The presence of Pentecostalism in social movements: a case study with a psychosocial approach

La presencia del pentecostalismo en movimientos sociales: un estudio de caso con enfoque psicosocial

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Abstract

The staggering growth of Pentecostalism within the impoverished classes has produced effects on the community functioning of popular organizations. Based on Cultural-Historical Psychology and Liberation Psychology, we aimed to investigate the senses assigned to the presence of the evangelical church by militants of a housing movement located in the city of São Paulo. The material used for the discussion consists of field diary records and interview reports. We observed in this context that the church, while promoting the development of bonds and support networks, contributes to the concealment of the social determinants of the reality experienced, replacing them with religious elements. The church also provides a parallel dimension of engagement and participation that, at times, competes with the direct participation in the struggle for rights.

Palabras clave

Pentecostalismo; Movimientos sociales; Psicología Social; Religión

Resumen

El crecimiento vertiginoso del pentecostalismo entre las capas más empobrecidas ha tenido efectos en el funcionamiento comunitario de las organizaciones populares. Desde la Psicología Histórico-Cultural y la Psicología de la Liberación, buscamos investigar los sentidos atribuidos a la presencia de la iglesia evangélica por militantes de un movimiento habitacional ubicado en la región periférica de la ciudad de São Paulo. El material utilizado para la discusión consiste en registros de diarios de campo e informes de entrevistas. Se observó en este contexto que la iglesia, si bien promueve la construcción de vínculos y redes de apoyo, contribuye al ocultamiento de los determinantes sociales de la realidad que viven, reemplazandolos por elementos religiosos. La iglesia también tiene una dimensión paralela de compromiso y participación que a veces compite con la participación directa en la lucha por los derechos.

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Introduction

Pentecostalism first arrived in Brazil in 1910, brought by Swedish missionaries who came from the United States and settled in the northern region of Brazil. (Freston, 1995). At this time, the religion was marked by strong sectarianism and asceticism regarding the world, a spiritual experience with Christ, healing through faith, and simply rituals (Mariano, 2014).

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, Pentecostalism underwent changes in the way it guided its practices, mainly by intensifying the use of the healing of illnesses as a result of divine action, the appropriation of modern media

(such as radio), and increasing attention towards the lower classes (Freston, 1995). During this period, the global expansion of Pentecostalism was noted, thus becoming, in the first decades of the 21st century, the religious denomination with the greatest adherence of new followers in Brazil (Alves et al., 2017) and with a significant presence in several regions worldwide (Seman, 2019).

According to Paul Freston (2013), in the global scenario of Pentecostalism growth, Brazil has been regarded as a privileged region for studying the social dynamics that involve this religious segment. When considering the outskirts of the twelve main Brazilian metropolitan regions, there are approximately 54 Evangelicals for every 100 Catholics, while in the core/capital of the same regions there are 41 Evangelicals (Alves et al., 2017). In addition to being from the outskirts, the most common profile among Pentecostal followers is being female and black, where 58% of the followers are female and 59% are black, and this percentage is above the national average of women and black people (Balloussier, 2020).

Brazilian Pentecostalism reached social repercussion in the 1970s because of the changes it had been presenting compared to classic Pentecostalism — the reason why it was also referred to as Neo-Pentecostalism. Such updates are related to three points, namely: preaching about prosperity theology; the exacerbation of dominion theology; and the liberation of uses and habits (Mariano, 2014).

Prosperity Theology is the religious doctrine that understands faith in God as a path to achieving good health, wealth, happiness, and power. According to this logic, evangelical Christians are considered to be worthy of an abundant life, and God's plan is to make them prosperous in all aspects of life. Several preachers in this religion add to the prosperity theology the principle of reciprocity: you have to give tithing in order to receive God's blessings. It is necessary to give God what belongs to us (life, strength, and money) and, in turn, what belongs to God (blessings, peace, and protection) will also belong to us (Mariano, 2014).

