

## The Brazilian Conservative Wave, the Bolsonaro Administration, and Religious Actors

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Despite the obvious connection between conservative Christian leaders and Bolsonaro, from his electoral campaign to the formation of his administration, religious agency in Brazilian politics goes beyond a mere conservative register. This article seeks to trace various dimensions of the trajectory made by evangelicals in Brazilian politics as a tipping factor in the emergence of a new protagonism of religious actors in politics. It discusses how the emergence of evangelicals as public actors has included different ideological and practical expressions, as well as internal disputes and ventures some remarks on whether current trends point to as Bolsonaro's government makes room for the evangelical right but sparks reactions and rearticulations from various forms of evangelical progressives.

**Keywords:** Conservative wave; Bolsonaro; minoritisation; religious right; evangelicals; catholics; Brazil.

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Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of a highly active and self-driven religious minority as a political actor in Brazil, the so-called evangelicals<sup>1</sup>. How can one make sense of such an emergence beyond conventional interpretations that extrapolate from abstract pre-conceptions of the phenomenon toward ready-made explanations of its instantiations? I wish to argue, as a starting point, that this emergence should not be about a sudden appearance nor should it imply a mere empirical recognition of a familiar phenomenon. Emergence should be taken as something which happens without being entirely expected or without being fully recognised as it happens, and which, through its occurrence, turns the tide, creates some kind of a turning point, or opens up some new perspectives in social life. It does not have to be absolutely new, but its occurrence introduces ‘unexpected implications’ for concrete situations<sup>2</sup>.

Another dimension that needs highlighting as regards the evangelical emergence in public life in Brazil is ‘public impact’. It is necessary to trace what has become the trajectory and the development of the political identity of Brazilian Protestants, more specifically Brazilian conservative evangelicals, of whom around two thirds are Pentecostals. So, this is a starting point, implied in my framing the current situation as a case of emergence. The story is about Brazil, but I am convinced it could also be, ‘mutatis mutandis’, expanded to many other places in Latin America.

Emergence also supposes some kind of ‘social and symbolic invisibility’ while things are happening ‘underneath’ recognisable and legitimated areas of social, political, cultural life. That means, for instance, to realise that while up to the 1970s Protestants in Brazil accounted for more than 5.2 percent of the population, already over 50 percent of them were Pentecostals. They could be easily ‘seen’ by some people, for instance, as a rural-minded self-isolated sect, but maybe for most they would not ‘matter’ much. As normally happens to tiny minorities like this, they went

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<sup>1</sup>The Portuguese or Spanish term ‘evangélico’, which translates as ‘evangelical’, applies across Latin America to any Protestant. When used in this text alongside ‘Pentecostal’ it will mark a wider constituency that includes traditional, non-Pentecostal Protestants and charismatic Protestants. Whenever a specific meaning is intended contextually, this will be signalled appropriately.

<sup>2</sup>‘Emergence’ will be used throughout according to its understanding in complexity and chaos theories, to highlight the relatively undetermined and unexpected, yet contextual, rise of (a set of) phenomena that introduce new configurations of forces and relations in the natural or social worlds (BYRNE 2001, pp. 63–64; HODGSON, 2000).

largely unnoticed, which is why by the mid-1980s, when Pentecostals first displayed their force of political coordination through the elections of over 20 members of parliament (32 including traditional Protestants) to the National Constituent Assembly, there was such a surprise among political commentators, academics, and social activists.

The second aspect, which I think also sheds light on this emergence/public impact focus refers to the 'democratisation process'. Particularly in Brazil, in the early 1980s, a struggle for democracy took place which in many ways was quite limited and protracted, but, on the other hand, created space for new agendas, new social actors, new political projects, which had not hitherto been easily organised or acknowledged in the Brazilian political context. Once set off, this process continued and picked up momentum in the late-1990s, through an 'expansive democratisation'. What has been occurring over the last few years in Brazil indicates that this process of expansive democratisation has all but come to a halt, resulting in what some have called a de-democratisation or a post-democracy scenario. Some kind of democratisation, then, did take place which caught analysts and activists a bit unawares, in the sense that religious actors which had behaved in a certain way started to move in very different directions, raising concerns and, sometimes, encouraging conspiratorial ideas about what they intended to achieve.

