



Religious Identities and Global Politics in Tension: A Latin American Perspective

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Nicolás Panotto, Ph.D.

Abstract

This work aims to offer some alternative analytical axes on the complex relationship between the religious and the political from a Latin American perspective. We identify how the processes of transformation of the Latin American political scenario during the last decades—i.e., the period of democratic recovery after military dictatorships, the crisis of the neoliberal state, the emergence of social movements, and the social polarization after the arrival of populist or leftist governments—have a direct correlate in the transformations in both the internal composition of the religious groups themselves as well as in their ways of operating in the public space and how they are integrated within the political dynamics. This results in a diversification of types of institutionalizations of the religious space (which we refer to as “processes of minoritization”), as well as of types of advocacy in the public and political space, which accounts for a plurality of types of linkages between these fields. To this end, the notion of identities/identification processes is used to study how religion is located within the dynamics of socio-political change and mobilization, especially from civil society. Finally, some specific case studies from different ideological spectrums in the Latin American context will be used to account for these emerging scenarios.

Keywords: *Identities, Religion, Politics, Identification Processes, Minoritization*

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1. Introduction: New Dynamics in the Religion-Politics Relationship in Latin America

Religion and politics are two fields that have coexisted synergistically since the beginning of Latin American history. It is a history undoubtedly filled with paradoxes, gray areas, contradictions, and impressive transformative and revolutionary potentials.

This history does not begin in the best way. As the Uruguayan poet and novelist Eduardo Galeano says, the *colonial enterprise* has left open wounds and veins that are still deeply felt today. A *Christianity* that came hand in hand with the *sword of conquest*, where the amalgam between power and religion was imposed under the mark of violence, especially from the annihilation or submission of the diverse plurality represented in the indigenous peoples of Abya Yala. This fact is far from being anecdotal: it is, instead, the mark of a trait that still runs through regional history, where a particular vision of Christianity—of Western, modern-centric, and colonial origin—became the format of what is and is not “religion,” and, therefore, a border that includes and excludes.

However, both the political and the religious are grounds that exceed any attempt at classificatory closure. Therefore, speaking of religion and politics does not only refer to a link that legitimizes *centralized* or *monopolistic* power. It also means speaking of a relationship that enables complementation and joint dynamization. Here, it is worth making a fundamental epistemic clarification, which is part of the current debates in the Latin American context, and that is that “the political” and “the religious” cannot be restricted to an institutional modality. Thus, politics goes beyond state bureaucracy or electoral machinery, just as religion is a phenomenon that transcends hierarchies and the transmission of “official” dogmas. Politics broadly includes how people mobilize to account for their multiple representations—for example, through social movements or spontaneous popular mobilizations—to stage very plural demands. Thus, politics is not an end but a dynamic that traverses and crystallizes in particular forms, always transcending them.

“...*politics* goes beyond *state bureaucracy* or *electoral machinery*, just as *religion* is a phenomenon that transcends hierarchies and the transmission of “official” *dogmas*.”

In the same way, the religious space is a phenomenon where the interpretation of the manifestation of the sacred challenges and transforms the institutional boundaries and discourses established to understand it, creating and constantly recreating new narratives, practices, and experiences (manifestations that today are named as *spiritualities* or *lived religions*).

With this distinction in mind, we can affirm that the political and religious fields share the exact synergy, which has to do with their capacity to transform their institutionality and practice in response to specific social demands and contextual changes. That is why we can affirm that the relationship between religion and politics must be reviewed based on the elements that intersect between them and not only from certain contingent bridges from two separated objects, often defined in an absolute or closed way.

The study of the relationship between religion and politics in Latin America has been mutating over time due to various factors, ranging from transformations in the socio-political context to processes in the religious studies itself. Therefore, when we analyze the link between these worlds, we must consider, on the one hand, how each element in question is specified, but, on the other hand, how we define the relationship between them. In this sense, from the social sciences, we can find different categories that have intervened in these analytical processes, which account for new epistemological scenarios and more complex approaches to the identification processes between these orders.

Hence, this text aims to develop two related categories that will allow us to broaden the analysis of the relationship between religion and politics, such as *identity* and *minoritization*, and their application to the religious field. The approach to these terms will also explore and introduce the central works in Latin America in this regard. Finally, recent cases of the region's socio-political intervention of evangelical sectors will be developed as examples.

“The study of the relationship between *religion* and *politics* in Latin America has been *mutating* over time due to various factors, ranging from transformations in the *socio-political context* to processes in the religious studies itself.”

2. Religious and Political Identities

2.1. Identity as an Analytical Category

The concept of identity has reemerged as a key category of political analysis in Latin America, particularly in relation to the reconfigurations of the social field driven by the intervention of diverse agents. These agents demand legitimacy in the public sphere and challenge the established modes of institutionalizing political practice.¹ The differentiation between the *political* as a constituent agonistic dimension of any social group based on the processes of construction of meaning and *politics* as the set of processes of sedimentation that provisionally historicize such dynamics through instances of institutionalization in specific contexts as a response to particular demands,² has opened a critique on the monopoly of certain actors as the only referents of political analysis, and the predominance of notions such as the State, partisanship, ideology, nation/nationalism, political class, among others, as the only ways to enter the political dynamics in the social field.

This approach allows us to account for other ways politics can be operationalized and materialized through diverse subjectivities. It highlights the presence of processes conceived from existing discourses, symbols, and structures, which can be embodied in identity particularities such as social movements, civil society organizations (CSOs), and discourses linked to minority groups, churches, and religious communities.

¹ Emmanuel Biset et al., *Sujeto—Una categoría en disputa* (La Cebra, 2015).

² Chantal Mouffe, *En Torno A Lo Político* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007).

“The concept of *identity* has reemerged as a key category of *political analysis* in Latin America, particularly in relation to the reconfigurations of the social field driven by the intervention of diverse agents.”

There are three terms of relevant importance to delve into the analytical implications of these emerging scenarios present in some contemporary studies. These are *heterogeneity*, *conflict*, and *articulation*. The first infers that politics is directly linked to creating a plural space of action and interpretation, where the encounter of narrated and staged performativities intervenes. In this sense, politics is not only concerned with the bureaucratic field or the public administration but also with the establishment of mechanisms that promote different ways the society can be defined and understood, with its expressions and ways of being. In other words, the pluralization of identity has a political dimension, accounting for the heterogeneity of ways of living and creating worlds.

