the hegemony of the Catholic Church, at least on the municipal level, and sometimes regionally. For a long time researchers were often content simply to denounce the alienating activities of the sects and the new religious movements. Nevertheless, a certain number of monographs have begun serious consideration of the Pentecostal phenomenon and different forms of Protestantism, though other non-Catholic religious manifestations remain neglected. Today, in the face of widespread changes in religious affiliation and the social and political effects of such an evolution, we should try to understand this religious diversification as a whole.

In the limited framework of this article, based on my recent research, I will try to answer three fundamental questions: Who are the participants in this religious shift? What are the causes of the religious deregulation? What are its principal social effects?

### The New Religious Actors

An overall view of the new religious groups that have emerged since 1950 is rare; too often, non-Catholic religion is reduced to Protestantism. It is true that from the latter half of the nineteenth century, Protestant missionary societies, mostly North American, succeeded in sustaining an active proselytism among Latin American liberal minorities. For a long time these historic forms of Protestantism remained the principal expression of religious difference within an essentially Catholic universe. Along with a few other groups-spiritualist, theosophical, positivist, Mormon, and freemason - they made up a limited universe. Until 1920, a few other expressions of native urban religion, like the Brazilian umbanda, completed this panorama of religious marginality. Since then an evangelical and pietist Protestant movement, preoccupied with conversions, has replaced the earlier liberal Protestantism, which had been more concerned with social work and education. This evolution took place because of competition from another religious movement, Pentecostalism, which was of Protestant origin, surely, but with a special capacity for acculturation. Born in the suburbs of Los Angeles at the beginning of the century (1906), Pentecostalism is identified with Protestant enthusiasm, with a religiosity emphasizing signs and extraordinary manifestations that suggest the appropriation of the sacred by the religious actor. Such a movement rapidly adapted itself to Latin American populism, spreading shamanistic traditions and reformulating them in faith-healing and speaking in tongues.

The first Pentecostal churches in Latin America appeared almost simultaneously in Chile, Brazil, and Mexico during the 1910s, before slowly spreading to most other countries of the area. Conversions to Pentecostalism accelerated after 1950 when new native churches emerged in the devastated suburbs of the sprawling capital cities. Some scholars (Feston, 1994) consider that a third phase has been taking place since 1980 with the growth of large Pentecostal societies that have shown themselves capable of mastering both a populist understanding of the sacred and the most modern means of communication, especially TV, thereby gaining an immediate national and international audience. An example of this new religious generation is the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, created in 1977 by a Rio de Janeiro state lottery official, which already claims more than 3,000,000 members and exists in more than thirty countries on three continents. Its founder, "bishop" Edir Macedo, owns a TV chain (TV Record in São Paulo), radio stations, and newspapers.

Religious marketing and the rational management of a multinational religious organization characterize this neo-Pentecostalism. Nevertheless, such social groupings are only the most visible evidence of a phenomenon whose base is made up of dozens of micro-religious enterprises on a neighborhood or village scale, founded by local religious actors. Thus the term "Pentecostal" includes manifestations as diverse as churches that descend from historic Protestantism (the Assemblies of God in Brazil, the Methodist Pentecostal Church of Chile), native messianic Pentecostalism (the Israelites of Peru, the Church of the Light of the World in Mexico), ethnic religious groups (the "idiomatic church" in Peru, the Toba Pentecostals in the Argentine Chaco), and neo-Pentecostalisms, urban churches of the emerging middle class (El Shaddai, Elim, Christian Fraternity in Guatemala City, the Wave of Faith and Love church in Buenos Aires, and Brazilian electronic churches).

This competitive diversity is the new religious factor in Latin America, with the proliferation of small religious enterprises that are independent of institutional Catholicism and the presence of a few large religious corporations that mobilize several million members(1) and are capable of recentering local initiatives. The success of the Pentecostal model is such that it has produced a kind of "pentecostalization" of the popular religious world. Simultaneously, Pentecostal practices have been adopted by the Catholic Church through its encouragement of a growing charismatic movement.

