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The Catholic Spirit:

Music, Media, Miracles and the Brazilian Catholic Charismatic Renewal

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The Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) is one of the biggest Catholic lay movements in Latin America, but its relationship with power--ecclesial, popular, and academic--is complicated.¹ Known for its celebrity priests, use of pop music in liturgy, and emphasis on ecstatic or charismatic experience, the Brazilian CCR is a far cry from the quiet, contemplative masses that have historically dominated the faith, let alone the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass of old. The CCR's focus on the Holy Spirit as well as its worship style and televangelism is reminiscent of Pentecostalism, which has also been sweeping Brazil and much of the rest of the continent in the past several decades. That similarity with Pentecostalism has led to charges that the CCR is insufficiently Catholic. However, Charismatic Catholics themselves place their Charismatic experience firmly within their Catholic identity,² and even Brazilian Catholics who do not identify as

¹ Some notes on language: When I write "Church" with a capital "C," I am referring to the Catholic institution, while houses of worship are referred to with the lowercase-c "church." I use "Charismatic" with a capital "C" in the context of the contemporary renewal movement, and "charismatic" with a lowercase "c" to refer to other movements (Catholic, Protestant, etc.) emphasizing spiritual gifts. Throughout the paper, whenever quoted sources use different language or formatting than I do, I leave the quotes as they were originally written. Bible quotes are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

² Because CCR people consider themselves Catholic, I discuss the CCR as a Catholic movement on the basis of this identification rather than trying to assign religious labels based on practices. Though the Catholic Church does recognize the CCR, that is irrelevant to my discussion of the CCR as Catholic. I am not particularly concerned with whether the CCR as a movement or set of beliefs is/should be part of Catholic orthodoxy; instead, I am interested in the way that Charismatic Catholicism operates as an identity alongside and within Roman Catholic identity more broadly, rather than a separate social or confessional commitment. Both personally and academically, I believe strongly in taking people at face value when they talk about their own beliefs and practices. For examples of how Charismatic Catholics have emphasized their continued (if not enhanced) identification with Catholicism after their CCR involvement, see: Edward L. Cleary, *How Latin America Saved the Soul of the Catholic Church*, (New York, Paulist Press, 2009), 60-64; Susan A Maurer, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm: A History of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, 1967-2000*, (Lanham, University Press of America, 2010), 43; Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, (Grand Rapids, W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1997), 248. Also, see a pamphlet published by a CCR group that repeatedly emphasizes the movement's relationship to the institutional Church and Catholic tradition: Stephen B. Clark, *Where Are We Headed?: Guidelines for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, (Notre Dame, Charismatic Renewal Services, 1973)

Charismatic increasingly report seeing practices recognized as Charismatic in church. I argue that the CCR is bringing about changes in what is considered mainstream or acceptable Catholic expression in Brazil.

Scholars have largely ignored the CCR, so I have tried to give plenty of background on the movement and some of the notable discussions around it.³ I start the paper by outlining several features of Charismatic Catholicism and placing them in the context of early Christianity through the writings of the apostle Paul. These features, plus traditional Catholic practices like confession, Eucharist, and Marian devotion, identify a Catholic church or community as Charismatic.⁴ Then, I trace the history of the CCR from 1967 to the present, including its generally accepted starting point in Pennsylvania, USA, and its spread to Latin America in the early 1970s. Since American Catholics ushered in the Brazilian CCR, it is worth giving attention to the American roots of the CCR's founding myth even though my project in general is not focused on the CCR in the United States. Having set up this historical background, I then shift my focus specifically to the Brazilian CCR and discuss its particular emphasis on music, media, and celebrity priest-performers. In this portion of the paper, my approach changes from being more

³ As examples of scholarly recognition of the under-coverage, particularly in a North American context, of the CCR, see the following book reviews: Smith, Brian H. "Book Review: The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America." *Journal of Church and State* 54, no. 2 (2012): 299-302; Mantilla, Luis Felipe. "Book Review: The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 55, no. 3 (2013): 170-72; Nesvig, Martin. "Book Review: The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America." *The Catholic Historical Review* 98, no. 3 (2012): 615-16; Froehle, Bryan. "Edward L. Cleary, Op, the Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America (Gainesville University of Florida Press, 2011) Xiii 309 Pp. \$74.95 Hardback." *Pneuma* 34, no. 3 (2012): 451-52.