The idea of *conflict*³ recognizes the inherent tensions within the processes of political construction, taking into account the dynamics of pluralization of identity and the interactions that occur between them to respond to various constitutive elements of the social, the disputes of interpretation that arise in the routes of explanation of reality (that is, the senses of “truth” and “the common”), the control of the dynamics of power and, in short, the conflict that arises from the clash of ontologies, that is, of ways of seeing the world.⁴ In this sense, conflict is not something negative but a natural dimension of all power dynamics based on the interpretations around social demands and the possible ways to meet them.⁵

Finally, conflictive interactions involve practices of articulation between the various parties that come into play within the public space—whether individuals, groups, or movements—an element that evidences the search for ways to build the collective pluralistically.

³ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

⁴ Mario Blaser, *For Emplacement: Political Ontology in Two Acts* (Duke University Press, 2025).

⁵ Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipations* (Verso, 2007).

“...*conflict* is not something negative but a *natural dimension* of all power dynamics based on the interpretations around social demands and the possible ways to meet them.”

In other words, political practice crystallizes in fields of joined actions among diverse actors who find common ways of responding to axial demands, thus creating trenches for the dispute of meaning, making the public space the space of inscription of such differences, which is far from being a scenario composed of isolated particularities in struggle, but instead of processes of identification shared by singular collectives that deliberate with others around those same demands.

This last element is of fundamental importance today, not only from a practical perspective but also in the need to create a political ethic from the common. The so-called “politics of identities” is fundamental in indicating the diversity of voices in the public space. However, such a framework must be deployed with a collective search for what we have in common as a society, based on shared demands, and thus avoid the compartmentalization of isolated voices without broader and structural impacts.

In short, these approaches to the notion of identity serve the complexification of social analysis—especially its political dynamics—by emphasizing the study of *interactions* (the relational), *interpretations* (meaning and the hermeneutic disputes they generate), *otherness* (heterogeneity and difference) and *tensions* (conflict) that emerge among the diverse practices that develop in the social and public field. This approach intends to overcome the discussions between the micro and macro extremes, the local and the global, the particular and the plural as confronted limits. Instead, it places the social in the process of interaction, interpenetration, and healthy conflict, which vindicates the polyvalence of constructions of meaning and practices rendering to their particular segmentation according to contexts, demands, historical processes, and specific territories. By way of summary, we can identify two conclusive axes of what has been developed so far, which serve as general guidelines to establish the category of identity as a field of analysis:

“The so-called “politics of identities” is fundamental in indicating the *diversity of voices* in the public space.

1. The concept of identity refers to the study of a location of meaning—whether individual or collective—that emerges as a location between contextual and structural instances, which produce representational segmentations but never reach a complete suture of the identification process due to the excess of constitutive meaning inherent to every process of subjectivation. Hence, the study of identity will refer to developments where systemic elements that produce predisposition, intersubjective dynamics that channel such processes, and the elements that imprint the sense of critical singularity with the shared sense/institutional field are conjugated.

2. By understanding identity from a performative perspective—as a locus that brings together a multiplicity of places where identification and singularization dynamics are generated—it becomes clear that this category inherently possesses political constitutively. This perspective reveals the processes of subjectivation as orders of construction, resistance, and resignification of social, cultural, political, and economic meanings, all shaped by the dynamics of power and conflicts over counter-meanings.

2.2. On the Processes of Religious Identification

From this approach, the relationship between identities, politics, and religion will focus on characterizing types of ties and contingent constructions. The political dimension of religion, viewed from the notion of identity, focuses on the socio-cultural tensions between the established boundaries of meaning (social, institutional, discursive) and the instances of singularization that subvert, adapt, and redefine them according to contextual and historical processes. This type of analysis focuses on the operations of dislocation within the religious discourse and practices concerning the historically assumed social worldviews, as well as the mechanisms of displacement and articulation that religious voices build from their particular worldview (religion, spirituality, theology), establishing displacements that allow them to reinterpret and overcome given hermeneutics, to respond to the concrete demands of a social context in constant transformation.

“The political dimension of religion,..., focuses on the socio-cultural tensions between the established boundaries of meaning...and the instances of singularization...”

The identity category has also influenced recent studies on the religious field in Latin America.⁶ We could highlight studies around the de/re-institutionalization of communities and fields of religious identification,⁷ the impact of individualization mechanisms, the dimension of “lived religion,”⁸ the incidence of religious spaces amid the diversification of civil society and the pluralization of social movements and activism in the public arena,⁹ or studies that have identified the analytical potential of the category of spirituality.¹⁰

All this leads us to consider questioning the notion of religious identity. The Argentinean anthropologist Alejandro Frigerio shows that such categorization is far from homogeneous and restrictive from an individual or group perspective.¹¹ On the contrary, its situated and contingent character implies, according to this author, understanding identity as acts of identification, which can be linked to the difference made by Foucault between “subject” and “subject positions.” Taking it to the field of religion, this reflects that “believing” should not be understood from a unique or uniform identification to a single framework of meaning but to a frame that involves a variability of possibilities according to the context of the subject.

⁶ Christian Parker, *Religión, Cultura y Política en América Latina: Nuevos Enfoques* (Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2012).

⁷ Joaquín Algranti, Mariela Mosqueira, Damián Setton, Eds. *La institución como proceso. Configuraciones de lo religioso en las sociedades contemporáneas*, (Editorial Biblos, 2019); Alejandro Frigerio, “Por que não podemos ver a diversidades religiosa: questionando o paradigma católico-centrico no estudo da religião na América Latina”. *Debates do NER* 19-34 (2021).

⁸ Hugo Rabbia, Gustavo Morello, Nestos Da Costa, Catalina Romero. Eds. *La religión como experiencia cotidiana: creencias, prácticas y narrativas espirituales en Sudamérica* (Fondo Editorial, 2019).

⁹ Joanildo Burity, “Religião e república: desafios do pluralismo democrático” *Cuadernos de Estudos Sociais*. 2005, Vol.21, N 1-2; Nicolás Panotto, “Campo evangélico y sociedad civil: sobre los procesos de minoritización y el desplazamiento de matrices analíticas”. *Religião e Sociedade*, Rio de Janeiro, 40 (2020).

¹⁰ Emerson Giumbelli and Rodrigo Toniol, “What is spirituality for? New relations between religion, health, and public spaces”. In: Blanes, R; Mapril, J; Giumbelli, E; Wilson, E. Eds. *Secularisms in a Postsecular Age? Religiosities and Subjectivities in Comparative Perspective* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Nicolás Viotti, “La espiritualidad en América Latina”. In: Esquivel, J.; Béliveau, V. *Religiones en cuestión: campos, fronteras y perspectivas* (Ediciones CICCUS, 2018).