Until the 1950s, the Catholic Church had always been able to coopt millenarian and messianic movements to its own profit. It incorporated independent religious expressions or at least channelled their growth. Somehow, the freedom of worship that had progressively been written into most national constitutions since the liberal reforms of the mid-19th century, in spite of the hopes that liberals had entertained, had little impact on the religious world of Latin America as a whole. It was necessary to wait a century for new independent religious actors to reveal themselves in the most deprived sectors of the population and succeed in building national and international organizations that promised salvation outside of Catholic religious authority.(2)

Deregulation is certainly the fruit of the multiplication of Pentecostal societies, which are independent of both Catholicism and historic Protestantism. Nevertheless, as a result of, or along with, this dominant movement, numerous other religious groups have emerged, either of a North American type (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Scientology), or mystic-esoteric (The Great Fraternity), or of Eastern origin (Ba'hai, Moon, Krishna). At the same time, revitalized by Pentecostal competition, African American cults appear to be experiencing a new dynamism, demonstrating, particularly in Brazil, a growing autonomy in regard to Catholic practices. These cults also export themselves throughout the area and tend to make use of modern means of communication.

This religious world is expanding in two specific areas: (1) in depressed rural communities with a subsistence economy, among the indigenous population or migrant workers on immense rural properties; (2) on the periphery of the huge capital cities where the same groups huddle after emigrating from the countryside. It is in the favelas and "cities of the abandoned" that the most diverse salvation movements spring up. Religions of the poor, they also attract a section of the new middle class. It is not unusual to find a receptive public for Eastern or North American religious movements in the urban milieu among students of humble backgrounds whose access to the university seems to have put them in a new category, or even among members of liberal professions who feel their status has been placed in jeopardy. In addition, although a rural or suburban religion, Pentecostalism seems to have penetrated middle-class areas where evangelical groups and historic Protestantism were already installed. In any case, the world of non-Catholic religious practice today, though certainly not that of the dominant groups of the Latin American world, is no longer identical with that of the poor. Most of the new religious movements share an oral religious culture and a syncretic worldview, permitting the rearticulation of traditional religious beliefs in new, sometimes imported, symbolic expressions, or giving a new dimension to supposedly popular religious expressions through intensive use of the media by middle-class religious leaders. How should we explain this religious evolution?

### The Causes of Change

It is undoubtedly the effect of multiple causes. Reductionist interpretations that consider the proliferation of sects as an effect of foreign, especially North American, manipulation, seem seriously open to question. To grasp the dynamics of religious divisions in Latin America, it is necessary to combine external and internal causes.

The first factor that one should take into account is external, and is linked to the process of globalization and transnationalization that affects religion on a world scale. This is not a specifically Latin American phenomenon. With the development of means of communication, an unprecedented expansion of religious movements has been produced in a multilateral dynamism. Differentiation of the religious landscape has been taking place for forty years simultaneously in Europe, the United States, Asia, and Africa, as well as in Latin America. The explosion of various religious movements should be situated within this worldwide trend, which has been encouraged by increasing economic and cultural exchanges. Such a development explains why Latin America is not only receptive to new religious movements of very diverse origins, but in turn produces and exports numerous religious movements to North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia, as well as the various countries of the hemisphere. Recent statistics from Bolivia show that 36 of the 161 cults registered between 1960 and 1995 derive from Latin America, while 42 are of national origin, and 46 come from the United States. As Colonomos (1995) explains, one can now observe a whole network of religious actors, on an international scale.

To this may be added a second endogenous factor, economic and demographic. Until 1950 whole sections of Latin America seemed to survive almost in a condition of self-sufficiency. Since then, the penetration of a market economy and the monetarization of exchange have produced a profound transformation of the countryside. In these rural societies, especially within an ethnically defined area, the religious regulation of accumulation for many years permitted a cyclical redistribution of excess. Today the dominant ethnic groups have abandoned this practice to their own profit, giving themselves the means of monopolizing the management of religious feasts. Social inequality has thus been reenforced and a struggle for power and economic control has taken place through the multiplication of competitive enterprises that offer salvation and even set up religious and political actors in opposition to the hegemony of the overlords. In this context of accelerated economic growth, the poor and marginalized of rural society have opted for independent religious

enterprises, assuring themselves relative autonomy in the face of the political-religious control of the system of taxation in their ethnic milieu and. of the cyclical Catholic feasts in mestizo areas.