### **A basic conceptual framework: pluralisation, minoritisation, and conservative reaction<sup>3</sup>**

I would like, before going into details of this emergence, to draw attention to three concepts that I consider helpful in understanding the process, as far as religious politics is concerned. I am going to be very economical here. Space is limited. The first concept is 'pluralisation', by which I understand the increasing differentiation and complexity of the social composition and relational dynamics of Brazilian society, coupled with multiple forms of cultural identification and collective organisation, which led to a very different picture of Brazilian society as compared to the 1950s and 1960s, when the military took power.

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<sup>3</sup>I developed these more conceptual aspects in different studies. For reasons of the scope of the present discussion, let me refer the reader to them (BURITY, 2020, 2018, 2017, 2016b).

Secondly, 'minoritisation'. Evangelical politics is a case of minoritisation, that is, not so much the mere existence and visibility of a numerical minority, but a process through which, in the contemporary world, we have witnessed a proliferation of minority groups or actors, which have challenged definitions of national identity, as well as the narrow spaces for participation and political representation that such cultural, ethnic, linguistic, sexual, religious minorities have experienced in many parts of the world. Minoritisation is, first, a process of self-assertion. It is a process of self-organisation to claim different things from a majority society used to being quite relaxed about demands coming from such minorities. Minoritisation is also a demand for majority identities to be brought 'lower' to the level of minorities, and therefore being treated as or becoming politically one more minority, among others. This can be expressed through a claim on democratic rights or through acts of defiance, contestation, and confrontation of the majoritarian order.

Thirdly, more recently, I think we can speak of a 'conservative reaction' against the (limited) advances that these entangled (but harbouring distinct logics) processes of expansive democratisation, pluralisation and minoritisation have achieved. After being challenged to the point in which it would appear that those advances could threaten the age-old political and cultural established order, a group of key conservative actors, transnationally connected, set out to undo this very deliberately.

### **The Evangelical/Pentecostal rise from minoritarian to hegemonic politics**

Several markers point to the process of emergence. They are markers of particular political developments in Brazilian society which lend credence to it. Brazil went through a process of 'expansive democratisation' which connected the transition to democracy, between the late-1970s and mid-1980s, to a centre-left coalition under presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, between 2003 and 2016. However, already by 2013 one can spot signs of incompleteness and discontent surrounding that process, as the so-called 'June Journeys' protests challenged the political institutions and, after a few moves under the umbrella of left-wing social movements, were hijacked by reactionary and far-right ones (CRUZ, KAYSEL, and CODAS 2015; GALLEGO 2018; MENDONÇA 2018). Initially rallying around public

transport demands, a wide articulation of other demands developed which included all sorts of grievances and, over a short period of time, was steered by right-wing groups towards a fierce attack on 'left-wing corruption', 'gender ideology', 'state interventionism', threats to 'traditional moral values', 'excessive' room for minority rights, and paved the way for a neoconservative agenda to gain terrain. The tide turned against the left through deep social media disputes coupled with a powerful conservative alliance between the conventional media, the political right in Parliament, sectors of the judicial system, and a very vocal religious right (led by Pentecostal politicians and media-savvy preachers, but including conservative Catholics, Jews, Spiritists and secular actors).

Although this did not prevent the re-election of President Rousseff in 2014, the widespread linking of think tanks, anti-corruption discourses, media conglomerates and conservative forces in parliament produced both massive street demonstrations and all sorts of political manoeuvres and reshaping of public opinion in a conservative direction. Between 2015 and 2018, this involved a successful impeachment procedure against Rousseff, via a collusion of the Supreme Court, conservatives (and sectors of the centre and left) in the National Congress (both the Federal Chamber and the Senate) and the media, leading to a growing polarisation of everyday and political relations (CLETO, JINKINGS, and DORIA, 2016; LISSARDY, 2015).

A conservative wave emerged which culminated in 2018 in the election of a far-right politician as president, Jair Bolsonaro, with a long history of defiance of democratic institutions and the exaltation of the previous period of military rule period (ALMEIDA, 2017; DEMIER and HOEVEHLER, 2016; FERNANDES, 2018). Certainly, democratisation in Brazil was far from linear and trouble-free. The travails of democratisation have always borne the marks of initiatives from below in Brazil, but also of elite transactions. Democracy has been a long, winding and difficult process of recognition, or upholding rights, of creating space for subaltern, exploited, discriminated social groups and people, even at an individual level, which have sought to carve a space in Brazilian culture and political institutions for other voices to be heard than the voices of the white elite. Moreover, sometimes we miss the amount of effort spent and the very complex, even contradictory way, in which such claims from below emerge and develop amidst re- accommodations of

powerful interests. This is usually far from idealised pictures of straightforward advancements. Wavering and regression, therefore, have not been novelties in the hard-won history of creating democracy in Brazil.