¹¹ Alejandro Frigerio, “Repensando el monopolio religioso del catolicismo en la Argentina”. In: Carozzi C. and Cernadas C. Eds. *Ciencias sociales y religión en América Latina* (Biblos, 2017).

This invites us to consider different levels of analysis of religious identity. Frigerio differentiates between the *personal identity* of individuals, their *social identities*, and the *collective identity* proposed by the group. Hence, an individual believer may opt for a specific social identity without this implying a change in his or her personal or collective identity. It can also happen that the individual acquires a particular type of personal identity. However, without this, it can lead to the development of a different or even divergent social and collective identity. This shows us how adopting a position of faith does not necessarily indicate the impossibility of assuming other positions in the various fields that traverse the subject's daily life. Moreover, these dynamics deconstruct the supposed monolithic character that a religious framework can have, no matter how hegemonic or monolithic it may appear.

As Alejandro Frigerio has emphasized,¹² it is important to differentiate religious identifications from practices and beliefs. Frigerio raises the necessary distinction between organizational supports, material supports, and the multiplicity of social interactions to account not only for the heterogeneity of dynamics within the political-religion relationship but also as a warning against the reductionism of promoting homogenizing visions, which is very present in some socio-anthropological and political analyses of religion.

An example of this dynamics is the particular constructions of popular religiosity or the broad growth of the so-called “new religious movements” in the region. The plural space these phenomena bring into play from their constitutive involves strongly questioning the classical sense of secularization. As Eloísa Martín and María Julia Carozzi state,¹³ popular religion represents another logic since it questions the “modern elements” that characterize secularized institutionality. This type of religiosity has received all kinds of judgments by sociological critics, either treating it as a simple fetish or as diluted derivations that respect their religious dimension as long as it responds to modern, rational, and Christian-centric parameters. Popular religiosity is neither prelogical nor irrational. It responds, instead, to the use of reason under another logic, narrative and symbolic. Therefore, it should not be seen exclusively as a phenomenon outside the ecclesial institutionality.

¹² Alejandro Frigerio and Gustavo Andres Ludueña, “Del ‘monopolio católico’ al ‘pluralismo’: ¿qué lugar para la diversidad religiosa en Argentina? Métodos, datos y perspectivas antropológicas en cuestión”. *Corpus*; 3-2 (2013).

¹³ Alejandro Frigerio, “Repensando el monopolio religioso del catolicismo en la Argentina” (2017).

“Frigerio differentiates between the *personal identity* of individuals, their *social identities*, and the *collective identity* proposed by the group.”

A whole stream of studies¹⁴ shows how this phenomenon symbolizes an interstitial and negotiation space within and outside the church or the constituted religious frameworks and the socio-political worldviews they bring with them. Many studies point out how these movements are deeply rooted in contexts with diverse social conflicts, such as the bureaucratization and institutionalization of everyday life, the division between private and public life, and the handling of the socio-economic problems characteristic of Latin American societies. An example of this is Pentecostalism. This religious group has a strong capacity to mobilize and channel diverse cultural elements predominant in popular sectors. It also embodies a catalytic space since it draws on elements of culture, attends to popular demands, and reinforces diverse religious traditions, whether Evangelical or Catholic.

Some studies on popular religious movements are sometimes saturated with a homogenizing understanding of the popular subject. However, the notion of “the popular” deconstructs a homogeneous understanding of the religious. It can be affirmed that the constitution of the popular cracks the self-assumed illusion of modernity, where singularities try to cohere in an atomizing container framework. Illusion, since such an effect is impossible to achieve because of the constitutive heterogeneity of the social that, paradoxically, modernity itself promoted. The same is projected when the new popular movements question the legitimacy of particular religious agendas that self-assume their monopoly. Such a condition not only responds to a reactionary logic (denying such monopolies) but also to a creative and disruptive logic, where diverse groups and subjects re-signify the hegemonic religious structures, moving between the fissures and interstices of their institutional constitution and worldview or creatively and subversively distorting their very discursivity or symbolic reservoir.

¹⁴ Eloisa Martín. “Aportes al concepto de ‘religiosidad popular’: una revisión de la bibliografía argentina”. In Carozzi, J. y Ceriani, C. *Ciencias sociales y religión en América Latina*, (Editorial Biblos, 2007); María Julia Carozzi, “Tendencias en el Estudio de los Nuevos Movimientos Religiosos en América: Los últimos 20 Años”. *Revista Sociedad y Religión*. 10/11 (1993); Pablo Semán, “El pentecostalismo y la religiosidad de los sectores populares”. In: Maristella Svampa, ed., *Desde abajo: La transformación de las identidades sociales*, (Biblos, 2000); Alejandro Frigerio, “Questioning religious monopolies and free markets: the role of the estate, the church(es) and secular agents in the management of religion in Argentina”. *Citizenship Studies*. Vol.16, Issue 8 (2012).

“[Pentecostalism]...has a strong capacity to mobilize and channel diverse cultural elements predominant in popular sectors.”

The use of the category of religious identity (or the approach to the religious phenomenon from the concept of identity) has made it possible to broaden the approach to the processes of identification from beliefs, overcoming structuralist visions (where the religious as a symbolic field is understood as a producer of a priori actions on the subjects¹⁵) towards notions that problematize the games of resistance, negotiation, and redefinition between beliefs, institutions, discourses and the subjects' sense of practice.

In summary, the notion of religious identity inscribes a location between the mechanisms of discursive and institutional sedimentation and the subjective instances of particularization of meaning—about belief, and from there towards reality in general— which allows us to re-signify the relationship between the religious and the socio-political. Religious devices—ritual, symbolic, discursive, theological, and institutional— enable a diversity of possible movements and actions and, thus, of ways of reinterpreting the world under a plurality of political visions. In this direction, we reiterate that religious particularities should not be ascribed to a reduced set of political, ideological, or moral options. Instead, their representative practices and discourses are located in intersubjective instances that account for anthropological visions, social dynamics, and discursive frameworks, which can trace diverse ideological and political paths.

More precisely, these approaches allow us to see how the processes of religious identification represent instances of diversification, tensioning, and conflict within the worldview imaginaries of the religious field, facilitated both by theological/sacred discourses and institutional mechanisms. It is this same dynamic that acts, from the religious field and the believing subjects, as a device of socio-political construction, since these same theological-religious meanings dispute social and cultural processes.

“...religious particularities should not be ascribed to a reduced set of political, ideological, or moral options.”

¹⁵ Talal Asad. *Genealogies of Religion* (John Hopkins University Press, 1993).

