# Religious Freedom for Christian Majorities
## The Brazilian Case

*Leandro L. B. Fontana*

The book "Brazil: Land of the Future" by the famous Austrian writer and pacifist Stefan Zweig went down in history as a declaration of love to Brazil and its people. Among the things that fascinated him most in this land were Brazilians' tolerance, open-mindedness, and in particular their ability to live courteously and peacefully in the midst of a high degree of cultural, ethnic, and geographic diversity.[1] Far from being merely a foreign, romanticized view of Brazil, this stereotype has also been cherished and nurtured for decades by the Brazilian people. This is partly due to the fact that this narrative was constructed in the process of formation of the Brazilian national identity that took place in the first half of the twentieth century and gradually found its way into the Brazilian DNA.[2]

Against this backdrop, the significant increase in cases of religious harassment in Brazil over the last decade has not only shocked the public but also posed several challenges to analysts from various disciplines. In fact, various sources point to an increase in the number of cases by about 315% from 2015 to 2021. How to make sense of this unprecedented magnitude of violence, intolerance, and stigmatization? What could be the causes, who are the main actors involved, and for what reasons? This paper aims to explore these questions, with particular emphasis on mapping ethnographic-hermeneutic attempts to both describe and analyze this phenomenon. For this purpose, it begins by examining the empirical evidence for the rise in cases of religious intolerance.

1 Zweig, Stefan: Brasilien. Ein Land der Zukunft, Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer 1941, pp. 153–158.

2 Souza, Jessé: A ralé brasileira. Quem é e como vive, Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG 2009, pp. 29–39.

It then looks for basic patterns in the reported cases to outline a profile of intolerance, as it were. The next section occupies center stage inasmuch as it focuses the research interest on performances of intolerance and non-cognitive factors rather than hermeneutic efforts to scrutinize the content and images circulated by the main actors or assess the cogency of their arguments. This methodological choice is crucial to the analytical reflection that follows, given that this final part delves into the scripts of these performances and offers a brief account of the current Brazilian scholarly debate on this phenomenon.

## The empirical evidence for religious intolerance

Overall, issues related to religious intolerance or freedom of religion or belief were not part of the public debate in Brazil until recently. A turning point was marked in 2015, when these issues also began to appear on the public agenda.[3] The case of the eleven-year-old girl Kaylane Campos in that year epitomized the kind of religious intolerance taking place in Brazil in several respects and had significant national repercussions. After being hit on the head with a stone as she left her *Candomblé terreiro*[4], the perpetrators continued to insult Kaylane, using abusive language and saying she should now burn in hell on account of her religion.[5] This regrettable incident prompted not only a new public debate but also initiatives such as the "Reports of Religious Intolerance in Brazil" – inter alia – whose data are indeed impressive. For instance, whereas fifteen cases of religious intolerance were registered in 2011, four years later in 2015 this figure had increased to 223.[6] Even more alarming was the 2023 report,

3 Nogueira, Sidnei: Intolerância Religiosa, São Paulo: Jandaíra 2020, p. 70.

4 *Terreiros* are temples or houses run by a male or female Candomblé priest where practitioners can gather, hold their ceremonies and worship, offer their sacrifices, and receive counselling. In the absence of a corresponding word/translation in English, this term will be used throughout.

5 For more details, see Santos, Carlos Alberto Ivanir dos/Gino, Mariana: "A menina e a pedra. Uma breve delineação sobre a intolerância religiosa no Brasil," in: Ivanir dos Santos/Maria das Graças Nascimento/Juliana B. Calvacanti M. T./Mariana Gino/Vítor Almeida (eds.), Intolerância religiosa no Brasil. Relatório e balanço, Rio de Janeiro: CEAP 2016, pp. 58–68, p. 58f.