Demographic growth, as much as the kind of development policies adopted by the state, explains the rural exodus. The countryside, however, has not been emptied, but has created suburban centers of rural population. In these "peasant cities," the religious community recreates the hacienda model around a charismatic leader (the pastor-manager), in a style both egalitarian and authoritarian, offering structure and protection in the face of social anomie (Lalive d'Epinay, 1968). The rural universe is thereby explosively restructured through a synthetic process of religious expression that, responding to the vital needs of marginalized populations, includes elements of ancestral shamanism along with modern forms of communication. Informal religious expressions, which develop as competing societies of salvation with social actors endowed with charisma, correspond to the informal economy.

A third, internal, factor is political. Even if Latin America has been going through a new democratic transition since 1980, the liberal model of representative democracy, based on the abstract individual citizen, remains a fiction. In practice, neo-patrimonial relations predominate, and there is still only a feeble mobilization of other autonomous and individual social actors. In fact, the communitarian affirmations that persist through the necessary links of individuals to the natural groups to which they belong (family, clan, village, tribe, caste) "have the effect of maintaining traditional forms of authority at the periphery of the political system and a fragmented social structure." This makes the formation of horizontal class interests difficult to establish (Badie and Hermet, 1993, 190).

In addition, political parties continue a patron-client manipulation by mobilizing subordinate collective actors rather than individual, independent citizens. In this rerouting of the electoral process, elections corrupted by fraud, servitude, and destitution become a ritual exercise that permits the settling of scores among the controlling elites under cover of electoral fever. At the same time, the electoral process favors the constant creation of client groups that try to negotiate demands and establish mechanisms of reciprocity with "legitimate" political forces. In this sense, one can, like Hermet (1973), speak of a limited pluralism. This system restricts the formation of independent actors and social conflicts. When in fact individual political actors are created, they are subjected to extreme pressures and repression. In such a context, expressions of extra-political, especially religious, autonomy can serve as a privileged instrument for dependent social structures excluded from the dominant political code. It is appropriate, therefore, to ask whether the multiplication of religious actors independent of Catholic control isn't a response to a relatively closed political system, a way of showing one has an alternative. Religion can serve both to construct an original space within the general anomie of those who are excluded, and to establish an effective mechanism of protest, capable of setting up a process of negotiation with the established political powers.

The last factor, also endogenous, is directly linked to the evolution of the principal Latin American religious actor, the Roman Catholic Church. Research has been polarized by the so-called exotic manifestations of popular religion and the spectacular expressions of internal challenge linked to the theology of liberation. Unfortunately, analysis of the mechanisms of the institutional regulation of power within Latin American Catholicism is lacking. Similarly, little attention has been given to the way in which relations between the Catholic hierarchy and political power are woven together.(3) In summary fashion, one may say that the Catholic Church in Latin America, in spite of the sense of renewal linked to Vatican II and the currents sustaining it, has hardly changed its authoritarian way of controlling conflicts.(4) The convergence of interest and complicity between religious

hierarchies and political elites assure the institution of a privileged link to the state. The church thus continues to instrumentalize the religious demands of the masses through a corporate model of management in a nationalistic Catholicism whose mariological or christological devotions are its principal manifestation. More subtle is the appropriation of Catholic base movements by ideological avant-gardes, which has been exposed by Lehmann (1996). Besides, in order to domesticate the rebellious wing of the clergy, whose pastoral practice is liberationist, the hierarchy has reenforced its policy of conciliating with governments, which are equally interested in demobilizing radical Catholic groups.

The model for this scenario is Mexico, when diplomatic relations with the Vatican were reestablished in 1992, just as the ruling party was losing legitimacy. This marked the end both of the anticlericalism inherited from historic liberalism and of the initiatives of the leftist clergy, repressed by the hierarchy itself. Elsewhere in Latin America Christian Democratic parties remained a decisive political force; where they did not triumph, the Catholic Church was solicited to legitimize the electoral results. The continuity of an integralist and conciliatory Catholicism, linked to the political power that guarantees its historic hegemony, has blocked the aspirations for democratic change which minority Catholic factions had tried to establish both in the church and the political order. This control of reforms and the restoration of privileged church-state relations may also explain the outbreak of non-Catholic religious alternatives. After the check of religious differences within the institution, one observes a proliferation of ruptures with the institution. Sects appear to be a religious alternative to a renewed integral Catholicism. The spread of non-Catholic religious movements may be the expression of the disenchantment of the masses in the face of a Catholicism that resists self-reform, as well as a way of organizing an alternative religious power. In this sense, the dynamic of religious competition appears to be like a "religious war" for the appropriation and control of the legitimate symbolic capital.