⁴ R. Andrew Chesnut argues that the CCR's emphasis on the Virgin Mary is a symbolic way for the CCR to differentiate its "product" (to borrow Chesnut's economic approach to analyzing Latin American religious landscapes) from that of Protestants with otherwise similar practices. See: R. Andrew Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), 89.

historiographical to being more anthropological. I focus on the phenomenon of celebrity priests, pop music, and TV masses, looking at the practices, mythology of, and reactions to this distinctive and public aspect of the Brazilian CCR. The Brazilian CCR is happening in a religious environment where liberation theology and Pentecostalism are also highly influential, and so I discuss the CCR's relationship with each of those movements. The overlap between liberationist and charismatic communities illustrates how the CCR can operate as just another activity for involved Catholics rather than, as some have regarded it, a separate confessional commitment. Pentecostalism and the CCR do not overlap in terms of membership, but they do share similar practices, and the Catholic Church has at times seen the CCR as a way of holding off the growing Pentecostal influence in Brazil, an effort that appears unsuccessful but does speak to some of the complicated power dynamics at play around the CCR. Since I am interested in the CCR's relationship to various sites of power, I think this project would be incomplete without a discussion of the way the institutional Catholic Church chooses to engage with the CCR, a topic which comes up in other sections of the paper but to which I turn specifically in the last section of the paper.

Charismata

The earliest available Christian texts testify to both the existence and power of charismatic gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul writes about *charismata*, or spiritual gifts (also called charisms). Seemingly responding to Corinthians' questions about people speaking in tongues, Paul affirms that charisms are endowed by the Holy Spirit, but

cautions against placing undue importance on such gifts, especially if those possessing them speak against God or Christ. He speaks of “varieties of gifts” (1 Cor 12:4), and explains:

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues ... But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. (1 Cor 12:7-10, 31)

The “greater gift” he speaks of is love, as he explains in 1 Cor 13:8: “Love never ends. But as prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.” When contemporary Charismatics cite the Bible to contextualize their practices within Christian tradition, they typically turn to 1 Corinthians 12.⁵

Charismatic Christians receive these charisms, the most common of which are speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*), prophecy, and healing, through Baptism in the Spirit. The idea of Baptism in the Spirit comes from Luke 3:16 – “I will baptize you with water; but ... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” – and typically marks a person’s full acceptance of and into the Charismatic movement. Across my sources, Charismatics generally describe Baptism in the Spirit as feeling overwhelmed by the presence or love of God/Christ, often accompanied by feelings of profound peace or clarity of belief. Edward Cleary identifies Baptism in the Spirit as a “peak experience,” which he

⁵ James William Jones, *Filled with New Wine: The Charismatic Renewal of the Church*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1974), 46

describes as a “detachment from human concerns and a time of wonder and awe.”⁶ Outwardly, people experiencing Spirit baptism may cry, speak in tongues, faint, or be “slain in the Spirit” (falling to the floor from the experience of being overwhelmed by God; this also happens separately from Spirit baptism).

Speaking in tongues is a prominent feature of Charismatic worship in its own right, though not all Charismatic Catholics speak or pray in tongues.⁷ While *glossolalia* can theoretically be in an “earthly language,” it is generally in what more charitable commentators have called a “heavenly language” and less charitable commentators have called “gibberish.”⁸ The gift of prophecy, while similarly drawing from the Spirit, comes not in tongues but in the speaker’s native language.⁹ Prophecy in the CCR “is not necessarily understood as a prediction of future events; rather, it generally is seen as a divine ‘message’ conveyed through a participant.”¹⁰ Charismatic prophecy is meant to reinforce belief in God or appreciation of Christian/Church teachings, and generally relates to present events. Healing is the third of the main spiritual gifts. CCR healing through prayer is not necessarily thought to be enough to cure someone’s ailment on its own and is at least as much about “healing of the soul” as the body (which in turn is believed to hasten physical healing).¹¹ In addition to the renewed attention to charisms in

⁶ Cleary, *How Latin America*, 61

⁷ Richard J Bord and Joseph E Faulkner, *The Catholic Charismatics: The Anatomy of a Modern Religious Movement*, (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), 79