3. The Religious as Part of Civil Society: The Category of *Minoritization*

The concept of *minoritization* is a category that can help us to inscribe the use of the category of religious identity or identification from a political perspective, starting from the process of mutation and inscription of the religious in civil society (CS) and the public space, especially in terms of how “minority” expressions that enter the game—from the different perspectives present in CS organizations—strain the matrices of meaning and hegemonic advocacy practices (both in the CS itself and religious institutions). One of the leading analysts of this phenomenon is the Brazilian political scientist Joanildo Burity. This author draws on the contributions of poststructuralism—especially Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe—to account for the internal and external dynamics—or what he calls the *collective dimension* (the relationship of the religious with social and political movements) and the *disseminative dimension* (the modifications of the religious in personal political trajectories)—of the evangelical communities in the Southern Cone, especially in Brazil and Argentina.¹⁶

Burity not only analyzes the particular processes of redefinition of political notions within religious communities—taking into account the specificity of the theological codes to which they respond—but also highlights the existing transformation in the pluralization of instances of joint work between religions and the State as well as the visibility of the religious as a particular expression within the growing spectrum of organizations, social movements and alternative institutionalizations of the political.

For this reason, Burity speaks of three central aspects for understanding the relationship between politics and religious pluralism in Latin America. First, religions are a constitutive element of the continent’s societies. In recent decades, this presence has been reflected in greater interaction between governments, churches, and religious organizations in the execution of social work, attention to religious issues by CS organizations, and the inclusion of religion as a cultural policy, among others. Secondly, it is possible to analyze religious phenomena and their relationship with the public space similarly to CS and the State dynamics. Finally, religious spaces are also fields of articulating political discourses and imaginaries with specific public agendas.

¹⁶ Joanildo Burity, “Religião, política e cultura”. *Tempo Social* 20, N 2 (2008); “Religião e lutas identitárias por cidadania e justiça: Brasil e Argentina”. *Ciências Sociais Unisinos*, 45-3 (2009).

“The concept of *minoritization*...can help us to inscribe the use of the category of *religious identity* or *identification* from a *political perspective*...”

This author uses the concept of minoritization to talk about the particular political dynamics of evangelical groups. Giles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and William Conolly mainly comprise this category. However, it also refers to authors such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Derrida, and Ernesto Laclau.¹⁷ This category refers to two central factors: first, the process of pluralization of religion, which highlights not only the phenomenon of heterogeneity of the field itself but also the internal processes experienced by the majority voices. Secondly, the place of organizations, churches, and movements nourished by a religious logic in heterodox perspectives of social advocacy is in line with the pluralization of political identities in today’s societies.

This concept responds to a broader concept of public space. Burity describes it from a definition that transcends the statist reference, broadening it mainly towards the place of the CS and the new political dynamics it represents, especially the emergence of other forms of citizen representation.¹⁸ Specifically, Burity proposes a redefinition of the public sphere based on changes in the relationship between the State, government, and CS, the transfer of state responsibilities to society, and the efforts of CSOs in the formation of advocacy networks.

However, the concept of minoritization not only refers to a descriptive dimension of the process of diversification of the religious field but also offers a way of understanding the constitutive logic of the construction of any identity, in this case, religion. This is intended to emphasize that a particular belief can construct dynamics of resignification within itself, appealing to the same discursive fields but referring to diverse practices and actions, even antagonistically, to those established as hegemonic.

¹⁷ Joanildo Burity, “Minoritization and Pluralization. What Is the ‘People’ That Pentecostal Politicization Is Building?” *Latin American Perspectives*. Issue 208, Vol. 43 No. 3. (2016); “Autoridad y lo común en procesos de minoritización. El pentecostalismo brasileño”. *Revista latinoamericana de investigación crítica*. Año IV. -6 (2017).

¹⁸ Joanildo Burity, “Religião e república” (2009).

“...Burity proposes a redefinition of the *public sphere* based on changes in the relationship between the *State, government, and CS*, the transfer of state responsibilities to society, and the efforts of CSOs in the formation of advocacy networks.”

According to Burity, from the concept of minoritization, the identity category is transformed into an intersection between CS and politics. This leads us to locate religious identities as instances between traditional political logic. Moreover, such identities become frameworks of renegotiation and tension of established narratives. In Burity’s words: “What makes them [religious identities] new is not a common set of attributes, but a circulation of themes and practices marked by the experience of a dislocation of old forms of identification (including those that had very recently been presented as alternatives) and by the difficult and never guaranteed apprenticeship of plural living, of negotiation between the I/us or the others/them.”¹⁹ Here, citizenship is important as a framework that allows the relocation of socio-political participation from disputes of meaning in a state of law, public policies, and the third sector itself.²⁰

According to Burity, religious groups contribute to CS in three ways: as socializing environments, fostering the civic commitment of the membership; as socially and civically inscribed units with other advocacy spaces; and as domestic bases, supporting individual members in their civic commitments. This description leads to a complex understanding of the relationship between religious organizations and public space, which is reflected in a more significant relationship between faith-based organizations (FBOs) and governments in the implementation of social projects, the multiple relationships between FBOs and CSOs, where the religious are integrated from the logic of respect for diversity and transformed into spaces of identity demand within a locus of plurality, and finally, in the place assumed by religious organizations in spaces of civil society advocacy, both at the national and regional levels.

¹⁹ Joanildo Burity, “Cultura, identidades e inclusao social: o lugar da religiao para seus atores e interlocutores”. *Debates do Ner*, Vol.2, N 14 (2008).

²⁰ Joanildo Burity, “Cultura e identidade nas políticas de inclusao social”. In: Amaral, A. y Burity, J. orgs. *Inclusao social, identidades e diferenca*, (San Pablo, 2006).

“...*citizenship* is important as a framework that allows the relocation of *socio-political participation* from disputes of meaning in a *state of law, public policies, and the third sector* itself.”

In conclusion, minoritization is linked to how religious communities influence the public space by constructing discourses and practices that stress hegemonic worldviews and practices, whether political or religious. They constitute border zones and spaces in-between, from circulating narratives and practices within the complex SC. It is a way of understanding political action, in Foucauldian terms, from the bottom up, where religious voices assume a two-way place: of a dispute of meaning and institutional articulation. Religious advocacy is not understood only as institutionalist pragmatics from the founded places of power but as a fundamental player in the production of sutures, conflicts, and competitions within the fluid world of CSOs. In this sense, the demands raised by religious groups, beyond addressing identity specificities (and their associated theological, historical, and genealogical matrices), engage with discourses, confrontations, and deficiencies within CS. This enables them to establish a dynamic of articulation with other emerging social agents and to advocate across local and global spaces extending beyond traditional arenas such as the State, political parties, and similar institutions.