Internationalization and the establishment of religious networks, exclusion and anomie in a context of soaring population, the difficulty of forming independent social groups and the repression of political possibilities, the failure of radical Catholicism and the constant strength of integral Catholicism - all these factors help to explain the religious deregulation now taking place. It is time to examine the social effects of this development, in both its ethnic and political aspects.

#### Religious Differentiation in a Ethnic Context

Religious deregulation is especially evident in the ethnic area. Studies of the Tobas Indians of the Argentine Chaco, the Mapuches in southern Chile, the Paez and Gambianos of the Colombian Sierra, the Guatemalan Quiche, and Chiapas, all stress the profound religious transformation that has taken place during the last forty years. Though each ethnic situation is different, in examining the various examples one can observe a constant in the way in which religious differentiation contributes to the redefinition of ethnicity rather than its destruction.

Among the Toba, Miller (1979) has clearly shown how the adoption of Pentecostalism by shamans during the 40s made possible the restructuring of an ethnic group menaced by agrarian proletarianization and the initiatives of the Argentine government. The Tobas adopted pentecostal ideas, but these were "injected into traditional shamanism." Rather than a conversion to a foreign religion, what took place was a reformation of a religion that offered the tribe "a mechanism of unification on a scale unknown in their previous history" (Miller, 1979, 161).

In the case of the Toba, the religious movement participates in ethnic reconstruction within a context of generalized anomie. Nevertheless, the overthrow and destruction of ancestral

values is not the only condition fostering religious change. Even well-structured ethnic groups may adopt new beliefs in order to strengthen their autonomy and emerge from subordinate economic and symbolic status compared with the mestizo population. Garma Navarro (1987) has demonstrated this in the case of the Totonaque Indians of Ixtepec in Mexico. They became Pentecostalists during the '70s in order to escape the Catholic religious monopoly of the mestizo, and to launch a struggle, on the basis of a pentecostal-like symbolic autonomy, for independent access to the commercialization of coffee, which had previously been exclusively in the hands of the mestizo. Pentecostalism has redefined the unity of the group, removed it from Catholic and mestizo mechanisms of religious cooptation, and made it possible to take up the struggle for direct commercial relations.

These struggles, which are both symbolic and political, can move from the local to the regional level, as was the case for the Paez and the Guambianos. These groups, each of which had about 120,000 members in 1992, have a long tradition of struggle which led to the recognition of a juridical and territorial independence, the resguardo. Nevertheless, a constant erosion of inalienable lands that have been gradually seized by the regional white and mestizo oligarchy, and the gradual decline of the cabildos, led some Indian groups to create the Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca (CRIC). As Gros remarks (1992), in a manner parallel to the development of CRIC, Pentecostalism has advanced within Indian communities to the point of converting a quarter of the population. According to Rappaport (1984), such a success is explained by the elective affinity that it has developed with a preexisting Indian millenarianism that emphasizes miraculous cures, prophetism, and trances. The link between the political and the religious movement did not take place immediately, but since 1977 Indian Pentecostalists have actively participated in occupying lands. Gros (1992, 130) notes that various members of the CRIC committee were "Protestants." This can be explained by the fact that the Indian organization developed conflictual relations with the Catholic Church, which tried to remove its members from a movement it judged subversive, claiming that "the resguardos of the Protestant population" formed the axis of the protest movement.

We find such ethnic religious movements again in the Mexican state of Chiapas where, according to the national census of 1990, it is precisely in the Indian municipalities that the percentage of non-Catholics is more than 50 percent, except where violent expulsions have taken place, as in San Juan Chamula or Zinacantan (Bastian, 1996). This has led those Indians who have been expelled to recreate their society around sectarian communities situated on the outskirts of San Cristobal de las Casas or in the Canadas region. Far from becoming diluted, they appear to have maintained their identity, continuing to demand the right to be reinserted in their community of origin. In Chiapas, political conflicts are linked to the struggle for access to land, which has been made more and more difficult by the monopoly of overlords. In a symbolic rupture, Pentecostal Indians, evangelicals, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses have gone on strike against the system of taxes and the mechanisms of accumulation imposed by the overlords at cyclical religious feasts. Not drinking the ritual alcohol, to refuse tequio (collective work), does not destroy the ethnicity claimed by the Catholic owners, but helps redefine it in terms of a struggle against intra-ethnic monopolies. As has been underlined in a Colombian context, "to become Protestant in a Catholic country does not mean abandoning one's difference, but manifesting it in a certain manner while modernizing its form" (Gros, 1992, 129).