6 Santos, Ivanir dos/Nascimento, Maria das Graças/Calvacanti M. T., Juliana B./Gino, Mariana/Almeida, Vítor (eds.): Intolerância religiosa no Brasil. Relatório e balanço, Rio de Janeiro: CEAP 2016, p. 23.

which compiled data from 2019 to 2021 and showed an increase to 966 registered cases of religious intolerance in 2021 alone.[7]

Based on these reports, it does not appear to be a coincidence that in the case of Kaylane Campos the victim was a member of Candomblé – an Afro-Brazilian religion – and the perpetrators – in addition to being Christians – acted out of religious convictions and/or motivations. In fact, out of 966 reported acts of religious intolerance in 2021, 244 (25% of the total) were inflicted on members of Afro-Brazilian religions. This is followed by 186 acts of intolerance suffered by Evangelicals (19%) and 125 by Catholics (13%). Taken by themselves, these numbers may not seem that impressive. However, when contrasted with the broader picture of the country's religious landscape, the proportions acquire entirely new dimensions. The proportions should then be interpreted in the following terms: 244 cases were reported among 590,000 practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions (0.3% of the total Brazilian population), 186 cases among 43 million Evangelicals (22.2%) and 125 cases among 124 million Catholics (64.6%).[8] It is therefore fair to say that proportionally, the members of the majority religion in Brazil – namely Christianity – have not experienced as much religious harassment as members of religious minorities.[9] With this being the case, another question that emerges is why among all of the religious minorities in Brazil such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Candomblé, Umbanda, etc. – all making up less than 1% of the population – the largest number of attacks were concentrated in the Afro-Brazilian communities alone. This question will be the focus of the following section, since

7 Santos, Carlos Alberto Ivanir dos/Dias, Bruno Bonsanto/Santos, Luan Costa Ivanir dos: II Relatório sobre Intolerância religiosa. Brasil, América Latina e Caribe, Rio de Janeiro: CEAP 2023, p. 35.

8 The numbers relative to the Brazilian population were taken from the last officially published census of 2010 (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE: Censo Demográfico 2010. Características gerais da população, religião e pessoas com deficiência, Rio de Janeiro: IBGE 2012, pp. 143–144), as are other statistics used in this text, unless indicated otherwise. Although a new national census was conducted in 2022, at the time of writing of this paper the results were not yet made public.

9 Dias, Bruno Bonsanto/Santos, Luan Costa Ivanir dos: "II Relatório sobre Intolerância Religiosa. Brasil, América Latina e Caribe, Reflexões teóricas e a necessidade da construção de bases de dados e de estatísticas públicas sólidas," in: Carlos Alberto Ivanir dos Santos/Bruno Bonsanto Dias/Luan Costa Ivanir dos Santos: II Relatório sobre Intolerância Religiosa. Brasil, América Latina e Caribe, Rio de Janeiro: CEAP 2023, pp. 167–181, p. 180.

– apart from the Jewish community, which is currently also alarmed by an unprecedented increase in the number of neo-Nazi groups throughout Brazil[10] – there is no evidence that any other minority religion is as threatened as Afro-Brazilians.

The forms of intolerance described in the reports ranged from insult, humiliation, threats, and coercion to the destruction of places of worship, vandalization of offerings, displacement from territory, and abuse of power by state authorities, to crimes of bodily injury.[11] As for the aggressors, according to the reports, the majority belong to Evangelical denominations, although the number of Catholics is also significant. This corroborates the argument put forward by several analysts who have established a correlation between the recent increase in cases of religious intolerance and the emergence of Evangelicals and Pentecostals as increasingly influential actors on the public and political scene.[12]

## The performance of intolerance

The stigmatization of Afro-Brazilian religions as well as ethnicity has a long tradition in Brazil's history. Obviously, the Catholic Church has her share of guilt in this bitter chapter, as does the Brazilian state, even after the colonial period, from the nineteenth century onwards. However, while the state introduced the principle of religious freedom into its legislation and the Catholic

10 For more details, see Grattan, Steven: "Neo-Nazi Groups Multiply in a More Conservative Brazil" (14 Jun. 2023), https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/neo-nazi-groups-multiply-more-conservative-brazil-2023-06-13/, accessed on: 08 Jul. 2023; Santos: II Relatório, p. 104–105.