4. Religious Identities and Processes of *Minoritization*: Case Studies from the Latin American Evangelical Field

Let us analyze the public advocacy processes of evangelical groups in Latin America. We can identify three main grounds: micro-social or community advocacy (focused on the processes of influence of evangelical churches in concentrated social spaces, such as small groups or communities, neighborhoods or assistance projects, and the role of individual believers in the participation of public spaces), advocacy at the national level from an institutional agenda (focused on the formation of political parties from the 1980s onwards), and transnational advocacy (linked to the participation of religious sectors in multilateral organizations such as the *Organization of American States* (OAS), the *Inter-American Court of Human Rights* (IACHR) or the *United Nations* (UN), or the creation of “ministries” and networks with a political focus and regional scope).

In recent decades, analyzing these reconfigurations has become one of the most fertile research fields within the religious and social sciences.²¹ Studies of the relationship between evangelicals and public space vary according to the orientations given to the definition of the particularity of the group and its type of relationship with the socio-political. We can find approaches to specific groups that make up the field (such as the extensive works on Pentecostalism²²), definitions of the types of advocacy field²³, or ways of defining the general framing from which the evangelical-political relationship is understood.²⁴

Without falling into analytical reductionism, the study of the evangelical incidence in the public space of the Southern Cone has gone hand in hand with the transformations of the political presence of such groups in Latin America. We find currents of study from the following fields:

1. The impact of demographic growth from the 1950s,
2. The first incursions and attempts to form confessional parties,
3. The place of evangelical communities in the transformations within the popular sectors from the 1990s in the neoliberal conjuncture of the region,
4. And the new processes of regional articulation of evangelical movements from the early 2000s.

²¹ José Míguez Bonino, *Rostros del protestantismo latinoamericano* (Nueva Creación, 1993); Robinson Cavalcanti, “Evangelio y política en América Latina”. In AAVV. *CLADE III* (Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, 1992); Christian Parker, *Popular Religion and Modernization in Latin America* (Orbis Books, 1996); Pablo Deiros, ed. *Los Evangélicos y el poder político en América Latina* (Nueva Creacion/Eerdmans, 1986); Eugenia Fediakova, *Evangélicos, política y sociedad en Chile: dejando “el refugio de las masas,” 1990-2010* (CEEP-IDEA-UdeSantiago, 2013).

²² Miguel Mansilla and Mariela Mosqueira, Eds. *Sociología del pentecostalismo en América Latina* (RIL, 2020).

²³ Miguel Mansilla and Luis Urtubia, *Evangélicos y política en Chile, 1960-1990* (UNAP-RILL, 2018); Miguel Mansilla y Luis Urtubia, *Pensando el pentecostalismo: Drama, protesta, migración y desencanto religioso* (RIL editores, 2021).

²⁴ Nicolás Panotto, “Pluralismo político y pluralismo religioso: nuevos escenarios y matrices analíticas de la relación”. In: Juan Mauricio Renold, Ed., *Religión: estudios antropológicos sobre sus problemáticas* (Editorial Biblos, 2015); “Religión, ciudadanía y espacio público: un acercamiento socio-antropológico y teológico”. *Perspectivas Internacionales*. Vol.11, No.1 (2015).

“...the study of the evangelical incidence in the public space of the Southern Cone has gone hand in hand with the transformations of the political presence of such groups in Latin America.”

The aforementioned research has concentrated more specifically on analyzing the first two axes indicated at the beginning, namely, the micro-social and community dimensions of the impact generated by the work of local churches and individual experiences of believers, as well as the incidence within a national state matrix implied by the visibility and mobilization of some sectors of evangelical churches. However, very few studies focused on a rather regional look and from a multilateral-international political dimension of the field.

Faced with this scenario, the concepts of identity and minoritization, in the framework of a complex notion of public space and the diversification of actions of the evangelical field from the SC, leads us to the need to specify how the process of self-understanding of evangelical groups unfolds in terms of political action and the impact it has on various fields, especially about the tension that their intervention produces on “common senses” and practices established in local, national and regional instances of incidence. In order to develop this, we will concentrate on two topics: as a way of example, the need to diversify and make the categorizations of the evangelical field more complex, especially given the use of “the value agenda” by some groups, and the transformations that currently exist in terms of evangelical advocacy in the Inter-American system. Both topics will help us understand how the logic of minoritization of the evangelical field has been mutating in terms of conceptualization and scope, in this case, at the regional level.

Regarding the need to diversify the ways of categorizing the evangelical field, we already know that it represents the first religious minority in Latin America after the Roman Catholic Church. Its growth process since the 1950s, especially under the figure of Pentecostalism, has made this group of churches and organizations reach a fundamental achievement within the Latin American public space, to the point, in some cases, of becoming a determining agent in certain political situations.

“...the concepts of *identity* and *minoritization*...leads us to the need to specify how the process of *self-understanding of evangelical groups* unfolds in terms of *political action* and the *impact* it has on various fields...”

First, it is worth clarifying that the Latin American evangelical field is highly heterogeneous. Regarding the modes of linkage between evangelicals and politics, we can analyze them from a denominational perspective (i.e., how each actor understands this link) and from ideal types, which intertwine the relationships more complexly and go beyond the identity specificities.

Concerning the latter, three modes can be highlighted: one rather critical-progressive, linked to ecumenical spaces, with the influence of liberation theology, commitment to leftist political models, and a discourse akin to human rights. Another neo-conservative, bordering in some cases on fundamentalism, where the relationship is conceived in moral terms through the defense of a traditional value agenda and with various levels of political incidence (from communities with more localized work to others with a strong presence in the institutional political bureaucracy and even political lobbying). A third category, progressive congregationalism, represents a group of churches and groups that do not want to relate to the conservative and fundamentalist spectrum but neither to the “extreme”—as some claim—of ecumenical and liberationist voices. The latter represents a very diffuse and heterogeneous spectrum of traditional evangelical expressions that question many conservative practices, especially in terms of social advocacy, but stay away from sensitive issues, especially those related to gender issues.

However, these three trends do not represent all the possible modes of identification between the evangelical field and politics. We can find very dissimilar and even antagonistic types in each group. As we know, recognizing a discursive or identity framework does not necessarily imply that local communities or particular believing subjects assume and resignify these guidelines exclusively.

“Regarding the modes of linkage between *evangelicals* and *politics*, we can analyze them from a *denominational perspective*...and from *ideal types*...”