The case studies that have been mentioned should not be a pretext to deny the eventual work of acculturation that sects can encourage in certain ethnic contexts, as among the Mapuches in southern Chile (Salas Astrain, 1996). Nevertheless, one should ask if the religious factor is the determinant one or if there are not other elements of long duration which can contribute to the destruction of ethnic identity. But against a reductionist reading of the non-Catholic religious factor in an Indian milieu, it is worth offering a contextual

explanation that emphasizes its reformist character, encouraging a budding intra-ethnic plurality. As Le Bot has maintained (1994, 49), ethnic neo-communitarian movements "mobilize sectors of the community in the name of the formation of a new community and in the framework of intercommunitarian networks. The rupture that they cause is not with society but with tradition. They thereby place in question not only the former communitarian order, but also the constitutive relationships of the overall social order."

### Political Effects of Religious Differentiation

The religious deregulation that is now under way modifies not only ethnic space but the national political scene. Undoubtedly, the biggest surprise for many observers has been the appearance, in the second half of the 1980s, of evangelical movements and political parties. The election of the Pentecostalist Serrano Elias as president of Guatemala in 1991, of a Baptist vice-president in Peru in 1990, as well as the success of the Pentecostal candidate who finished third in the presidential elections in Nicaragua in October 1996, could not go unnoticed. How can we explain this political dimension of religious movements which, during the 1960s, rejected any political involvement or were considered as the "refuge of the masses" (Lalive d'Epinay, 1968)?

The political irruption of religious sectarianism is explained by the elective affinity between Pentecostalism and Latin American political culture. Pentecostal neo-communitarianism is born within societies with conditions favorable to patronage relations and client networks. As Corten has noted (1995), it fits in with a corporatist political culture. The communitarian emotional fusion that accompanies Pentecostalism is both an egalitarian affirmation of those excluded from the social system and the adoption of a language - glossolalia and praise - that is unacceptable in the dominant society. At the same time, it provides an authoritarian structure of protest because of the group's submission to the natural charismatic leader. In this sense, Corten remarks pertinently that "it contains a principle that is incompatible with the 'first principle' of the Western political system, the contract" (Corten, 1995, 137).

If praise is the first principle of Pentecostalism, one should add the notion of gift as a mechanism for structuring corporatist relationships. The importance of gift is shown by the financial sacrifice of the faithful, which is central to Pentecostal cults as a recognition of the charismatic power of the director. The faithful member gives money in order to receive in exchange a symbolic good through the intervention of the charismatic mediator. Gift is an expression, first of all, of gratitude for the charismatic power of the religious leader, who is capable of guaranteeing reciprocity or even of responding to "the excess of belief" with spiritual and material blessing. Rouquie (1987, 272) sums up the logic of this mechanism of power: "The politics of gift is above all a politics of scarcity" and fits in with the "necessity of intercession." The scarcity of vital goods and the mediation necessary in order to have access to them establish and support the neo-communitarian emotion of the poor who are mobilized by Pentecostalism and the corporatist mechanism of political and religious control by pastor-patrons. That is why the Pentecostal principle, although situated only at the "door of politics" (Corten, 1995, 281), contributes to the development of the classical means of political action in Latin American minds. From this point of view, Pentecostalism can be seen as more in continuity than rupture with the Catholic religious mentality that has structured and reinforced the corporatist political and social imagination.

Inasmuch as they represent "the emotion of the poor," Pentecostalisms are born of economic underdevelopment. In passing from religious demands to political action, they aim to fill the stage between the reality of the world of exclusion from which they emerge and an external political modernization, which continues to deny liberal democratic principles in everyday situations, since it is based on merely a simulacrum of

parliamentarianism and allows the poor no representation other than corporatist. That is why, inscribed in the dual structure of Latin American political systems, the Pentecostalist masses, in continuity with the indigenous symbolic universe, tend to develop a client or subordinate relationship with the neo-corporatist state.