Not everything that can be said about evangelical minoritisation relates to the rise of the extreme right. The latter is very much a recent development, both because that minority had never been so powerful before and its recent prominence benefited from a juncture of institutional turmoil and uncertainty, domestically and internationally. On the one hand, Pentecostals emerged in the 1980s when post-military rule was about to start. There was a national election in 1986 and Pentecostal candidates were launched with official endorsement from their churches in many parts of the country. Thirty-two representatives were elected to the lower chamber of Brazilian Congress who came from evangelical backgrounds. The majority of them (18) were Pentecostals. But there were still people coming from more traditional Protestant denominations. Already, there was a diverse party and ideological spectrum. On the other hand, Pentecostal politics was, however ambiguous, a key part of the Workers' Party-led governmental and parliamentary coalition for over a decade, between 2002 and 2016 (ALMEIDA, 2017; BURITY, 2006; LACERDA and BRASILIENSE, 2018; LAFUENTE and BEDINELLI, 2018). The far-right story, thus, comes in a lot later.

The main idea behind this process was to carve out a space of recognition and participation in Brazilian mainstream cultural and political life for a religious minority. Pentecostals sought to protect religious freedom from an alleged Catholic Church attempt to become re-established and avert a putative communist threat. But they also claimed social and economic rights. They resorted very much to the same kinds of citizenship codes of expression and mobilisation that were being used by so many other social minorities and political groupings, then, who fought the military regime and engaged in democratic construction.

Basically, this participation expected to find a 'place' for Pentecostals in the national people (BURITY, 2021, 2016b). Minoritisation had to do with a claim to be part of the people through self-assertion and autonomous representation. Pentecostals had long been seen as members of a foreign sect, maybe representing anti-national interests. On the right, they threatened the Catholic underpinnings of Brazilian culture through their staunch conversionism and opposition to

syncretism. On the left, they were associated with US foreign policy objectives in halting the spread of left-wing projects in Latin America. In other words, who could trust their motives and claims? They were also considered to be ignorant, rude, poor people, who did not understand well the workings and dealings of political and cultural life. In that sense, Pentecostals felt their growing numbers were beginning to clash with the very negative and dismissive view of who they were or what they might represent as 'Brazilian citizens', as a genuine 'popular religion', because that is what they were within the national society<sup>4</sup>.

Through political and electoral activism minoritisation became a highly successful experience. A sustained sequence of electoral advances, initially through 'corporatist' candidates endorsed by their own churches or receiving the support of other churches, allowed them tip the scales in ballots nationwide. Some Pentecostal churches, such as the Assemblies of God, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God or the Foursquare Gospel Church, set up highly professional structures to get people elected and were very successful at that. Throughout, the innovations introduced by any of those would soon be emulated by others, thus creating a field of political forces, informally known as 'the evangelical caucus'.

Anyway, this process becoming so successful led to coalitions on the centre, right and left, and Pentecostals landed and remained in the supporting coalition of the Workers' Party between 2002 and 2016 (including corresponding electoral campaigns, although first rounds of presidential elections were often the occasion for some temporary defections). The first to join, the Universal Church, was also the last one to leave the coalition, by April 2016. It was a rather long political and electoral alliance, placing these conservative evangelicals firmly into a progressive coalition. Throughout the period, there was surely an accumulation of experience, knowledge and power among evangelicals, leading to the growing consolidation of a political and pastoral elite of politicians, advisors and media brokers. The latter became a very important reference point for electoral politics, not only at national level, but also at state and municipal levels.

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<sup>4</sup>This story is not just about institutional politics. The public impact of Pentecostalism in Brazilian society has been ascertained by ethnographic and sociological research that focus on issues of identity, everyday life, media presence, etc. (BIRMAN and MACHADO, 2012; MACHADO, 2018, 2013; MESQUITA, 2009).