Dominion Theology presumes that there is a constant struggle for dominion over humanity between God and the Devil. Human beings, whether consciously or not, are participants in this holy war, either voluntarily joining the divine side or allowing themselves to be drawn in by the evil forces (Mariano, 2014). For Pentecostal preachers and believers, everything that happens on the earthly plane is a result of this battle, ranging from daily events to social issues, in such a way that the forces of evil are expressed in loneliness, depression, unemployment, marital fights, and addictions (Souza et al., 2019).

The third aspect responsible for updating Pentecostalism is the liberation of uses and habits that marked the demands of the classic Pentecostal churches regarding moral discipline in relation to the life experience of the biblical text. Such flexibility has made room for the Pentecostal insertion in the most diverse aspects that surround the believers' lives, creating an evangelical modality about everything that had been previously rejected, such as carnival, funk, and fashion, to name a few. In contrast, the spread to various spheres of public life enabled by the liberation of some norms is carried out simultaneously with the repression of guidelines that had long been condemned, such as practices related to sexual and gender diversity, the decriminalization of abortion, and use of alcohol and other drugs (Mariano, 2014).

Since the last decades of the 20th century, a progressive insertion of Brazilian Pentecostalism into the public sphere — whether institutionalized or not — has been noted, aiming to compete for the direction of society and updating the traditional relationship between politics and religion (Burity, 2001; Teixeira & Barbosa, 2022). Paula Montero et al. (2018) perceive Pentecostalism as a strong representative of the current way of "performing religion in public" that relies on the extensive use of media and dramatic performance to garner a strength of moral and political contestation over public debates in contemporary society.

Compelled by the progressive public influence of religion and its strong representation among the popular strata, some studies have analyzed the presence of Pentecostal evangelical religious segments in contexts of struggles for rights and community organizations (Ferreira & Almeida, 2016; Swatowiski & Barbosa, 2019). Although it consists of a plurality of stakeholders and cosmologies within this theological framework, such presence is noticeable by the number of militants who self-declare pentecostals and by the emergence of churches in social movements.

In the cases where it was possible to note the presence of evangelical churches in contexts of struggles for rights, the practices and principles of religion started to mediate these relationships, the comprehension of events, and the members' expectations for the future, significantly affecting the community organization of that location. The social movements, which had garnered the community resources until then, had different ways of relating to religion, sometimes with a greater or lesser divergence and perceived conflicts (Ferreira & Almeida, 2016; Swatowiski & Barbosa, 2019).

The configuration that the relationship between these contexts can assume is precisely the research interest of the present study. The findings of the cited studies will be presented in more detail along with the discussion of our results. This discussion

leads to the question that guided this article: *How do the principles and practices of Pentecostalism relate to those of the struggle for rights, in this case, the right to housing?* Adopting this question as a guiding point, we aimed to investigate the meanings assigned by activists regarding the presence of the evangelical church in a housing movement occupation.

Theoretical context of the research

For Lev Vygotski (1934/1982), the articulations between the senses and the meanings are responsible for the representation of reality in the consciousness of individuals. The senses comprise the sum of subjective mobilizations that emerge from the words understood in a context, a process which is mediated by the subject's entire psychological constitution up to that moment. The meaning, in turn, is only one dimension of the senses, which is the most precise and stable, and which, due to being socially shared, enables communication between people.

The relationship of the senses and meanings with the environment and with each individual's subjectivity occurs in a complex and profound manner, mediated by the connection to places and people, memories, feelings of varying tones, the social roles performed, the greater or lesser elaboration that the subjects have of the concepts, as well as other elements that compose their relationship with the world and with themselves. The effect of words and their signification dynamics echoes in the subjectivity, enabling the most diverse psychological mobilizations that are transfigured into images and narratives, stimulating the memory and imagination, drawing them closer to and distancing them from the understanding shared by other individuals and groups (Smolka, 2004).