11 Santos: II Relatório, p. 69.

12 See e.g., Silva, Vagner Gonçalves da: "Neopentecostalismo e religiões afro-brasileiras. Significados do ataque aos símbolos da herança religiosa africana no Brasil contemporâneo," in: MANA 13 (2007), pp. 207–236, https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93132007000100008; Miranda, Ana Paula Mendes de: "'*Terreiro* Politics.' Against Religious Racism and 'Christofascist' Politics," in: Vibrant Virtual Brazil Anthropology 17 (2020), pp. 3–20, https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-43412020v17d456; Cunha, Magali do Nascimento: Do púlpito às mídias sociais. Evangélicos na política e ativismo digital, Curitiba: Appris Editora 2019, pp. 32–36; Dias, João Ferreira: "'Chuta que é macumba.' O percurso histórico-legal da perseguição às religiões afro-brasileiras," in: Sankofa 12 (2019), pp. 39–62, https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1983-6023.sank.2019.158257; Nogueira, Sidnei: Intolerância.

Church in the second half of the twentieth century – imbued with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council – made significant efforts to promote ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, another kind of intolerance began to be rehearsed in some Pentecostal churches. In fact, there is a broad consensus among experts in attributing to Bishop Edir Macedo – the founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God – a key role in the waging of a "holy war"[13] against Afro-Brazilian religions.[14] This war was also taken up by a few other neo-Pentecostal churches that were emerging in the 1980s. "In our church" – writes Macedo in a polemic book published in the 1980s,[15] explicitly attacking Afro-Brazilian religions – "[…] demons are humiliated and even mocked."[16] In fact, in their sessions of exorcisms, performances are extremely humiliating, and all demons that are driven out are attributed to the works (*trabalhos*) of Afro-Brazilian sorcerers, who are also mocked. For "[…] umbanda, quimbanda, candomblé, and spiritist religions and practices are, in general, for demons, the main channels of action."[17]

These performances of humiliation, contempt, and even disgust not only took place in worship services, but they were also daily broadcast on television. "Many of these TV shows present 'reconstructions of real cases' or dramatizations in which symbols and elements of Afro-Brazilian religions are construed as spiritual means with the sole purpose of causing harm: the death of enemies, the spread of diseases, the separation of couples or love relationships, discord in the family, etc."[18] Whether in the form of testimonies by former Candomblé priests or quarrels with demons being driven out from attendants of the services, Afro-Brazilian religions had been constantly depicted as satanic and extremely harmful for one's personal and social life. Moreover, as the media power of these churches has expanded (TV broadcasters, newspapers, in-

13 Mariano, Ricardo: Neopentecostais. Sociologia do novo pentecostalismo no Brasil, São Paulo: Loyola 2014, p. 111.

14 For more details, see Mariano: Neopentecostais, p. 119; Oro, Ari Pedro: "Neopentecostais e afro-brasileiros. Quem vencerá esta guerra?," in: Debates do NER 1 (1997), p. 10–36, p. 13, https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-8136.2686; Silva: Neopentecostalismo, p. 212; Dias: Chuta que é macumba, p. 48.

15 Unless otherwise noted, quotes that have not been published in English have been translated into English by the author of the chapter.

16 Macedo, Edir: Orixás, Caboclos e Guias. Deuses ou Demônios?, Rio de Janeiro: Universal Produções 1987, p. 134.

17 Macedo: Orixás, p. 113.

18 Silva: Neopentecostalismo, p. 217.

ternet platforms, social media, mobile apps, etc.), so has the reach of this narrative.[19]

However, it is more important – considering the purpose of the present paper – to bear in mind that this theology has exerted a profound impact on concrete lives, material objects, and geographical spaces. For example, the fact that members of these churches go to *terreiros* to destroy altars, break images, and exorcise their members should come as no surprise in light of the above.[20] In the same vein, scholars have identified another layer to this problem, which is a much more complex phenomenon arising on the fringes of large urban centers such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte, among others. It concerns the entanglement of drug traffickers, criminal organizations, politicians, and Evangelical-Pentecostal churches in an explicit offensive against Afro-Brazilian communities.[21] Once Catholics and/or adherents of Candomblé, these populations have increasingly become Evangelical or Pentecostal, as has the territorial space. Former traffickers – now converted to Evangelicalism or associated with a church/pastor – have launched a "witch hunt" against Afro-Brazilian practitioners and their places of worship to "clear the land," eliminate *terreiros* and other authority figures, and impose "a belief that convinces, regulates and produces obedience".[22] Experts emphasize that it is not merely about religious expansion and missionary efforts to win over new souls, but instead, "the phenomenon has favored the consolidation of an agenda of customs and increased attacks on gender, religious and racial minorities in the country."[23] Furthermore, the performative character of this

19 For more details see Cunha, Magali do Nascimento: Fundamentalisms, the Crisis of Democracy and the Threat to Human Rights in South America. Trends and Challenges for Action, San Salvador: Koinonia 2020.