Success and access to the inner circle of power drove a more ambitious, smaller group of pastors, politicians and media-savvy laypeople to dream of a much wilder bid for political influence and control, as disaffection grew with governmental, legislative and judicial decisions impacting traditional Christian morality, which represented some kind of turning point. More moderate, politically centrist groups within Pentecostalism lost space to a very articulate, small minority of highly conservative, even fascist, Pentecostal politicians and pastors articulating a discourse of threat (minority values trumping Christian traditional morality; state policies and legislation forcing compliance with unacceptable principles or practices in the name of justice or human rights, for example; etc) and the reassertion (of traditional values and, now, anti-statism, in the name of a harassed majority). Threats and reassertions that would justify openly confronting enemies and taking the reins of power to bring things back to where they should be. One cannot understand the present circumstances without realising this dislocation of the minoritisation narrative by a growing hegemonic narrative.

The story we have got used to hearing over the last few years, one of far-right religious profiling, began to be written in the 2010s (CUNHA, 2018, 2017). That story moves from the aim of having a place in the national population to constitute a kind of general constituency called 'the evangelical people', as if all 40 million plus evangelicals by 2016 rallied under the same agenda and leadership. After the impeachment of Dilma, the evangelical right put together a concerted initiative to move towards the centre of the political machinery by managing that kind of conservative ecumenical idea of 'the Christian majority'. The 'evangelical people in Brazil' narrative now aimed at 'the Brazilian people as evangelical'.

A hegemonic aspiration based on a number of theological ideas from conservative and fundamentalist evangelicalism, namely, dominion theology (a justification for a 'Christian leadership' of society), reconstructionism (a justification for making biblical law the basis for secular law in contemporary societies), the prosperity gospel (a justification for economic, social and political success and the 'deserved' occupation of top positions in society), and spiritual warfare (a justification for an antagonistic approach to adversaries and enemies as worthy of defeat through 'political exorcism' of meta-

historical demons controlling human affairs)<sup>5</sup>. This connection was non-existent until the mid-1990s among Brazilian evangelicals and Pentecostals as political actors. In practice, the post-impeachment scenario allowed the right-wing evangelical pastoral and political elite to gain ground, moving up positions of power and pushing for decisions that would undo cultural dimensions of the pluralisation that experienced until then, but also other forms of policy and legal advances particularly related to socioeconomic welfare (social inclusion and participation), women's, LGBTQ+, Afro-descendants' and indigenous' rights. Here we begin to notice a two-pronged convergence of Pentecostals and traditional conservative evangelicals, particularly under Bolsonaro, with Presbyterians and Baptists controlling the more 'technical' advisory and executive positions (for instance in the legal system, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Education), while Pentecostals led the main open battles in the political front (in Parliament, or, for instance, in the Ministry for Women, the Family and Human Rights) (LACERDA, 2019; MACHADO, 2020b).

### **Ecumenical and radical evangelical regrouping: articulating dissent and disputing the evangelical voice**

Alongside the former developments, there was a much smaller group within Protestant churches pursuing their 'faith politics' without drawing too much attention to themselves. They had been part of the ecumenical movement, associated in the 1970s and 1980s with Catholic-led Liberation Theology and its corresponding ecclesial experiments (the so-called popular pastoral, the People's Church, the ecclesial base communities). This ecumenical group had developed a very distinctive way of seeking influence at public level by forming small organisations, grassroots (neighbourhood, poor women, rural workers, homeless) social movements, NGOs, or simply joining in labour and social movements and left-wing political parties. Although also engaging in electoral politics on left-wing platforms, such forms of radical Christian activism leaned towards a more

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<sup>5</sup>Dominion theology, reconstructionism and spiritual warfare, have distinct theological provenances, the first two from neo-Calvinism and the latter from white Pentecostalism, and have appeared connected in the work of missiologist Peter Wagner. But they have been intertwined in the popular 'neocon' Christian discourse in the US and recently found expression in Brazilian conservative evangelical and Pentecostal political discourse see (BARRON and SHUPE, 1992; DORRIEN, 2005; MARIZ, 1999; ROCHA, 2020; ROSAS, 2015).

confrontational, civil-society based engagement with the state. At best, some of their (grassroots) leaders and (middle-class, intellectual) advisors were drawn into executive or consultative policy-making structures of progressive administrations.