As well as Vygotski, Ignácio Martín-Baró (1988) understands that every action, based on the use of language, is referenced to a system of meanings. However, the author adds that the system of meanings culturally available is permeated by social interests of dominant groups that, through ideological devices, imprint their power in the composition of social and psychological reality. In the relationship of subjects with their environment, ideology carries out roles such as "(a) providing meaning in the face of the great questions posed by human existence; (b) justifying the value of the social order to all sectors of the population; (c) enabling the normative internalization of the social order by groups and people" (Martín-Baró, 1985/1990, p. 105, own translation). Ideology, by performing these functions, conceals and simultaneously operationalizes the interests of the dominant classes, in a way that distorts the conscious understanding of reality by the masses of people. As a result of this process, Martín-Baró (1987) proposes the concept of fatalism to designate the stance of resignation before the op-

pressive reality attributed to Latin American sectors of the population due to the internalization of social domination enabled by ideological mechanisms.

Ideology provides the meaning and the image with which subjects will apply to their actions so that they acquire sense. The totality of social interests in articulation with ideological mechanisms provide the basis and significance for human actions. Thus, action —being a synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity, whose particularities are appreciated and historically related to the social structure— can be compatible with the interests of the dominant classes, those of a class in particular, or with an articulation of both (Martín-Baró, 1988).

From the contribution of both authors, it is possible to understand the attribution of senses regarding the situations experienced as a process that occurs in the midst of specific social interests and ideological devices. Therefore, the critical understanding of the production of senses enables an analysis of the ideological processes mobilized in each space and their effects on subjectivity and on collective and individual courses of action. In the present study, this process is set in Pentecostal religious spaces and its effects on the psychological reality of people who are, simultaneously, in churches and social movements.

Method

The field materials used for the development of this study consist of field diary records and interviews with three militants of a movement struggling for housing, participating in a housing occupation in the city of São Paulo: a shepherd, a grassroots militant, and the main leadership of the occupation. The housing movement occupation in question has been in place for approximately three years. In this occupation, there are three Evangelical Pentecostal churches.

This present article is part of a larger research project aiming to investigate the critical formation processes in the collective spaces of a housing occupation (Almeida, 2022). The discussion concerning the effects of the presence of the evangelical church in the social movement for the critical formation process of the militants and the relations established between both spaces proved to warrant further research in light of the social problematics involved and the limited Social Psychology production on this theme.

As a case study in community psychology, we understand the investigation of psychosocial processes and relationships in the community based on the language and methodology of this field, whose investigation aims to be based on a dialogic and

participatory character, in addition to having a political stance aiming towards transformation and social emancipation (Montero, 2006). In light of this, we have adopted participant observation, recording the data on a field diary, as well as individual and face-to-face interviews based on a semi-structured questionnaire.

The participant observation had the purpose of enabling the closest possible experience of the phenomenon under study, a circumstance where we are personally exposed to what would be the scope of reflection (Gonçalves Filho, 2003). According to Ecléa Bosi's (2003) guidelines, we aimed to register in the field diaries all the perceptions, anguish, and dilemmas experienced within the religious services and in the informal conversations with the interviewees during the field visits to the occupation, which were carried out weekly for approximately 11 months, from 2019 to 2020.

The interviewees were selected according to what we aimed to understand and who could provide additional information (Montero, 2006). The interview focused on the life story and the experiences in the collective spaces present within the occupation; in this article, we focus the discussion on the testimonies related to the evangelical churches. The audio-recorded content was transcribed in full. The Informed Consent Form was read to the participants, explaining the ethical guarantees present in the term, and all agreed with and signed it.

The analysis procedure initially focused on the appreciation of each interviewee's statements in order to investigate the senses assigned to the Pentecostal church in the occupation movement and the life experiences related to this space. Subsequently, we then carried out analyses of the topics that permeate the individual statements to explore the elements that converge, differ, or contradict themselves, and that satisfy the interests mobilized by this study's objective and by its guiding question.

