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PRAISE OF THE CONVERT: BELIEVE AND BELONG FROM THE CATHOLICITY OF LATIN AMERICA

Abstract

Latin America was considered for many years the main bastion of Catholicism in the world by the number of parishioners and the influence of the church in the social and political life of the región, but in recent times there has been a decrease in the catholicity index. This paper explores three variables that have modified the identity of Catholicism in Latin American countries. The first one refers to the conversion processes that have expanded the presence of Christian denominations, by analyzing the reasons that revolve around the sense of belonging that these communities offer and that prop up their expansion and growth. The second variable accounts for those Catholics who still belong to the Catholic Church but who in their practices and beliefs have incorporated other magical or esoteric scheme in the form of religious syncretisms, modifying their sense of being Catholics in the world. The third factor has a political reference and has to do with the concept of laicism, a concept that sets its objective, not only in the separation of the State from the Church, but for historical reasons in catholicity restraint in the public space which has led to the confinement of the Catholic to the private, leaving other religious groups to occupy that space.

Keywords: politology of religion, conversion, syncretism, secularism, laicity, Catholicity restraint

Introduction

I have no right to pronounce that sacred verb, only one man on earth had that right and that man has died.
(Funes el Memorioso, Borges, 1967)

Latin America is today one of the regions with the largest number of Catholics in the world, 49% of the parishioners are located in this region, surpassing Asia with 10.9% and Africa with 16.4 and of course, Europe with 22.9%². But

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2 *The Pontifical Yearbook 2015*, Central Office of Church Statistics, Vatican Press, Vatican City, 2015.

this indicator of Catholic majority in the region may cease to be in the medium term if we analyze the dynamics of religious change and diversity that expand the offer of experiences other than the Catholic. This can be observed in the percentage decrease of people who said they were Catholic in a span of twenty years³ in countries traditionally identified in that religion. These are the cases of Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia, which in census counts are reflecting drastic decreases.

What factors have contributed to the decline of the catholicity index? The reasons may be several and for the purposes of this text, we will address three variables that help to understand such a decline.

The first one refers to institutional religious diversity, that is, the multiplicity of Christian religious offerings that promote community experiences and rituals different in intensity and extension that have expanded and attracted the attention of social sectors that had moved away from the church that once participated.

The second variable that has influenced the decline of beliefs and practices of catholicity has been the growing supply of the esoteric and magical religious market. Beliefs in energetic matters and transcendental or magical rituals have been incorporated into the religious beliefs and practices of many Catholics. According to the latest survey of the Research Network of the Religious Phenomenon in Mexico, those who declare themselves as Catholics also believe and practice Yoga 5%, energies 6.8%, angels 14.3% and witchcraft 12.9%⁴.

Unlike conversions, religious syncretism generates a different process, the Catholics continue to declare belonging to their church, but in parallel to their religiosity, they incorporate heterodox beliefs that do not fit with the ecclesiastical canons but that allow them to understand and give meaning to an everyday need and the problems they face. In reality, an avowed Catholic can attend the Mass in his parish, in the afternoon go to cleanse his energies and at night be meditating with quartz crystals without a problem, without being with conflict of meaning or interpretation in his religious practices. It is what has been called a believer in his own way, forms of individual appropriation of the sacred according to what each one interprets and makes sense in their faith⁵.

The third one is an exogenous factor to the belief itself has to do with the definition of public space in Latin America, this public space has been decanting for being a secular space in the French sense of the term, a separation between

3 Juan Cruz Esquivel, Transformations of Religious Affiliation in Contemporary Latin America: An Approach from Quantitative Data, *International Journal of Latin American Religions*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1-19.

4 Alberto Hernández et al, *Encuesta Nacional sobre prácticas y creencias en México*, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte- CIESAS- Red de Investigadores sobre el Fenómeno Religioso en México, Tijuana, 2016. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2zCOVys>, accessed October 25, 2018.

5 Alejandro Frigerio, "Lógicas y límites de la apropiación New Age: dónde se detiene el sincretismo", in: *Variaciones y aproximaciones latinoamericanas del New Age*, De la Torre Renée, Gutiérrez Cristina (eds.), Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios en Antropología Social, México, 2013, pp. 49-51.

the State and the Churches on political issues and in some countries, the political tension that is generated when expressions and churches seek to participate in public issues such as the recognition of diverse sexual identities, the interruption of pregnancy and the more general issues of inequality and injustice such as corruption, migration and drug trafficking⁶. Jevtic Miroljub has already pointed out this when from the politics of religion, he insists that we should study the influence that religion has on politics, not from its theological doctrine but from its moral discourse and pastoral practices that, although they do not have a political message they have political consequences⁷.