The friction and the challenges that the conservative wave created in Brazil, especially after the general elections of 2014, slowly led to a more public profile of these progressive and radical evangelical groups and movements. As a result, they have tried hard to contest this widespread idea of ‘the evangelicals’ very often used by right-wing leaders within the evangelical political establishment to convey the idea that there is a (near) homogeneous collective out there the latter fully represent. Ecumenical and radical evangelicals have tried to empower, from a religious perspective, the agenda and demands of social movements, and they have joined with other religions, other religious minorities, particularly the Afro-Brazilian religions, that have become highly discriminated against, to create more space for a non-conservative religious voice in this process. They also resonate the agenda of minority, environmentalist and global justice politics through their connections with local, transnational and global partners.

In the 1980s progressive religious activists had some space in the Brazilian Congress, but they basically either withdrew in disillusionment from institutional politics to work at the grassroots or they developed an understanding of political and policy engagement, lobbying legislators to get changes approved and so on without seeking themselves to be those representatives occupying those spaces. Withdrawal from electoral politics left space open for more conservative forms of Pentecostal politics to emerge, bent on precisely securing larger chunks of political representation (ALENCAR, 2014; BURITY, 2016a; FE BRASIL, 2006). On the other hand, ‘*incidência pública*’ (public advocacy on policy and legal issues) allowed for a more effective influence of such small constituencies at the state level, generating achievements that the conservatives met with growing apprehension and even indignation. Occupying posts within governmental offices also made room for progressive Protestants and Catholics to further make their mark on policymaking and implementation.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, given the dramatic rise in absenteeism and denialism in the top echelons of government in tackling responsibly the impacts of Covid-19, an escalation of small and larger disputes involving this evangelical

minority took place. Mainstream evangelical groups, which by and large adopt right-wing or extreme right profiles at this moment, have attacked the measures aimed at controlling the spread of the virus, whether railing against 'lack of faith in God' or seeking to get exemptions for their churches from the various regulations and restrictions that were being adopted by city and state governments. They also sought to have some legislation approved through Congress and sub-national legislatures following the more or less general demobilisation that the pandemics created, on issues of gender, reproductive rights and deregulation of environmental protection protocols and labour relations (ANGLICAN ALLIANCE, 2020; BANDEIRA, CARRANZA, and GIUMBELLI, 2020; CUNHA, 2020; G1 PERNAMBUCO, 2021; MACHADO, 2020a; PIRES, 2020).

However, these actions were confronted by progressive sectors, even in Pentecostal churches. As social media became more salient and instrumental in the context of constrained face-to-face encounters and collective mobilisations, they allowed for voices to be seen and heard via lives, Facebook and Instagram posts, tweets, etc, in a process of fractalisation of religious disputes (BRASIL DE FATO, 2021; MORI, 2020; SCUR, 2021; TOSTES and CORAZZA, 2020). At all levels, from politico-institutional to ecclesial and everyday life, disputes arose around questions of health care, gender violence, racism, political participation, leading right now to the creation of a deliberately organised movement throughout the country from left-wing and radical evangelicals to get people elected for city councils or even having candidates who are running for mayor or mayoral positions. Some denominations have issued public statements challenging the federal government and its supporters to uphold the lives and rights of ordinary citizens and workers.

### **Concluding remarks**

The startling thing about evangelicals in politics over the past few years is that we are dealing with popular religion, not elite expressions of religion. Although there are wealthy, intellectualised movers in the process that was discussed above, we are really mostly dealing with ordinary people. Some of the most strident mouthpieces of conservative evangelical politics come from very humble origins, some of them with only a few years of formal education (and theological training). Pentecostalism does have its middle class expression. But it

still largely thriving in the peripheries of urban areas, in prisons, in rural communities. Even the larger traditional, non-Pentecostal churches, such as Baptists and Presbyterians, are mostly low-middle class, and share many of the neighbourhoods where Pentecostal churches are located. So, why are they not on the side of progressive politics? For some time they were. We cannot understand the directions of evangelical politics in isolation from the wider trends in recent Brazilian – and international – politics.

The difference is that Pentecostals, the large majority of Brazilian (and Latin American) Protestants, have been engaged in constructing an autonomous voice and representation, and focused on institutional, electoral politics to achieve this. Given the strong ties that are nurtured in local churches and relations of authority that privilege the oracular voice of the pastor (male or female, it matters little), it has proved plausible and effective to interpellate these constituencies to respond to vague and largely illusory threats. The intensive use of the media – which goes a long way back in popular Protestantism – and easy access to social media, recently, added to the self-authorisation of other voices, beyond the clergy, to produce and circulate contents accessible to all. Moreover, WhatsApp has made it possible for ad hoc opinions and teachings to spread unfettered among ‘equals’ (acquaintances, neighbours, friends and family), below the radar of organised actors (sometimes including church leaders) and mainstream academics.