All names mentioned are fictional. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology at the University of São Paulo.

Results and discussion

Introduction of the interviewees

Carlos, evangelical leadership

Carlos is 49 years old, black, from São Paulo, and works as a cook and a shepherd. He became an evangelical christian during the time he spent in prison, when he was

between 18 and 35 years old. He said that his religious conversion was similar to awakening from a "spiritual blindness" and that God's company was vital to face the adversities of his years in prison.

A few months after his leaving from prison, Carlos rented a property and moved in with Luciana, to whom he is currently married. The couple had difficulties with rent payments until they learned of the occupation movement which was associated with the struggle for housing: "I needed to breathe, paying rent was unbearable, and the Lord blessed us here. I came here certain that it was God who sent me here" (Carlos, personal interview, December 2019).

With the support of some occupants, Carlos built a church in the occupation movement and started to hold church meetings three times a week.

Lourdes, grassroots activist

Lourdes is 56 years old, black, and works as a housewife. Lourdes came across Pentecostalism for the first time when she was 28 years old. She was going through a difficult pregnancy and, as she was unable to receive care at the hospital, she decided to go to a church to receive a prayer. The shepherdess told her "your labor is tied! [...] Come again to the church service so that God can break it!" (Lourdes, personal interview, October 2019). On that same day, Lourdes says she managed to receive medical attention. She followed the doctor's and the shepherdess' instructions and had her daughter; both of them went through this period in good health. Since then, she has had a strong bond with the Pentecostal church.

Lourdes built her house on a plot of land she bought more than 20 years ago, the monthly payments for which are still being paid today. She currently lives in this house with her children, grandchildren, and sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, experiencing a condition of high domestic density. The overcrowded conditions combined with the lack of resources has created an environment that, in her words, is defined as a "mess" and "chaos", which motivated her to join the housing movement.

Neuza, housing movement leadership

Neuza is the only interviewee who is not evangelical. She is 50 years old, white, Catholic, from São Paulo, and works as a trainer and leader of the occupation movement being researched. At the age of 18, Neuza started working as a maid and at that time met a man with whom she had a son. Towards the end of the 1990s, when she was about to turn 30, she got a divorce and started renting a room in a slum down-

town. It was at this time that she came across the housing movements, since some meetings of the social movement were held in the premises of the Catholic church she attended.

Since joining the housing movement, Neuza progressively deepened the importance she assigned to the role of militant, becoming a leader in the social movement. In 2015, Neuza, along with other movement leaders, started to investigate the processes of non-compliance with the social role of the land upon which the occupation movement currently stands.

Field material analysis

The meanings assigned to the Pentecostal church in the occupation movement and the subjective effects of pentecostalism

Carlos and Lourdes have converted to Pentecostalism at a time when they felt utterly helpless to face the adversities and hardships that a society imposed on them. Both found in the church, either through the Bible or through the friendship bonds with other evangelicals, the support needed to have the strength and to be able to endure the difficult situation in which they lived. Becoming evangelical meant having access to an important community support network for the participants, present not only in the outskirts, but also in penitentiaries (Spyer, 2020), as it is possible to note in Carlos' case.

Along with the need for decent housing, the religious aspects were also motivating them to join the social movement:

> When I came here, I wanted to get a little piece of land to build a preaching place. Then I built two rooms for myself in the corner, and in the other part I built a hall, which was destined to be a preaching place. (Lourdes, personal interview, October 2019)

> My project aimed to build a church here, and within this church we could train professionals, upon the professionals that already existed within the church. Let's say I'm a cook, and someone else is a welder… And then, we could bring the families in to learn something new, to get out of this situation where they're deprived of having a bathroom, of having good flooring, of having a good house. Where they could leave, let's say, anonymity and be able to say, "I'm currently living in a wooden shack, but tomorrow I want to have a palace built here". (Carlos, personal interview, December 2019)

The acquisition of a plot of land in the occupation movement meets Lourdes and Carlos' motivation to deepen their relationship with the religion and to be in charge of the position of religious leadership that has its own preaching place. The wish of becoming a shepherd, as desired by the participants, is often related to the pursuit for better living conditions and a sense of citizenship, which, in the face of professional advancement challenges, is made possible through being in charge of a socially prestigious position as an evangelical leader (Oosterbaan, 2023).