The reader will be able to question how this French concept of laicity influence catholicity as a topic of politics and public policy rather than ascription and beliefs between the church and its parishioners⁸. The answer has to do with Latin America's own history and its relationship with the Catholic Church, which has been problematic because of the symbiosis of religious beliefs with political issues. Laicity in Latin America was understood only in two opposite meanings: The Catholicity restraint in the public sphere limiting the presence of Catholics in politics or, at the other extreme, the symbiotic participation of the church in public policies⁹. In the first case, Uruguay and Mexico, while in the second, we can identify Peru, Paraguay, and Argentina. The objective of this text is to understand the factors in Latin America that have influenced a change in catholicity, taking into account conversions, syncretisms and, of course, the issue of laicism. This paper is organized into two sections. The first will address the complexity of belonging and belief within Catholicism and its dialogue with other forms of religiosity. The second will outline the paths of laicity and its relationship with the church and its parishioners from the perspective of contention that from the State seeks to channel the religious outside the political sphere, sometimes without achieving it¹⁰.

The religious experience, between tradition and the marketplace

What makes a European believer different from a Latin American? What are the differences between a Catholic in Europe and another in Latin America if the two starts from the same canonical framework? The answer may seem very obvious if we only refer to the differences between the cultural and the mestizo symbiosis that has enriched the Catholic with other indigenous and Creole tradi-

6 Roberto Blancarte, "Laicidad y laicismo", in: *Laicidad, estudios introductorios*, Caro Nelly and Gutiérrez, Daniel, El Colegio Mexiquense, México, 2012, P. 61.

7 Miroljub Jevtić, Political science and religion, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, pp. 59-69.

8 E. Poulat, *Nuestra laicidad pública*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 2012, p. 128.

9 Jean Pierre Bastian, "Las dinámicas contemporáneas de la pluralización del campo religioso latinoamericano o cómo pensar de manera relacional la configuración de relaciones objetivas", in: *Pluralización religiosa de América Latina*, Olga Odgers (ed.), El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, 2010, p. 27.

10 Miki Bozinovich, Politology of religion, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2009, p. 281.

tions, which construct different ways of believing and practicing. Our hypothesis is something simpler, by reviewing the different research and values surveys, we can identify that the religiosity of Europeans has focused more on the individual experience tending to spirituality¹¹. It is believed without necessarily belonging to the ecclesial communities, it is believed without institutional mediation.

In contrast, in Latin America, religious practices and beliefs tend to focus more on community experience, belonging and believing, although with greater emphasis on belonging¹², one of the peculiarities of Latin American religiosity is its ritual forms and collective practices that promote the religious experience from the belonging, either from the conviction of the parishioners or by tradition. The distinction would be subtle to think about when you observe the emphasis on religious parties and gatherings, celebrating saints or Marian traditions such as Guadalupe, Luján, del Cobre, etc.

Latin American Catholics recognize as community centers and of recognition through parishes which may or may not have direct meddling by priests or bishops in the topics and convergences of parishioners, but the ways of belonging to the Latin American Catholic has not been a strength of recognition in the community, it has also been its weakness. Belonging without the correspondence with believing has implied that both religious practices and services end up being rituals that are followed by family tradition rather than conviction¹³.

The decline in the density of belief has placed the Latin American Catholic in the face of the expansion of churches of another Christian sign that promote participation in the ritual which emphasizes the close relationship between belonging to the community and the effervescence of belief.

Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal groups, Adventists, Methodists, Evangelicals, and Christians, in general, offer the conversion through the collective and the renewal of the faith. This is evident in the studies that have been done on the subject from Argentina on Evangelicals¹⁴, Pentecostals in Chile¹⁵ and Protestants in Mexico¹⁶ among others, also reflected in the exponential growth of their faithful in general. In a study by Juan Esquivel, he makes a statistical analysis of how the number of evangelicals and Christians in the region has increased in recent years but points out that this growth is not necessarily a transfer of Catholics to these churches. Apart from conversion, this growth can also be explained

11 Karel Dobbelaere, "La secularización: teoría e investigación", in: *Religión y política en la sociedad actual*, Pérez-Agote and Jose Santiago (eds.), Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Madrid, 2008, pp. 30-31.