20 Silva: Neopentecostalismo, p. 217.

21 Miranda: *Terreiro* Politics, pp. 3–20; Vital da Cunha, Christina: "'Traficantes evangélicos'. Novas formas de experimentação do sagrado em favelas cariocas," in: Plural 15 (2008), pp. 13–46, https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2176-8099.pcso.2008.75226; Pereira, Réia Silvia/Mesquita, Wania Amélia Belchior: "Entre setas e demônios. Pentecostalidade performática guerreira em um território de favela," in: Ciencias Sociales y Religión 24 (2022), https://doi.org/10.20396/csr.v24i00.8671021.

22 Miranda, Ana Paula Mendes de/Muniz, Jacqueline de Oliveira/Almeida, Rosiane Rodrigues de/Cafezeiro, Fausto: "'Terreiros' Under Attack? Criminal Governance in the Name of God and Armed Dominion Disputes Over Control in Rio de Janeiro," in: Dilemas, Special Edition 4 (2022), pp. 651–682, pp. 654–659, https://doi.org/10.4322/dilemas.v15esp4.52535.

23 Miranda: Terreiros, p. 671.

phenomenon is not without bearing on the impact of these actions. "The theatricalized performance of the attacks/assaults […] allows for the production of a subservient local public and audiences threatened remotely through smart phone screens."[24] As with the aforementioned televised exorcism sessions in which the humiliation and triumph over demons are performed on a daily basis, communication media also plays a central role in these milieus, thereby proving to be a key component in the design of this religiopolitical project.

Another factor that has enormously contributed to the escalation of this conflict was the rise of Evangelicals to public and political influence.[25] In addition to their ability to channel their social capital into political influence, these actors owe much of their success to their capacity to construct simple narratives and use rhetorical devices with great impact. In this regard, again performance and staging have held fundamental importance.[26] In Brazil, one of the most effective narratives deployed by Evangelicals/Pentecostals in the public/political sphere has been the idea – or rather sentiment – of Christophobia. On the one hand, this device implies that Christians are being persecuted worldwide, against which they are to speak up, and on the other hand that Christians are also under threat in Brazil.[27] While identifying at once the persecutors and the cause of the major crisis that Brazil is going through – namely the minorities – due to their moral/spiritual decay, this device proposes as a solution the bending of the minorities to the values of the majority – namely Christians – by means of a single public morality/religiosity.

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24 Miranda: Terreiros, p. 663.

25 For more details see Pérez Guadalupe, José Luis/Carranza, Brenda (eds.): Novo ativismo político no Brasil. Os evangélicos do século XXI, Rio de Janeiro: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2020.

26 See also Adelakun, Abimbola Adunni: Performing Power in Nigeria. Identity, Politics, and Pentecostalism, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press 2021.

27 For an account on this concept, see Carranza, Brenda: "Die neue christliche Rechte. Politische Subjektivität, Gender-Ideologie und Christophobie," in: Leandro L. B. Fontana/Markus Luber (eds.), Politischer Pentekostalismus. Transformation des globalen Christentums im Spiegel theologischer Motive und pluraler Normativität, Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet 2023, pp. 66–94; see also former President Bolsonaro's speech at the 2020 UN General Assembly: Nações Unidas: "Em discurso na ONU, Jair Bolsonaro pede combate à 'cristofobia'" (20 Sep 2020), https://news.un.org/pt/story/2020/09/1727002, accessed on: 10 Aug. 2022.