In coordination with the church that was built, Carlos would like to develop a professional training project within the occupation movement. It is noted that the project has a communitarian and collective dimension for the improvement of concrete living conditions, but, simultaneously, adopts a significant level of individualism when it associates the lack of professional skills training with the "scarcity" experienced.

Based on what is said in the church meetings, the church also contributes to normalizing this social reality and to encouraging a resignation stance towards social hardships.

> The Shepherdess Lucia [invited by Carlos] asks God to open the paths of the followers present, to open the doors to employment, courses, and colleges. She also asks God to clear the enemies out of the way of the believers, and to get them away from harm's way. [...] In the end, she says that God will glorify them. (Field diary, June 2019)

> At a certain moment, the guest shepherd said, "you are here because the world is only going backwards, but the church is still marching forward." After recounting a biblical passage about resilience, he draws a parallel to the reality of the people present, saying that life is like a giant wheel: "there are those who are at the top and those who are at the bottom, and those who are at the bottom will eventually rise, while those who are at the top may always run the risk of falling". (Field diary, September 2019)

It is noted that the idea of supreme power and the responsibility of driving society is assigned to God, including the improvement of people's social conditions; the believers are responsible for strengthening their relationship with the only institution that moves forward, which is the Pentecostal church for them, and wait for the moment of glorification. Faith in God as the driving force of life and as the main actions of subjects to obtain progress in all senses are aspects peculiar to contemporary Pentecostalism, which is driven by the prosperity theology (Mariano, 2014). In summary, the effects of this process are expressed in the frequent mention of

the financial issues and social ascension associated with faith in God as a belief for a better future.

The prospect of prosperity is also mentioned by Carlos when he exposes his thoughts regarding the religious services:

> The work that we do here is great! It benefits people, I think it's something even better than money, which is the so-called spiritual benefit inside your home. And this makes us thank God for the struggles we go through and to see progress. To see people wishing for change, wishing for a new history, you know? This makes me happy, it makes me very happy. (Carlos, personal interview, December 2019)

In the field records and testimonies presented, the elements of life (psychological and social) are always subordinated to God; the church, as a supreme institution, occupies a central and key role in the organization of life. The changes in the course of life are assigned to God, as well as the hope for a better future. In contrast, the negative points are often related to evil forces, to "spiritual blindness".

The work, formal education, and social ascension issues are given religious meanings, which, in a last instance, are understood as the results of divine action, resulting in a combination of spiritual and social aspects where the latter have their roots in the former. Therefore, this process ends up concealing the oppressive reality and its historical nature, in addition to replacing the class struggles and other exclusion processes by the battle between spiritual and transcendent forces of good and evil.

Caio Próchino et al. (2008) state that, when the subjects are faced with helplessness, the promise of healing and progress offered by Pentecostalism triggers a process of subjectivation that is marked by a perverse condition of subjective imprisonment. This happens because, in addition to omitting the social nature of the hardships experienced by the believers and turning the religious exercise into the only way to solve problems that are not of a divine nature, it stimulates the subjects to harness the image of an ideal Self that is certain of its glorification moment. When the promise does not come true or life conditions worsen, the accountability is attributed to the individual and is justified by a lack of belief in God.

The relationship between the Pentecostal Church and the housing movement

Aiming to understand the relationship between the church and the social movement, we asked every interviewee questions about it.