12 Eliana Eliana, "Modernidades latinoamericanas", in: *Dialécticas de la postsecularidad*, Sánchez de la Yncera, Rodríguez Fous M. (eds.), Editorial Anthropos – UNAM, Barcelona, 2012, pp. 215-216.

13 Hugo Suárez, *Creyentes urbanos: sociología de la experiencia religiosa en México*, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales-UNAM, México, 2016, p. 76.

14 Marco Carbonelli, Los evangélicos en la arena política del conurbano; dilemas y horizontes de una apuesta religiosa territorial, *Revista Mitológicas*, Vol. XXIX, 2014, Centro Argentino de Etnología Americana, Buenos Aires, pp. 47-48.

15 Miguel Ángel Mansilla, *La cruz y la esperanza*, Universidad Bolivariana, Santiago, 2008, pp. 56-57.

16 Jean Bastian, *Protestantismos y modernidad latinoamericana*, Fondo de Cultura Económica. México, 2011, pp. 33-34.

by migratory flows, expansion of the population that is born and grows in these churches¹⁷.

Although mostly we can say that it is the conversions of Catholics to these churches that fuels their membership today. The figures prove it. Churches with a Christian sign other than Catholicism are: The offer of the churches, without delving into other variables, is simple: community and faith in the participation of small, autonomous and solidary communities with a high degree of integration. At first sight it seems to be opposed to Catholicism, but, on the contrary, in reality, its strategy in Latin America is a resilience of the Catholic identity through belonging and believing that it can give an account and a halo of spiritual security in economic crisis issues, violence, anonymity in the cities and in general of the social polarization of the region.

But conversions have not been the only processes of change in Catholic identity, from within and without leaving the catholicity have been gestated long-term changes that are not attributable to the conjuncture but to the processes of change in modernity and the spirit of the time. Religious syncretisms have existed since the birth of Christianity itself, the difference today is that these syncretisms arise in the framework of a process of secularization in which religious diversity becomes a market that has been called "Religiosity à la carte"¹⁸. Perhaps it is not the best expression to name it "à la carte", but for us, it corresponds more to a sense of accommodation syncretism in the world from diverse experiences that overlap the doctrinaire and that do not cause any problem of coherence for the parishioners. This type of syncretism or coupling of religious experiences closer to the magical or spiritual has been divided into two types. One of them corresponds to the magical syncretism closest to popular religiosity or popular catholicity, while the second has a greater reference to spiritual issues and personal growth, individualized response to existential doubts.

The first of them, the popular catholicity¹⁹ has been a form of historical religiosity of the ritual from the towns and communities that do not necessarily get along well with the ecclesiastical canons and that on the contrary appropriate the images and symbols to recreate them in their own way and according to their customs. The festivities of saints and Marian images throughout the countries of the region show how the people have understood the religious principles centered on veneration images and objects. Exemplary cases of this are the multiple Marian representations that have their feast in the popular ritual calendar according to each town, or at the other extreme, the repetitive image of the figure of Santiago Apostle that fought against the "Moors" whose reference it is towards the Middle East, these same Moors can take forms and figures accord-

17 Juan Esquivel, Transformations of Religious Affiliation in Contemporary Latin America: An Approach from Quantitative Data, *International Journal of Latin American Religions*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2017, p. 11.

18 Grace Davie, *Sociología de la religión*, Editorial Akal, Madrid, 2009, pp. 103-104.

19 José Luis González, Catolicismo popular y tejido social, *Revista Estudios- ITAM*, No. 62, 2000, pp. 99-119.

ing to each community or town where it is venerated, from devils to figures of foremen who punished the peons in the plantations. The syncretism produced by catholicity has derived more towards a less doctrinal perspective and a greater emphasis on the magical and the symbolic¹⁸.

This change has an important meaning because the magic anchors the sacred to an exchange and to the finitude of the symbol over the doctrine and the bureaucratic organization as the church by organizations more in function of uses and customs and in some cases of charismatic character as it happens with the religiosity of profane figures not recognized by the church but by the parishioners as are the figures that go from the Santa Muerte in Mexico or San Muerte in South America, to Gauchito Gil in Argentina or Jesús Malverde, saint of the drug traffickers in Mexico²⁰.