It should be noted that these narratives are not only deployed in these actors' "propaganda feedback loops"[28] but also in the Brazilian National Congress, among other spaces, in alliance with other conservative Christian groups. PL 1804/2015 and PL 4152/2019 can be cited as examples of bills that explicitly deploy the Cristophobia argument to justify the tightening of the current legislation on crimes of mockery (against Christians), increasing both the term of imprisonment and the bail. By way of illustration, the justification for PL 1804/2015 reads as follows: "[…] for what has happened in recent years in demonstrations, mainly in LGBT events, is what we could call 'Christophobia', and involves the practice of obscene and degrading acts that express prejudice against Catholics and Evangelicals."[29] For these crimes, PL 4152 provides for a prison sentence of up to nine years.[30] Meanwhile, there are 72 bills under consideration that seek to regulate the principle of freedom of religion in one way or another.[31] These range from excluding religious ministers from the crime of insult and defamation in the exercise of their ministry (PL 6314/2005) to exemptions from taxes on property, income, and religious services (PLP 21/2020), and the prohibition of state intervention in pastoral and priestly activities (PL 2756/2011). Afro-Brazilian religions would be particularly affected by bills PL 8062/2017 and PL 4331/2012, which propose prohibiting the sacrifice and/or use of animals in religious rituals. Thus, under the aegis of the principle of *laïcité*, Evangelicals and some Catholic groups are seeking to reshape the country's legislation to further expand the rights of Christians, while circumscribing those of other (minority) religions and/or groups.[32]

28 Benkler, Yochai/Faris, Robert/Roberts, Hal: Network Propaganda. Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics, New York: Oxford University Press 2018, p. 57.

29 Câmara dos Deputados: Projeto de Lei No. 1804, de 2015, p. 2, https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra;jsessionid=node01lz81dnrhnkcipu3j9ui7zbhz13374989.node0?codteor=2161028&filename=Avulso+-PL+1804/2015, accessed on: 20 Jun. 2022.

30 Câmara dos Deputados: Projeto de Lei No. 4152, de 2019, p. 1, https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra?codteor=1781213&filename=Tramitacao-PL+4152/2019, accessed on: 20 Jun. 2022.

31 Weber, Bruno Curtis: "Em nome do Laico, do Cisma, da Liberdade Religiosa, amém," in: Plural 28, pp. 184–208, https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2176-8099.pcso.2021.179714.

32 Weber: Liberdade Religiosa, p. 202–204.

## The architecture of intolerance

Having considered some of the most prominent manifestations of religious intolerance, the question remains how to make sense of this recent phenomenon that is gradually gaining ground in Brazil. The first observation in this regard concerns the very term "religious intolerance." Far from simply mirroring – in the public debate – forms of religious polarization or conflicts involving differing worldviews, this category has taken on a very specific connotation in Brazil. It "[…] has circumscribed the experiences of victimization by religious prejudice and expresses, in our times, the growth of conflicts between Afro-Brazilian groups and those of an Evangelical-Pentecostal religious profile."[33] In light of this, some scholars as well as Afro-Brazilian activists have come up with the term "religious racism" instead, arguing that it better captures and conceptualizes this notion.[34] In their view, what is ultimately at stake is a religiopolitical project of hegemonic power that includes – among other things – an "epistemicide," that is the erasure of a people's knowledge, practices, beliefs, memories, and origins[35] and a "religious genocide against black people."[36] Albeit acknowledging that this may appear to be an excessive assessment, at first glance one of the reasons that nevertheless renders these claims tenable is the fact that other religious or ethnic collectives have been far less affected than these. It should therefore be noted that the category of "religious intolerance" today refers less to general forms of intolerance than to this specific, targeted variant.

In the same vein, some scholars have been working with the concept of "Christofascism."[37] Coined by the German theologian Dorothee Sölle in the 1970s in a completely different context, this concept has been reinterpreted in Brazil, especially in view of the rise of the so-called Christian Right to key positions of power and influence, of which former President Bolsonaro's administration represented a high point. As with the term "religious racism,"

33 Miranda: Terreiros, p. 652.

34 For more details, see Nogueira: Intolerância Religiosa; Fernandes, Nathalia Vince Esgalha: "A discriminação contra religiões afro-brasileiras. Um debate entre intolerância e racismo religioso no Estado brasileiro," in: Revista Calundu 5 (2/2021); Miranda: *Terreiro* Politics, pp. 3–20.

35 Nogueira: Intolerância Religiosa, p. 122.

36 Miranda: *Terreiro* Politics, p. 12.

37 For more details, see Py, Fábio: Pandemia Cristofascista, São Paulo: Recriar 2020; Miranda: *Terreiro* Politics.

the analytical potential of this concept resides in its ability to decode and expose the very architecture of this kind of intolerance. Fábio Py defines it as the interweaving of Christian language and symbolism with a Manichaean worldview to underpin and legitimize an authoritarian power project for the country along the lines of a "Christian Nation."[38] If this analysis proceeds, one can indeed recognize – as claimed by the above-cited authors – an overlap between the new performances of religious intolerance and the new project that has been advanced by the New (Christian) Right for the Brazilian nation.