> We don't mix up church affairs with the struggle for housing, these are different stories. The church is here to provide comfort to your spiritual self, to open up paths where you didn't have a better quality of life previously, spiritually speaking. The church isn't part of the occupation movement, the church is apart from any kind of movement. Wherever you have people, you have to hold out the gospel, even in the midst of error, the gospel has to be preached. One doesn't overlap the other. When I came here, I came here aware that I was wrong. [Do you think your stance is wrong?] Yeah, I do. It depends on the point of view, because this land doesn't belong to me, but by the mercy of God, he knows that I'm doing it because I need to, I couldn't keep paying rent and the Lord has blessed us up to now. But I came here because of my strength, I came because I can understand that I know I can get something better in the future. (Carlos, personal interview, December 2019)

For Carlos, the church and the occupation movement are unrelated, they walk upon different paths, and they have different objectives. In his point of view, the church is right, and the occupation movement is wrong. This interpretation demonstrates that in reality, for him, there is an opposing relationship between both contexts, rather than an inexistence of a relationship, as he stated. Carlos is a person who has become immersed in the symbolic religious universe and in the physical space of the church. From this point of view, the struggle for housing, through the act of occupying land in order to live, is interpreted through nuances that intensely contradict each other. This contradiction seems to be solved or, at least, softened by the future hope of leaving the occupation movement to live in a property he may buy or rent. Carlos places his hopes in being able to afford an apartment through the government's housing fostering program, which he has financed in monthly payments of a symbolic value: "One day I may get it, then who knows whether we'll be able to leave the occupation movement and go to our apartment, right?" (Carlos, personal interview, December 2019).

Lourdes, in turn, when questioned whether there was a relationship between the church and the social movement, answered the following:

> No, there isn't! It has nothing to do with the housing movement, it's more like religion... Now there is a [church] in the shed, the one doing this is Shepherd Jonas, who has just arrived. Even children are going. It's good to encourage the children to preach. So this is good, right? At least, it is encouraging them to follow a path in life, a direction towards religion. (Lourdes, personal interview, October 2019)

For the interviewee, there is no relationship between the political elements that involve the occupation movement, worship, and the church. These are marked by the

comfort of the word of the Bible and by the comfort of being able to "tell a testimony" of a "miracle" or "deliverance" (Lourdes, personal interview, October 2019), as mentioned in another moment of the interview. In her point of view, these are spaces that are apart from each other. The presence of the churches in the occupation movement is regarded as positive by Lourdes, considering that all of them are related to the positive senses assigned to the evangelical church, which are reflected, for instance, in the last sentence of her testimony of the church as a good path to follow.

Regarding the churches' relationship with the struggle for housing movement, Neuza, who is part of the occupation leadership, stated:

> I have a solid opinion! I don't see them present within the social context. They come, ask for the land, build their church on it, and that's it! They don't care about the social aspects, they're only worried about themselves! To set up a church and be a shepherd, you've gotta work for the community… You've gotta participate in the meetings! And they don't want to! They are on their own land, they don't want to participate, they don't want to collaborate… They only care about filling the church to promote their name. You either attend their church and do what they want, or they won't even care! And things shouldn't be that way, a movement is not built without help! Because there's a lot of pressure when it comes to holding a movement together! You have to believe in yourself! You've also gotta believe in God, but like, without chasing a spirit in a church! No! Your will, your wishes, must be greater. (Neuza, personal interview, February 2020)

For Neuza, the presence of the churches leads to dissatisfaction and conflicts, considering that the shepherds have no commitment towards the occupation movement and do not contribute to the organization of the collective processes necessary to empower the collective struggle for housing. It is also noticeable in Neuza's report the perception of the churches as spaces that compete for power with the occupation's leadership, for not encouraging participation in the social movement, for narrowing their attention and action down to only those who attend their churches and, mostly, for setting themselves up as guiding the actions and the worldview of their followers.