From a vision of the processes of minoritization, we could ask the following questions:

- How do evangelical churches identify their political role and place in the public space?
- How does the distinction between religion and politics, the sacred and the profane, the Church, and the world, act as cosmo-visionary devices of incidence?
- In what way does the evangelical drive and resignify socio-political practices and notions?
- What role has the evangelical church played in the reconceptualization of a secular state?

To answer these inquiries, we will analyze some concrete facts within the neo-conservative sector, which is gaining increasing visibility at the public level, from national to regional. The first element to highlight is how these evangelical churches have been mutating in the conception of their political role. During the 1980s, with the return of democratic regimes in Latin America, there were attempts to form evangelical political parties, which ultimately failed. The dissolution of these efforts led their members to join traditional political parties in their countries and continue their advocacy work from there.²⁵ It is worth noting that these efforts were coordinated by individuals belonging to churches and not by church structures in an official and institutional manner. At that time, there was still significant resistance in the churches to engage in the political arena. During the 1990s, despite the absence of a notorious presence of believers (at least explicitly assumed) within partisan efforts or in legislative positions, evangelical churches as local communities achieved a significant growth and an important influence in neglected sectors of Latin American societies. As stated by Daniel Míguez in the case of Argentine Pentecostalism, this presence occurred in the absence of state and public policies on fundamental needs.²⁶

“...recognizing a *discursive or identity framework* does not necessarily imply that local communities or particular believing subjects *assume and resignify* these *guidelines exclusively*.”

²⁵ Hilario Wynarczyk, *Sal y luz a las naciones. Evangélicos y política en la Argentina (1980-2001)*, (Instituto Di Tella-Siglo XXI, 2010).

²⁶ Daniel Míguez. “Why Are Pentecostals Politically Ambiguous? Pentecostalism and Politics in Argentina 1983-1995”. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 67 (1999).

During this decade, we can identify a shift in several levels. On the one hand, the “geography” of evangelical groups changes (especially in neo-Pentecostal groups) through a turn from popular sectors to others closer to the middle and upper-middle class. This contrasts with traditional analyses that only see evangelical presence in marginal sectors. On the other hand, it is a period of great social crises in several countries of the continent, especially between 1995 and 2002. This situation led many evangelical communities to rethink their political leading role so that not only the presence of individual actors but also churches, organizations, networks, and denominations in instances such as neighborhood assemblies, articulated work with NGOs, dialogue with municipalities, provincial and national ministries, for the development of contingency actions, among other efforts, began to be evidenced. This is what Hilario Wynarczyk²⁷ calls the transition from a negative dualism (where there was a marked distinction between “Church” and “world,” without many ways of connection between one and the other) to a positive dualism (where the Church-world distinction is maintained, but now from a vocation of social moralization, that is, where the Church feels called to respond to the crisis of the context in order to change it).

“During the 1990s, despite the absence of a notorious presence of believers...within *partisan* efforts or in *legislative* positions, *evangelical churches as local communities* achieved a significant *growth* and an important *influence* in neglected sectors of Latin American societies. ”

Here arises the second element to consider: this transformation around the self-perception of the political dimension of the churches (where the political no longer meant only a way of being present in partisan bodies or established institutional structures but with the experience of faith, of the ecclesial task and the dynamics of the “spiritual world” in the daily life of believers and communities). This leads to the construction of a type of advocacy centered on the promotion of a “value agenda” focused on issues of sexuality, gender, pro-life perspective, and family, and from there on, the opposition to issues such as public policies on sex education, equal marriage, decriminalization and legalization of abortion, among others.

²⁷ Hilario Wynarczyk, *Ciudadanos de dos mundos. El movimiento evangélico en la vida pública argentina, 1980-2001* (UNSAM Edita, 2010).

“[Great social crises between 1995 and 2002] led many evangelical communities to rethink their political leading role so that not only the presence of individual actors but also churches, organizations, networks, and denominations...[began to be evidenced for the development of contingency actions].”

In other words, the type of advocacy focuses, as Emmanuel Sivan says, on constructing an enclave culture, or as Marcos Carbonelli proposes, a politics of moralization.²⁸ This does not mean that the political perception of these communities has left aside other fields, namely, advocacy in terms of social development, education, health, or economic growth. However, these same actions are seen as responses to promoting a moral scale, where the signifiers “family” and “values” assume a central and distinctive place concerning other projects.

There are many examples we could mention in this line: the campaign “Don’t mess with my children” in Peru, the mobilizations against the legalization and decriminalization of abortion in Chile and Argentina, the joint action between Evangelicals and Catholics to stop the comprehensive sex education law in Panama, the impact of the evangelical bench in Brazil concerning the treatment of human rights agendas, or the victory of the “no” vote in the first popular consultation in Colombia on the peace process, a result primarily attributed to the mobilization of evangelical churches that linked the treaty to gender ideology, among many others.

This process relates to the distinction between public and private spheres in modernity, where what is considered “non-political” rises to strain the boundaries of politics. However, in addition to this, there are two factors worth highlighting. First, it is no coincidence that these agendas have become more visible at a time of regional political juncture of great polarization, following the arrival of governments of a new ideological stamp between 2000 and 2015, often referred to as populist, progressive, or left-wing, which assumed an ideological position more centered on a discourse aligned with human rights.

²⁸ Marcos Carbonelli. “Evangélicos y política en Argentina: entre la institucionalización y la autonomía”. *Mitológicas*, Vol. XXIII. (2008): 47-65

Hence, the protagonism of some evangelical churches with their political-moral agenda responds not only to a historical positioning but to the attention of a particular situation, where opposing various bills or promoting specific issues implies taking a position in political terms and serving as a catalyst perspective in a scenario of dispute of meaning, articulating part of the citizenry as well as political movements, CSOs and even political parties, within a much broader agenda on moralization and transformation of a “corrupt” scenario in political, social and cultural terms.

In other words, the political banners of some evangelical groups do not only respond to the visibility of a particular identity positioning but to an intentional action of articulation with a set of broader political phenomena, where churches are placed as agents of greater reliability and empathy than other social actors, including emerging ones. Churches are acquiring significant symbolic capital by resignifying the political through a discourse presented as “de-ideologized” in a climate of disbelief and disenchantment with traditional politics. Moreover, we observe how the logic of minoritization within a particular evangelical sector—despite its limited demographic density—catalyzes a broader social crisis. Their voices emerge as counterpoints to other political and civil society agents, who have come under scrutiny. This scrutiny arises both from the fallout of the crisis facing progressive governments in power and from tensions within society itself regarding the treatment of social and public policies on sensitive issues, such as those affecting the LGBTIQ community, feminism, sexual education, and more.