In any sense, the popular changes the Christian ethics of the transcendental, that is, salvation and redemption through the central figure of Jesus Christ, by an ethic of retribution more oriented to provide parishioners and participants with the popular catholicity of a series of elements of effervescence of the faith and some magical resources, emphasized in the collective rituals and in the religious festivals, to face the daily life, the risks and dangers of this profane life. At the other extreme of syncretism, we can recognize the syncretism of what has been called the "esoteric nebula" due to the heterodox ways of integrating and reinventing Catholic beliefs with oriental elements and personal improvement. Yoga, meditation, mantras, etc. are ways of believing that a significant number of Catholics in Latin America have joined, especially those from the middle class and with university studies, although not exclusively in them²¹.

The esoteric syncretism in Latin America, unlike in Europe where experience tends to focus on the individual, moves in belonging to flexible and sometimes ephemeral collective forms in which the community persists as long as the search for the sacred is efficient in the answers to existence. Existence not as the search for an inner self alone but the response of a "we" in the community. That is why self-help groups, meditation, and yoga groups, energy groups, and angels, are the extended and bonding forms of believers in the esoteric nebula, these groups seek to belong and transcend what makes the practices not individual but shared²².

Catholics have translated their experience of the parish and belonging into their search for the spiritual through groups that encourage them to continue together. The esoteric groups do not dispute the membership of the church, on

20 Hugo Suárez, *Creyentes urbanos: sociología de la experiencia religiosa en México*, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales- UNAM, México, 2016, p. 89.

21 René De la Torre, et al, *Creer y practicar en México: comparación de tres encuestas sobre religiosidad*, Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, México, 2014, pp. 31-32.

22 Eliana Alemán, "Modernidades latinoamericanas", in: *Dialécticas de la postsecularidad*, Sánchez de la Yncera, Rodríguez Fous M. (eds.), Editorial Anthropos – UNAM, Barcelona, 2012, pp. 216-218.

the contrary, they complement many of the parishioners through the emphasis in certain empathic aspects of the Catholic as are the beliefs about the protection of the angels whose names are in the ecclesiastical cosmogony, or the case of thinking of Jesus as energy and transcendence, or Mary as mother earth that protects her children on earth, etc. Catholics have built alternate and complementary forms around the esoteric, Catholics continue to belong by tradition to their church, but seeking confirmation of the transcendental outside of it.

Both conversions and syncretisms have transformed the Catholic identity, the conversions have opened the door to the experience and religious belonging of Catholic parishioners in other communities seeking to match belief and belonging. This has led the Catholic Church to rethink a new evangelization that since John Paul II and until Francis has been entrusted, especially in the need of a greater proximity of the priests with their parishioners, trying to reactivate the parish as the neuralgic center of the community and under ecclesiastical regulation²³. Regarding the syncretisms we can say that catholicity has changed since it has resignified the images, symbols and doctrinal principles in pragmatic versions, contextualized in the uses and customs and, above all, to match the catholicity with the belonging, but making faith a flexible and malleable experience, unorthodox as it is stated in the ecclesiastical canons. We will have to be careful when we point out the syncretisms that have developed from the popular catholicity, more linked to the community sense and the spiritual syncretisms oriented to the immediate experience of sharing and consuming what the religious market offers today.

Laicity, Catholicity restraint in the public space

The second aspect that has changed in recent years has been the theme of Laicity and Religiosity in the public space, the French heritage of laicism has permeated the ways of understanding public space. For a long time, the National States in the region built the legitimacy of the State based on an anticlerical Jacobin idea of the separation between the State and the Catholic Church²⁴. In some countries, the separation sparked conflicts and the establishment of a regime that confined the presence of churches, temples and religious festivals without the possibility of intervening in political decisions. Uruguay and Mexico were the two countries that radicalized their position in an anti-clerical laicism that was not anti-religious, laicism against the power of the church, but not

23 Fortunato Mallimaci, "Los laberintos de la secularización y la laicidad en Argentina", in: *Nuevos aportes a los estudios de la religión en sociedades contemporáneas del cono sur*, Touris Claudia (ed.), Ediciones Lumiere- RELIG-AR-CONICET, Buenos Aires, 2011, pp. 40-41.

24 Daniel Levine, "Religión y política en América Latina en el siglo XX: un balance empírico metodológico", in: *Nuevos aportes a los estudios de la religión en sociedades contemporáneas del cono sur*, Touris Claudia (ed.), Ediciones Lumiere- RELIG-AR-CONICET, Buenos Aires, 2011, pp. 201-204.

against the beliefs of the citizens²⁵.