In general, the studies that have addressed this issue have found that the presence of evangelical churches in social movements have significant effects on the struggle for rights process. As stated in Claudia Swatowiski and Luciano Barbosa's study (2019), it is possible to note that the religious and political dimensions retain a relationship that varies between states of tension, as they oppose each other, and intertwining, as they overlap each other. Our findings are also similar to those of the

aforementioned study regarding the perception that the church has a role that is not conflated with that of the social movement, and that it, in fact, has a parallel dimension of engagement and participation that, at times, competes with the direct participation in the struggle for rights movement.

Fabio Ferreira and Milene Almeida (2016) noted that the activity history of the *Movimento Sem-Terra* (Movement of Landless Rural Workers) in the debate on gender issues was key for the subjective change of the evangelical militants, since it allowed the development of a more critical stance towards the social roles they played, which transformed their own religious identity. In our case, considering that the housing occupation movement under research has been in existence for approximately three years, an initial structuring process of formative actions is still needed to enable a process similar to that reported by Ferreira and Almeida (2016) — regarding the development of sufficient criticality to question the several expressions of speech that aim to normalize the oppressive reality.

The relationship between the principles of Pentecostalism and the principles of the struggle for rights

As Martín-Baró (1988) pointed out, in order to think about the relationship of a collective context with the needs of a social class, it is important to reflect upon the ideological aspects that, through the mediation of specific social interests, provide a basis and assign meaning to the subjects' actions. In our field of research, as we have discussed, it has been found that the mythification of reality occurs so that it can be understood primarily from religious determinants. The social determinants are not discarded, but made secondary and subordinated to the cosmology of Pentecostalism. An example that synthesizes this reflection was when a shepherd, referring to the possibilities of social mobility, told the followers that life was like a Ferris wheel: there are those who are on top and those who are below. Those who are below will move up sometime; those who are above are always at risk of falling down. Such perceptions or senses assigned to the church and the social reality unveil a commitment to a type of ideology and role as the mediator of social interests that do little to stimulate the disclosure of the exploitative social structure.

Despite the perception of reality as something natural and not as a historical product and the resignation regarding the actions for the struggle for rights discussed in the previous paragraphs, there is a new initiative proposed by evangelicals that raises questions when analyzed through the perspective of Martín-Baró's concept of fatalism (1987). At the community level, the evangelicals have a practice of mutual support among themselves, such as referrals for job opportunities, childcare, and

favors that can contribute to the improvement of their quality of life (Spyer, 2020). In our findings, this aspect could be noted in Carlos' statements, when he refers to the support he provided in buying cakes from the girl from the church and in hiring a mason who also attended the same religious congregation. Furthermore, among the changes noted in the Pentecostal movement in the last decades, one of them is the emergence of churches in the dispute for the conduction of society, including within institutional politics (Teixeira and Barbosa, 2022). This new community and political organization has a complex relationship with the notion of resignation towards one's destiny or conformism as a trait of the fatalistic stance, as pointed out by Martín-Baró (1987).

If fatalism means a tragic and inevitable future that collides with the religious understanding of submission to God's will as virtue, and of life as a trial for attaining eternal salvation (Martín-Baró, 1987), Pentecostalism reverses this scenario. Using its own ideological elaboration, it preaches an avoidable fate for its followers, and glorification in life as God's will for its children, inviting them to take action to make it happen. Religion seems to offer its followers a sense of capability and self-esteem in order to motivate them to change their lives and rise socially. In Carlos' statement, this belief emerges when he talks about the professional training project associated with religious formation within a given occupation, whose motivational horizon was synthesized in the following statement: "I'm currently living in a wooden shack, but tomorrow I want to have a palace built here" (Carlos, personal interview, December 2019).