“Churches are acquiring significant symbolic capital by resignifying the *political* through a discourse presented as “de-ideologized” in a climate of disbelief and disenchantment with traditional politics.”

Here is a second important element: the political dimension of many evangelical groups is reflected as places of (intra and extra-ecclesial) articulation and differentiation. On the one hand, it is striking that what theology could not do for centuries, social mobilization did it: we are referring to the new “ecumenism” between Evangelical and Catholic conservative groups. For a long time, this term has been resisted by many Christian groups in Latin America, considering it as a liberal or political scheme. However, common political objectives have caused this term to be redefined from a pragmatic point of view.

On the other hand, the influence of evangelical sectors in regional organisms such as the Inter-American system is increasingly noticeable, as we will see later. In all these cases, political action is carried out with a high level of organization, institutionality, and formality and with very concrete agendas around the articulation not only among themselves but also with other political actors who pursue the same objectives. However, it is worth noting that the results of this type of advocacy are not homogeneous. Let us look at the example of Colombia:

“...the influence of evangelical sectors in regional organisms such as the Inter-American system is increasingly noticeable, ...”

While the mobilization of evangelical churches in favor of a “no” to the peace process had a significant impact, the evangelical pastors and candidates who were the leaders of this campaign and ran in the parliamentary elections a few months later did not manage to gain the support of those same churches. Something similar happened during the primary elections in 2019—also called *Primary, Open, Simultaneous, and Mandatory* (PASO)—in Argentina, where the formula that presented itself as “the evangelical option,” made by Juan José Gómez Centurión and Cynthia Hotton, which obtained media support from famous pastors and *ACIERA*—the largest evangelical federation in the country—for its activism in favor of life and family, and therefore against any policy in favor of the legalization and decriminalization of abortion, finally managed to reach only 2.84% of the votes. This figure is extremely low compared to the 14% of evangelicals at a national level. The picture differs from that of President Milei, who received significant support from the evangelical community—not for religious reasons, but due to moral and ideological factors, reflecting broader societal trends.

This allows us to identify a fundamental operation. When it comes to defending themselves against what is understood as a threat to some constitutive element of the Church, as represented by what is called “gender ideology,” the neoconservative communities act almost as a block. However, this reality will not necessarily translate into electoral results, where the partisan options are much more diverse. Here, the complexity of the relationship between political and ecclesial institutions is evident: the visions of the leadership and the general community do not always overlap. Therefore, the evangelical and political relationship manifests complex and heterogeneous scenarios.²⁹

²⁹ Marcos Carbonelli, “Poder religioso sociedad y clase política: a propósito del debate sobre la despenalización del aborto”. *Revista Oleada* (2018)

The processes of articulation of these logics of minority ownership not only show a level of organization in the influence of these groups but also the appropriation of a *modus operandi* that aims to take advantage of the gap that opens up from the crisis of credibility of monopolistic political discourses and practices, based on a set of actions centered on the logic of civil society organizations, as a growing space of dispute at the national, regional and global level.

“[*President Milei*] received significant support from the evangelical community – not for religious reasons, but due to moral and ideological factors, reflecting broader societal trends.”

During this period, a change in political strategy is evident, especially among neo-conservative evangelical sectors, regarding regional reach and their immersion within multilateral influence instances, such as the inter-American system. Many efforts have been created since the beginning of 2000. For example, consider the case of *Parliament and Faith*, an international US ministry that began operating in 2009 in Latin America, starting in Argentina and extending its presence to Paraguay, Bolivia, Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela, Colombia, and even Spain and Italy. It began as a ministry that organized prayer and biblical reflection meetings for members of Congress and politicians in municipalities and provided pastoral care to political leaders who requested it. Over time, they have managed to have meetings with many political parties and officials, participate in consultation instances (local and regional), and organize meetings between evangelical legislators from all over the continent to establish common strategies.

“[*Parliament and Faith*] have managed to have meetings with many political parties and officials, participate in consultation instances, and organize meetings between evangelical legislators from all over the continent to establish common strategies.”

Another recognized effort is the *Ibero-American Congress for Life and Family*, an event of Latin American scope whose first call was in 2017, and which, from the second meeting in February 2018, established a work agenda at the political level, with five particular points to:

1. Develop coordination mechanisms with other Ibero-American entities that share common efforts;
2. Launch a *Political Study Center*;
3. Prepare NGO coalitions to achieve presence and voice in the *Organization of American States* (OAS) assemblies and other international organizations;
4. Launch an evangelical media network for Latin America in digital format, and
5. Create a *Fraternity of Evangelical Parliamentarians*.

The influence of this group became evident during the OAS Civil Society Assembly held in Washington, DC, on June 4-5, 2018. They registered three coalitions, representing 37 CSOs: the *Ibero-American Evangelical Congress Coalition*, the *Brazilian Coalition*, and the *Education and Culture Coalition for Democracy*. The demands were along the same lines: the claim of the historical postponement of the evangelical sectors within the OAS, the scientific defense of the gestation of life from conception, and the rejection of policies that go against the traditional family as the central nucleus of society. All these points are stated from a discourse that appeals to sensitivity for human rights and the defense of life. Over the years, they added two more coalitions.³⁰ To show the heterogeneity of the religious presence in the CS within these organizations, *Religions, Beliefs, and Spiritualities in Dialogue with Civil Society* coalition also participated in that same assembly. This coalition, as mentioned in its speech at the assembly, represents “a group of more than twenty organizations from all over Latin America and the Caribbean, which belong to FBOs as well as to CS, and which work together to make critical worldviews visible from the multiple ways of living faith and beliefs, based on human rights and dignity, in addition to the development and promotion of inclusive policies, as legitimized by international legal instruments.” This coalition results from the joint work between these religious actors and the *Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy* (REDLAD). This organization brings together more than three hundred civil society organizations throughout the continent.

³⁰ Nicolás Panotto, “Incidencia religiosa en clave multilateral: la presencia de Redes Políticas Evangélicas en las Asambleas de la OEA.” *Revista Cultura y Religión*. Vol. 14, No. 1 (2020): 100-120.

In short, we can say that a reading of the evangelical field from the logic of minoritization leads us, on the one hand, to identify the tensions and divergences that are brewing within the field itself, which indicates to us that the processes of evangelical political representations are far from being homogeneous. At the same time, this logic—which, as we have seen, can take on a very varied set of representations and performances—is inscribed within a much broader field of political dispute, making evangelical sectors act as spaces to drive broader conflicts of social meaning and respond to specific demands in contexts of crisis and loss of legitimacy of political agents or discourses, giving rise to diversification of institutional articulations and games.