But the heritage of French secularism also influenced other countries to see it as a threat to their political stability if their alliance with the Church was broken because they considered their support as a legitimacy to their power and to catholicity as part of the national identity that needs to be preserve, these countries refused to mention laicity in their political constitution and, on the contrary, decided to legalize their alliance in the law and in the structure of the State. They decided to bet on a collaboration with the Catholic Church through social missions and support in matters of health, education and even military chaplains. In this sense we can say that it was a cooperative or positive laicity as long after, already in the 21st century, it was named by Pope Benedict XVI together with Nicolás Sarkozy during a papal visit to France where an implicit criticism was made of the historical Jacobin model of the French policy. Laicity by cooperation or positive acknowledges the legitimacy of each area of public life. The power of the State in making decisions and the church in its pastoral work²⁶.

In both cases, positive laicity meant first of all the areas for cooperation between both institutions. Peru, Chile, Dominican Republic, Argentina were some countries that maintained, and still maintain, cooperation agreements with the Catholic Church through the figure of the concordat. Even in some of these countries, the processes of national independence of the Spanish crown were supported by the local church. A support that later they charged even more²⁷.

Laicity, whether in its Jacobin or positive version, profoundly marked the way laicity in Latin America is understood today. Theoretically, laicity is always thought of as the separation between the State and the Churches²⁸ or as a regime of coexistence where the general will prevails over any belief that is not the agreement between equal citizens²⁹. We also come to think of the possibility of making visible the importance of churches in politics as part of the diversity of a country and of representing their parishioners in public life³⁰, but laicity is not a concept in the abstract, but a political action aimed to restrain the Catholic Latin American public space by the State itself where laicity has a Jacobin cut

25 Sol Serrano, ¿Qué hacer con Dios en la república? *Política y secularización en Chile 1845-1885*, Fondo de Cultura Económica. México, 2008, pp. 73-76.

26 Jean-Paul Willaime, La sécularisation: ¿Une exception européenne? Retour sur un concept et sa discussion en sociologie des religions, *Revue Française de Sociologie*, Vol. 47, No.4, 2006, pp. 770-775.

27 Catalina Romero, "Iglesias, Estado y sociedad civil: el tema de la laicidad en el Perú", in: *Laicidad en América Latina y Europa: repensando lo religioso entre lo público y lo privado en el siglo XXI*, Da Costa Ernesto (ed.), CLAEH- EuropeAID Cooperation Office, Montevideo, 2006, pp. 113-121.

28 Roberto Blancarte, "Laicidad y laicismo", in: *Laicidad: estudios introductorios*, Caro Nelly, Gutiérrez Daniel (eds.), México, El Colegio Méxicuense, p. 61.

29 Jean Pierre Bastian, "Las dinámicas contemporáneas de la pluralización del campo religioso latinoamericano o cómo pensar de manera relacional la configuración de relaciones objetivas", in: *Pluralización religiosa de América Latina*, Odgers Olga (ed.), El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, 2010, p. 23.

30 Jean-Paul Willaime, La sécularisation: ¿Une exception européenne? Retour sur un concept et sa discussion en sociologie des religions, *Revue Française de Sociologie*, Vol. 47, No. 4, 2006, pp. 758-759.

or by social and religious organizations in those others where cooperation with the Catholic Church with the State has been evident³¹. At this point there is a process of influence of religion on politics, an influence that is not merely institutional but causes a change in the attitudes of citizens to accept the religion as something positive and neutral without realizing that every religious practice includes a political message and a particular worldview that is not neutral but a position of power of God that should reign over all things³².

Catholicity restraint in the public space involves questioning the ways in which Catholics, the church and the ways of believing and practicing by the parishioners in the public space. This has been strengthened not only by the State but by Evangelical and Christian religious groups that have criticized the presence of the Church and Catholics in political spaces without noticing that they themselves are participants of what they criticize.

The pressure of this type of churches has not been to strengthen the laicity of the State but to occupy a space that would allow the retreat of Catholicism, this has influenced the catholicity of the countries in a subtle way since the sounding board has been transferred to the evangelical and Christian churches that confront the participation of Catholics in political issues. It has also caused these same religious groups to put their conservative political agenda before the State and before the citizens, these groups tend to be more conservative than similar Catholic groups, these groups tend to be more conservative than similar Catholic groups and with greater aggression to impose their agenda, they seek above all to ensure that their values have a greater emphasis on relations and negotiations with other social and political actors, even over the State itself³³.