In Latin America political or religious action does not depend on the opinion of the individual actor, but on the services obtained and the protection given to the social group. This is what distinguishes Latin American political practice from the liberal democratic model. Instead of being based on the principle of individual representation, the political system is one of participation and mobilization, starting with the local community and collective actors. That is why "the system of overlords does not reinforce the isolation of the communities; on the contrary, it facilitates their access to the central power. But it is more a means of controlling a population than an agent for expressing its demands, which cannot be manifested directly, through the channel of chosen 'representatives'" (Touraine, 1988, 99-100).

As the facilitator of access to regional and central power, Pentecostalism easily transforms itself into a means of capturing votes, to the degree that a vote appears as one exchangeable good among others as against other goods more immediately utilizable. The changeability of the captive vote of the Pentecostal faithful is demanded by these local bases and utilized by pastors for political ends. To the degree that Pentecostal and evangelical leaders of religious organizations are aiming at growth, they are forced to look for ways to increase, or at least maintain, their prestige. This interest converges with that of political managers seeking to recruit potential clients - that is, actors willing to enter into a relationship of personal dependence. During the 1970s and 1980s pastors thus became objects of the attention of military regimes that wanted to strengthen their legitimacy, and in the 1990s they are being wooed by political organizations on all sides. In this way the religious leaders are being inserted into networks that cover the entire political spectrum.

In the framework of this political culture, practices of mediation by the evangelical leader develop, depending on his capacity to mobilize larger and larger sectarian clienteles. Pentecostal pastors who, at the outset, withdrew from society in general, are becoming transformed, through the exponential growth of their churches, into "vote sellers," mediators who are much sought after, exchanging the vote of their faithful for subordinate political posts, the redistribution of public or private goods, such as the granting of radio stations and television channels (Freston, 1994, 551). Through this mechanism, the neo-communitarian religious movements which draw on the poor and the excluded enter into a client-like relationship of subordination to the state, and "aim less at the construction of conflict than social and political integration, which explains their conservative radicalism, a mixture of the most extreme discourse with the most utilitarian clientelism" (Touraine, 1988, 257).

Nevertheless, precisely because Pentecostalism and evangelicalism are the means of escaping the corporatist hegemony of the Catholic Church, it is worth asking if the confessionalization of politics through the creation of evangelical parties and political movements is not also a demand for a greater independence of civil society.

These religious expressions of rebellion offer a privileged terrain for the development of an alternative confessional politics that is still at an embryonic stage. They are characterized by their fragility and their external role in relation to the official political scene. But whereas most experts expected that the Catholic base communities would be the instruments of the political expression of the poor, it is the sectarian groups that appear to have been so. We should ask why.

This is explained by the fact that in Latin America the political and the religious are not separate in the practice of the principal religious actor, the Catholic Church. The latter has even regained its privileged links with the governments of the region, an amazing fact after a century-and-a-half of anticlerical liberalism. Latin American political modernity is, in fact, a paradoxical modernity. The populist, organic, segmented, or ethnic nation continues in opposition to the model of the civic, voluntary, contractual, or elective nation inscribed in constitutions. Beyond the secularist juridical framework, social and even political practices do not exist. The Catholic Church constantly intervenes either as mediator in political conflicts or as principal opponent of measures of ethical modernization (abortion, divorce, procreation), or secularization (maintaining its confessional schools). It would also be appropriate to analyze the multiplication of small Catholic parties in addition to Christian Democracy, which is an important confessional political actor in the region, as well as the large number of Catholic politicians who are supported by the Catholic charismatic movement. The formation of confessional Evangelical parties is a response to this situation, an attempt to displace the Catholic Church from its privileged and even exclusive relationship with the state by mobilizing their supporters in the same way the church mobilizes its supporters. This demand explains the attitude of Pentecostalists to Pinochet's regime, which gave them the hope of being transformed in turn into an official church, or their support for Rios Montt in Guatemala, who gave them greater recognition by the state than they had ever previously enjoyed.

Moreover, the multiplication of religious actors is a new situation for the state in Latin America. Until the 1950s the state felt constrained to dialogue with only one religious partner, the Catholic Church, which enjoyed a monopoly over civil society, and with which the state had to negotiate, since policies of confrontation with the church and the privatization of religion had failed. Today the state, forced to identify with the whole universe of religious organizations, has established separate ministries to deal with religion. To the degree that the neo-corporatist Latin American state has a long tradition of coopting social movements, the new religious movements are being coopted as well. That is all the more likely since certain Latin American governments have successfully fought off political pluralism, and in the absence of partisan representation, religious plurality could serve as a relay for the demands of civil society or facilitate the fluctuating alliances of the opposition. The multiplication of diverse religious movements makes the task of the state more arduous. The religious interlocutor is mobile, divided, and diffused, hence more difficult to mobilize in a monolithic manner. But the political concern to control the religious actors comes up against the interest of the religious actors who want to make use of a privileged relationship with the state in order to combat their principal religious adversary, the Catholic Church. Such an interest explains the recent emergence of "God's politicians" and of evangelical political parties in numerous countries in Latin America.