While acknowledging that this concept is often employed with a lack of conceptual precision and empirical evidence, bringing up the notion of the New Right – closely related to, and sometimes overlapping with, the Christian Right – seems helpful at this point in at least two respects: it sheds some light on the actors involved in this project, and it exposes the tenets at its core. As for the former, Benjamin Cowan's studies have shown that this movement was capable of bringing together very "strange bedfellows" who were not historically closely related. It comprises "[…] Brazilians, North Americans, Catholics, Protestants, secular conservatives, neo-medieval fantasists, authoritarian opportunists, and others."[39] In his assessment, the core values that appeal to these different groups are "veneration for private property, hierarchy, nationalism, and traditional culture; and rejection of ethnic and religious pluralism, global liberal humanitarianism and cooperation, modernism […], secularization, and 'communism.'"[40] Bearing this in mind, one may better grasp why the Christophobia narrative works so well in the Brazilian context. As it appears, it essentially accomplishes two things. For one thing, Evangelicals – who actually are a "minority" – bracket themselves together with Catholics, thereby placing themselves on the side of the "majority," as well as appealing to the sympathy and engagement of Catholics.[41] For another thing, these actors invert the roles

38 Py: Pandemia, p. 29–30; see also Borda, Guillermo Flores: "A construção de uma 'Nação Cristã' na América Latina," in: José Luis Pérez Guadalupe/Brenda Carranza (eds.), Novo ativismo político no Brasil: Os evangélicos do século XXI, Rio de Janeiro: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2020, pp. 131–151.

39 Cowan, Benjamin A.: Moral Majorities Across the Americas. Brazil, the United States, and the Creation of the Religious Right, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2021, p. 2.

40 Cowan: Moral Majorities, p. 15.

41 For more details, see Burity, Joanildo A.: "Minoritization and Pluralization. What Is the 'People' That Pentecostal Politicization Is Building?," in: Latin American Perspectives 43 (2016), pp. 116–132, https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X16639238.

of victims and persecutors, create a common enemy – namely the minorities – and spread a sense of moral panic in the ubiquitous public sphere.

## Final remarks

This contribution has attempted to provide a brief account of the significant changes observed in Brazil in recent years regarding religious (in)tolerance. Throughout, the religiopolitical orientation of the performances of intolerance stands out as the most salient feature of this recent phenomenon. Nonetheless, despite this fundamental political component, the concept of populism alone has not proved adequate to capture and account for this multifaceted phenomenon, for which other concepts have been tentatively explored. Rather than a political strategy or a general attitude of intolerance towards other religions, Brazilian scholars essentially concur that at the heart of this phenomenon is a very specific, contingent form of religious intolerance, which might as well be conceived of in terms of "religious racism." For its part, this concept exposes the idiosyncratic sources of this development: the alliance of a fundamentalist, agonistic variant of Christianity with authoritarian economic elites who – under the flag of conservatism and with recourse to populist rhetoric – are advancing a nationalist project for Brazil.

It has been emphasized that this heterogeneous group of Christians comprises Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Mainline Protestants, and Catholics alike, with none of them representing the full spectrum of their respective denominations. However, their narratives and performance-oriented use of communication media have catapulted them into prominent positions on the public and political scene. Far from seeking to downplay or de-value the important contributions of these actors to society, this paper has attempted to lay bare the contingent (rather than necessary, normative, teleological) character of this variant of Christianity,[42] thereby suggesting the need for both more (theological) debate and finding forms of balancing the presence of different political, social and religious actors on the public scene. Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Catholics have also certainly been – and remain – victims of religious intolerance. However, the prerogative of interpretation of the

42 See e.g., Burity, Joanildo: "El pueblo evangélico. Construcción hegemónica, disputas minoritarias y reaccion conservadora," in: Encartes 3 (2021), pp. 1–35, p. 6, https://doi.org/10.29340/en.v3n6.158.

right to freedom of religion or belief should not be highjacked by any majority religion, let alone by a minority group such as the Christian Right, as in the case of Brazil.