Having started taking advantage of opportunities for democratic participation towards the end of the military regime, which led to a minoritisation in search of a ‘place’ in the new post-dictatorship, the political success and vicissitudes of the political process has pushed Pentecostals and non-Pentecostal evangelicals into the arms of a growingly reactionary political and cultural leadership. This was not predetermined by their religious identity. It was politically constructed. Moreover, despite the victory of the right-wing coalition in 2018, a third of the evangelical population did not join the new majority, and several indicators point in the direction of a slow disaffiliation.

What the pandemics revealed as a new development is that such is not a uni-directional movement or process. There are ‘non-aligned’ Pentecostals and evangelicals, even among the conservative ones. There are dissenting voices finding ways to be heard and seen. New social media have also benefited

them, by creating opportunities for these non-aligned constituencies and actively dissenting voices to bypass certain difficulties posed by, for instance, local church leaders not allowing them to speak or even to make contact with members of their churches. Obviously, dissenters can now reach those people very easily without ever meeting them. This is going on and, I think, raises the question of the ambivalence of such media, but also of political initiative, regarding how new social media can be made to work for purposes that are not necessarily conservative or manipulative.

A considerable number of people have raised the question of whether a new (American-style) Christian right has emerged in Brazil. I wrote about this recently and I am reticent, even sceptical. On the surface, there are several very similar elements that might tempt us to say 'OK, we have seen this before', 'it is America in the 70s', 'it is America under Bush', or 'it is America under Trump'. I would not deny that in relation to Trump, specifically, there have been explicit connections between Brazilian (evangelical) right-wingers and their (more experienced and richer) American counterparts. But I think we still need some clarity about how much we could extend this analysis to the original experience in the US. Pentecostals did not play a major lead in that case, and even more recently, those who have managed to are overwhelmingly white and middle class. Brazil is in stark contrast to this. The trajectory has been less linear and clearly more pragmatic in the Brazilian case, considering the 2002-2016 period (not to mention the late 1990s). They have been very much in control of evangelical politics in Brazil, for almost four decades, and that included many years in which nothing like a 'Christian right' had much substance. Such sustained course is also at variance with the American case.

Are we arriving late? Or is there more to say about the kind of resonance between the American religious and political rights and Pentecostal political (neo)conservatism? The left seriously misjudged the notion of accrediting the conventional (and sometimes self-appointed) leadership of Protestant churches in Brazil as their authentic representation as some kind of monolithic communities and identities. Acknowledging the capillarity of Pentecostal churches, they left the political formation for others and, as we hear today, the disputes of narrative, among ordinary church members. Of course, something can be gained from the comparison,

provided that we hold a clear understanding that these are different phenomena. Although there may be very similar agendas and repertoires of action that Brazilian politicised evangelicals are currently using, a lot are different.

One final point about environmentalism in Brazil. The coverage we get from the news currently shows evangelicals as quite complicit or even actively defending Bolsonaro's disastrous environmental politics. This is true, if we mean the right-wing evangelical elite. Generally speaking, evangelicals, back in their churches, in the pews, do not make much of the environmental debate. On the one hand, the more conservative ones tend to have a kind of perspective that would see the world going from bad to worse, towards Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ. For these, why waste such time in protecting things that are not going to survive, anyway? If cynical, this is a mostly passive understanding that does not generate engagement. It is the evangelical right who have really endorsed indiscriminate use of natural resources, in the name of prosperity, in the name of showing that you are under God's grace and that God is in control and will not let the worst happen.

However, the picture would not be complete if I stopped at that, because there is a growing environmental awareness among evangelical social activists and Christian ecumenical NGOs. Several of the latter were formed in the early-1990s, but some date back to the mid-1960s and early-1970s. From my own research on ecumenical social activism in Brazil and Argentina, I would err much in saying that all of them are very keen to promote or develop environmental policies as part of their social projects, as part of their charitable support for poor, indigenous and traditional communities, and some of them make a lot of this environmental concern. Among them, the largest Christian NGOs that operate in Brazil.

So, the story is unfinished and as unpredictable as ever, despite appearances to the contrary...

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