In a broad sense, it is possible to understand that Pentecostalism stimulates and allows subjects to relocate the image they have of themselves, in order to refuse the condition of being oppressed, accepting the condition of someone destined to have prosperity (Lima, 2007). The vertiginous growth of Pentecostalism among the most impoverished layers of society has produced effects on the associativity of the outskirts so that the contradictions adopt forms that retain similarities and differences in relation to the fatalistic stance noted by Martín-Baró (1987). On one hand, the normalization of the unfair reality persists and, on the other, the submission to the idea of a tragic life as fate seems to be discarded. In reality, there is an update of the contradiction that, in part, eludes the understanding of the fatalist concept in a way that this rupture does not take place through the means that Martín-Baró had pointed out: recovery of historical memory, popular organization, and class practice.

Martín-Baró (1990) researched the growth of the Pentecostal religious segment in the midst of the Salvadoran civil war during the 1980s. For the author, changes in religious affiliation were related to changes in political stances, as evangelical subjects, in comparison to other religious groups, tended to adopt individualistic and passive

stances toward the current social order. Martín-Baró (1990) noted that the feeling of existential satisfaction and new meaning to life reported by the participants may be precisely the element that promotes the subjects' alienation from their own reality and from the history of the social groups of which they are a part.

In our field study, in the church meetings, it was possible to note that in addition to the lack of criticism of the social inequities that they experience, there is no reference to elements of historical memory. Attaining eternal salvation and the glorification of life are presented by the shepherds as dependent on the individual relationship of the followers with God. As found by Martín-Baró (1990), even though there are solidarity bonds among the evangelical community in the occupation movement, a prioritization of the individual dimension in relation to the collective is noted, in which the success or failure of the projects rests upon how well an individual has been able to satisfy God's will. Individual accountability for social mobility issues highlights a meritocratic understanding of life and spreads a false idea of autonomy among the followers, being a point of compatibility between contemporary Pentecostalism practices and neoliberal practices, a relationship also found in other studies (Cazavechia and Toledo, 2020; Próchino et al., 2008).

Final considerations

The discussion on the tension between the evangelical church and social movement contexts exposes the dilemma of the resources currently in use by impoverished and stigmatized subjects to cope with the feelings of anguish and dehumanization resulting from social humiliation events.

Bernardo Svartman and Luis Galeão-Silva (2016) have pointed out cases where social movements found in community roles the means to collectively cope with the feelings of social humiliation, turning them into the strength needed for transformative political actions. As a chronic experience felt by generations who have been excluded from the condition of humanity and excluded from initiatives and the use of speech, social humiliation is a psychological issue of political nature. A form of suffering whose elaboration "is rooted in clearly determined collective conditions" (p. 53, own translation), of an existence that presumes participation in the development of a world that is against privatizing and excluding logic (Gonçalves Filho, 1998).

If popular organization, which presumes a communitarian sense and a political horizon of transformation, is considered the primary form of elaboration for the subjectivity distressed by social humiliation, how to conceive the growth of Pentecostalism among impoverished groups that, on one hand, promotes the

development of bonds and networks of support and, on the other hand, endorses conceptions of life and society that are impregnated by elements — such as oppression and capital accumulation — that forge the pain complained of? Possibly, the vertiginous growth of this religious movement is the expression of a desperate cry that seeks to mitigate the feelings of suffering stemming from social humiliation, clinging to the ideal form of humanity promised by Pentecostalism. The divergence of principles and the dilemma that imposes itself between the strategies for the elaboration of social humiliation through the fight for collective rights or by religious actions escape from a simplistic dichotomy and are precisely the matter that should be the object of future reflection for furthering the understanding of this social phenomenon.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that, in light of the works presented and our findings, the Pentecostal evangelical denomination preserves plurality. In reality, ruptures with a church due to criticism and conflicts are frequent, which can be motivating mechanisms for the foundation of new religious organizations (Mariano, 2014). In any case, Pentecostalism presents, in its totality, principles that can present themselves singularly in each church, but that also present themselves as challenges for social movements in the critical formation process of their members.

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