Christian and evangelical organizations have been using the discourse of laicity to promote the Catholicity restraint in the public space and occupy that place with their own agenda, this happened in Colombia in 2016 during the referendum on peace agreements with the guerrillas. It was these churches that promoted the No vote to reject peace arguing that justice was incomplete because the suffering of the evangelicals in the conflict was not taken into account.

All the evangelical activism was unfolded before the expectation without the intervention of the church and the Catholics in the discussion. At the end, these churches were a fundamental factor in rejecting the agreement and forced the Colombian State to recognize them as legitimate interlocutors, not only for peace negotiations but to include their agenda on issues of defense of life and control of the body for public conservatives' policies in the short term. Other examples have been the expansion of evangelicals in political posts in Brazil and

31 Fortunato Mallimaci, "Los laberintos de la secularización y la laicidad en Argentina," in: *Nuevos aportes a los estudios de la religión en sociedades contemporáneas del cono sur*, Touris Claudia (ed.), Ediciones Lumiere- RELIG-AR-CONICET, Buenos Aires, 2011, pp. 17-19.

32 Miroslav Jevtić, Political science and religion, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, pp. 60-61.

33 Miki Bozinovich, Politology of religion, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2009, pp. 279-283.

the reduction of catholicity, not only in beliefs but in the presence of the Church. In 2017 an ultraconservative evangelical pastor was elected as Mayor of Rio de Janeiro.

The laicity aimed to decrease the presence of the Catholic in the squares and streets has promoted that these spaces are occupied and used by other organizations that use the resource of laicity to set their own agenda. The strategy of restraining the Catholic public space has produced various effects that can be described as positive or negative depending on where they are observed. For some, this was one of the variants that provoked a greater religious diversity of churches and institutions as well as of cults and informal religious groups. This process of legal and political confinement of the Catholic clergy demanded by the State or by civil organizations can be explained in terms of the historical burden and the political weight that the clerics exercised in politics, but that same historical burden generates a political dissonance because it promotes laicity only towards Catholics and not towards the rest of the religious universe.

Conclusions

The decrease in catholicity in Latin America has multiple factors. In this text, we only present some variants of this change that go from the question of believing and belonging shown in both conversions and syncretisms, to the strategy to Catholicity restraint in the public space. In the next few years, we will see an even more dramatic decrease in catholicity rates due to processes that change the appearance of the religious map in the region. On one hand, external migratory flows and a greater presence of other religions such as Islam, orientalisms, and a new wave of churches. To this, is added the people who declare themselves today as "religionless" who are not atheists or agnostics, but a category that is still undefined and which appear in the censuses but could not be conceptualized. The "religionless" range from those who believe, but do not ascribe to a church, or those who abandon the rituals or participate in beliefs that are not cataloged. This segment of the population will grow in the coming years and we will see a radical change in the ways of believing and participating, Latin America has been seen by the Catholic Church as the region of hope and renewal of catholicity in the world. But it would be necessary to question itself if, in fact, it would be necessary to be measured with this idea. In Latin America we will have that combine a dimension of laicity with a renewed look from the politology of religion without restriction.

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ХВАЛА КОНВЕРТИТИМА: ВЕРОВАЊЕ И ПРИПАДАЊЕ КАТОЛИКА ЛАТИНСКЕ АМЕРИКЕ

Сажетак

Дуго година је Латинска Америка сматрана за бастион католицизма у свету по броју верујућих људи и утицају цркве у друштвеном и политичком животу региона. Међутим, у последње време се примећује пад у индексу католичанства. Овај рад истражује три варијабле које су промениле идентитет католичанства у Латинској Америци. Прва се односи на процес конверзије који је проширио присуство других хришћанских деноминација, и анализира разлоге због којих припадање овим заједницама утиче на њихов развој и пораст. Друга варијабла се односи на оне католике који и даље припадају Римокатоличкој цркви али су примили елементе других религија стварајући тако једну форму синкретизма, мењајући тако осећај припадности католичанству у свету. Трећи фактор има политичку позадину и тиче се концепта лаицизма, концепта који дефинише своје циљеве не само у раздвајању цркве и државе, већ и у историјским разлозима повлачења католичанства из јавне сфере који је довео до затварања католика у приватну сферу, остављајући тако простор за друге религијске групе у јавној сфери.

Кључне речи: политикологија религије, конверзија, синкретизам, секуларизам, лаицитет, католичка ограничења

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