“...a reading of the *evangelical field* from the *logic of minoritization* leads us...to *identify the tensions and divergences* that are brewing within the field itself, which indicates to us that the processes of *evangelical political representations* are far from being homogeneous.”

We can conclude that there is a mutation in the way in which evangelical groups perceive their socio-political role, moving from being an exogenous phenomenon to a constitutive element of their “being church.” In this way, we can relate the redefinition of the political dimension of evangelical communities with the transformations of the same political field at a regional level, where there is a greater predominance of the social role of new subjects and CSOs, which not only link but also strain, subvert, and challenge the traditional notions of politics and its practices. In this case, religion denotes an identity framework and an epicenter from which to discern politics.

This leads us to confirm that the incidence centered on a value agenda implies not only the defense of a particular position of some churches within this religious scope but also the demarcation of a border of definitions with other socio-political actors. “The private,” a field historically protected by the ecclesiastical institutions, assumes its political impact by framing itself as a way of confronting other meanings and practices within a heterogeneous public space plagued by polarizations, assuming a way of channeling other processes, as a response to the demand for social stability and political renewal or the construction of new practices of influence, by social sectors and political groups, whether SC or part of the governing institutionality.

“...the incidence centered on a *value agenda* implies not only the defense of a particular position of some churches within this *religious scope* but also the demarcation of a *border of definitions* with other *socio-political actors*.”

In other words, the “value agenda” that represents the activism of neo-conservative evangelical sectors has become a locus of counter-reaction of social meaning from a broad understanding involving a varied and heterogeneous set of social agents, which in turn responds to a very diverse field of social demands, even more so in a situation of polarization and social weariness concerning traditional political models.

The issue of “the religious” has also become a web of disputes and tensions within the CS organizations. Historically, the latter have resisted joining forces with religious groups due to the assertive secularism that reigned in this sector. This led to a refusal to join ecclesiastical agents, who have also remained outside their field of action. Given the transformations stated, various groups that comprise the conglomerate of CSOs have created instances of dialogue with the religious field, creating bridges of joint action and dialogue and articulating the development of various projects. These situations, in their various expressions and ideological positions, are not only the result of the growing presence of religion in the public space but also of how religious organizations and institutions provide a framework of symbolic and social legitimation in a context of antagonisms and polarizations. In other words, the emergence of religious sectors in the SC also responds to socio-political phenomena that exceed the sole intention of religious participation or protagonism.

Finally, we see how these dynamics reflect the emerging scenario of political processes (local and global) and a new way of conceiving the relationship between religions, politics, and public space. Here, hermeneutic strategies demanded as epicenters of political construction, tensions over interpretive dynamics, lobbying, and advocacy processes, among others, reflect a scenario of profound change in the understanding of a political phenomenon that is going beyond certain local reductionisms and is being transposed into a field of global influence.

“...various groups that comprise the conglomerate of CSOs have created *instances of dialogue* with the religious field, *creating bridges of joint action* and *dialogue* and *articulating the development of various projects*.”

5. Conclusion

This essay attempts to complexify the analysis of a particular and even constitutive element of the sociocultural dynamics in Latin America, namely the relationship between religion and politics. As mentioned, the presence and study of this link runs parallel to the continent's history. Each cycle of this journey also has its emphasis: the construction of national sovereignties and the role of the Church, the advance of liberalism and the expansion of religious freedom, the migratory wave of the mid-twentieth century and the growth of religious expressions (predominantly non-Christian), the participation of religious actors in decisive circumstances such as revolutions or military dictatorships, among other key moments.

In this opportunity, we use the category of identities or identification processes to account for the diversification of the links between the pluralization of the religious field as well as the civil one in the background of what we can identify as another fundamental stage, such as the post-1980s process and the recovery of democracies in Latin America (especially in South America). This parallels the advance of neoliberal policies that weakened the State's and its institutions' role, which implied a diversification of social agents in the public space to respond to what that institution could not reach. Religious communities were fundamental actors in this process.

Therefore, the idea of religious identities allowed us to see the following concerning this phenomenon:

- That the diversification of the religious field impacts the diversification of the social field and its political and cultural expressions.

- This pluralization of the religious field entails a plural understanding of the possible links between the religious, the civil, and the political.

- That religious groups and expressions are not homogeneous but have wide internal diversity.

- The political dimension of the religion does not reside only with what type of actors it relates to but responds to an intrinsic characteristic of its constitution as a field of socialization and community.

- That is how religious groups influence and adapt to how the political system is constructed and mutates according to the demands, going from the local to the global.

Having said this, we see that Latin America has developed what we call in this paper a process of *minoritization* of religious advocacy. That is a “double process” in which religious institutions diversify into different ways of influencing the public sphere and thus assume different projects and articulations with other social agents and organizations. In the particular framework of the Christian majority in the Latin American region, this indicates that advocacy does not only come from the actions of ecclesiastical authorities or that it is focused only on the role of ecclesiastical institutions. Instead, we can account for various organizations, networks, movements, and collectivities, which show configuration forms in institutional terms and different types of political agendas.

Finally, the cases mentioned within the Latin American evangelical field show that this diversification does not involve a single spectrum but crosses the religious phenomenon in all possible expressions, theologies, and ideologies. Here, “the political” is not only a field where the religious operates as an external actor. Instead, it represents an intrinsic dimension of its constitution as a field, which allows us to see why the field of sacred beliefs is a fundamental and not an annexed part of regional political dynamics.

In analyzing this phenomenon within the Latin American context, we are left with a fundamental question, which we could place as a source of other questions: How do religions and spiritualities contribute to regional democratic development? The possible cases in this regard are equally paradoxical. Although we see that in all cases, there is a process of adapting to the transformations in the public space, in some, they legitimize practices of democratic regression, and in others, they contribute to its defense. In this sense, there remains the challenge of continuing the debate within the framework of regional religious advocacy, not only on how political practice operates but also on a broader discussion of ethical commitments to democracy, which often comes into tension with the particular agendas of some religious groups. Beyond that, we can recognize that the political diversification of religious identities responds to its intrinsic commitment to social dynamics, with its tensions, challenges, demands, and needs.

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About the CFG

The Center for Faith, Identity, and Globalization (CFG) is the interdisciplinary research and publication unit of Rumi Forum. CFG contributes to the knowledge and research at the intersection of faith, identity, and globalization by generating semi-academic analyses and facilitating scholarly exchanges. CFG's spectrum of themes will cover contemporary subjects that are relevant to our understanding of the connection between faith, identity, and globalization, such as interfaith engagement, religious nationalism, conflict resolution, globalization, religious freedom, and spirituality.

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