By transforming sectarian neo-communitarianism into a political expression, the new religious movements try to assure themselves a basis for negotiation. This negotiation takes place in the framework of the corporatist pattern of reciprocity and vertical and asymmetrical redistribution between legitimate political actors and their religious subordinates. Through negotiation over votes, the new religious movements try to assure themselves a privileged relationship with the state, and to dislodge the Catholic Church, the traditional bearer of symbolic capital, from its exclusive position.

## Conclusion

There are many other areas to explore besides ethnicity and politics in order to understand the social impact of religious deregulation. In particular, one can ask if, in reaction, there are not significant changes taking place in the Catholic Church. The progress of the new movements undoubtedly weakens Catholic hegemony but does not eliminate it. By the

influence of opposition, Catholicism is in the process of redefining itself, rediscovering an active symbolic role among the masses through the charismatic movement and the revival of devotional Catholicism. The "pentecostalization" of Catholicism could even affect its control of the sacred by bringing about a greater participation of the laity, a subject still to be explored. One might equally ask about the impact of Pentecostalism on people's mentality and behavior, and how its effects on modes of development will be felt over the long term.

Perhaps this last question is the one most debated today. Did the condemnation of alcohol lead to a better life in sectarian areas? Does respect for the relationship of the couple lead to a redefinition of machismo? Some (Willems, 1967; Martin, 1990) have, instead, supported the Weberian hypothesis of the possible linking of Protestantism and capitalism. The movement of Latin Americans to a form of Protestantism would be an early sign of a changing mentality in the direction of religious modernity and even of rationalizing economic conduct. At this point we lack serious studies that would allow us to develop this hypothesis. Other investigators have reservations about such a mechanical reading of the relationship between Protestantism and economics (Lalive d'Epinay, 1968; Corten, 1995; Cavalcanti, 1995). For my part (Bastian, 1997), I see more continuity than rupture with the traditional religious universe in the "reenchanted" behavior of Pentecostalism. Nor do I observe an individualization of belief in elective affinity with civic modernity, but the constant reconstruction of collective actors through religious neocommunitarianism. This does not mean that the religious deregulation now going on is the sign of a mutation. In terms of ethnicity, it is possible that religious diversification contributes to an intraethnic plurality that can contribute to an endogenous modernization of these societies. On the political level, the visibility acquired by alternate political actors, even in secondary roles, can contribute to the plural mobilization of civil society. But plurality does not mean pluralism. Undoubtedly, in the transition now taking place, the end of the Catholic monopoly and competing religious manifestations are necessary, though insufficient, conditions for a Latin American religious modernity. This endogenous modernity tends, nevertheless, to be built up by the competitive interaction of non-Catholic actors, and even, for the first time in Latin American history, to be transformed into religious mass organizations.

#### Notes

1. The Pentecostal Methodist Church of Chile claims more than a million members, the Assemblies of God in Brazil between six and nine million.
2. The statistical data are quite uneven and insufficiently rigorous but indicate a tendency. For Protestantisms, see Bastian, 1994, 208. Some national censuses take religion into account (e.g., Mexico every ten years [INEGI] and Chile in 1992) and are very valuable indicators, especially for studies at the municipal and regional level. In general, it is probable that less than 80 percent of the Latin American population today is Roman Catholic. In the Mexican state of Chiapas, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INEGI), 91.21 percent of the population called themselves Catholics in 1970, but only 75.87 in 1980 and 67.62 percent in 1990.
3. As an exception, one should note the excellent socio-historical study of Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia católica en México, 1929-1982* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992).
4. On this subject, consult Jose Oscar Beozzo, "La reprise en main d'une Eglise: le Brésil," in *Les rendezvous de Saint Dominique, Les enjeux d'un anniversaire (1492-1992)*, ed. by Ignace Berten and René Luneau (Paris: Centurion, 1991), 178-206.

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