⁸ For a more charitable example, see: Maurer, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm*, 65-66; for a less charitable treatment of speaking in tongues, see Bord and Faulkner, *The Catholic Charismatics*

⁹ Maurer, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm*, 67

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 67

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 68

Catholicism, the CCR has brought several other elements to the forefront in Catholic practice. The CCR has drawn attention for its use of pop music in liturgy, especially in Brazil, a topic I will cover further later in the paper. Also, for some Charismatic Catholics one of the “fruits of ‘Baptism in the Spirit’ is a renewed taste for Holy Scripture” writes Paul Josef Cordes.¹² Vinson Synan writes that the CCR moved beyond a Catholic desire to simply “catch up” with Protestants in their academic understanding of the Bible and shepherded in an interest in the Bible for personal, devotional purposes, saying “[the CCR] brought to the fore a hunger to read the Bible as a daily spiritual resource for the average church member.”¹³ The focus among Charismatic Catholics on reading the Bible is not as prominent as music and ecstatic experience in the Brazilian CCR, but is certainly notable when looking at the international CCR and its relationship with non-Charismatic Catholicism.

A New Pentecost

The beginnings of what would become the modern Charismatic renewal emerged in the aftermath of Vatican II (1962-65), which opened possibilities for new and different forms of worship and religious engagement within Roman Catholicism.¹⁴ Vatican II, which was referred to as a “New Pentecost,” marked a change in terminology from “Holy

¹² Paul Josef Cordes, *Call to Holiness: Reflections on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1997), 20

¹³ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 241

¹⁴ Vinson Synan specifically links the CCR to the Catholic Church’s interest in ecumenicalism spurred by the Second Vatican Council, though I have not seen this view echoed elsewhere. See: *Ibid.*, 237.

Ghost” to “Holy Spirit.”¹⁵ Scholars and practitioners alike typically date the start of the CCR to February 1967, when a group of faculty and students from Duquesne University, a Catholic university in Pennsylvania, USA, experienced an ‘outpouring of the Spirit’ (including Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues) while on a retreat.¹⁶ One of the students, David Mangan, talked about his experience of falling to the ground, having been “slain in the Spirit,” saying: “I cried harder than I ever cried in my life, but I did not shed one tear. All of a sudden Jesus Christ was so real and present that I could feel Him all around. I was overcome with such a feeling of love that I cannot begin to describe it.”¹⁷ There is also evidence of a similar event happening in Bogotá, Columbia, around the same time, but the story of the Duquesne group is the one most frequently cited by both scholars and Church groups like the (now-defunct) International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), and is a central part of the CCR’s origin myth.¹⁸ In the wake of the Duquesne retreat, a similar instance of Baptism in the Spirit happened at Notre Dame University in 1967. Campus newspapers reported the story, which was later picked up by the *National Catholic Reporter*. This launched Charismatic Catholicism into the American Catholic consciousness, so the story goes, though it

¹⁵ Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, 6-7

¹⁶ Ondina E González and Justo L González, *Christianity in Latin America: A History*, (Cambridge; New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008), 287

¹⁷ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 246-247

¹⁸ For discussion of the event in Bolivia, see Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, 10. For examples of the use of the “Dusquene event” in CCR mythology, see “The Catholic Charismatic Renewal,” (ICCRS); Stanley M Burgess and Ed M Van der Maas, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Pub. House, 2002), 460; Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, 10

remained a relatively fringe movement.¹⁹ The CCR hit its peak in the United States in the mid-1970s and has been fading ever since. In general, Charismatic Catholicism was never nearly as influential in the US as it was--and continues to be--in Latin America, particularly Brazil.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal spread to parts Latin America in the early 1970s as Jesuit and Dominican priests from North America arranged “Life in the Spirit” retreats to discuss various aspects of Charismatic Catholicism with priests, sisters, and brothers in Latin America. Many of those attendees then spread the CCR to their parishes. Edward Cleary writes of how Charismatic Christians (both Catholic and Protestant) have connected more naturally with Brazilian culture than Catholicism has in the past.

It is noteworthy how quickly both Pentecostalism and Charismatic Catholicism became indigenous movements with Brazilians taking over or at least sharing leadership in the movements. For centuries both Protestant and Catholic missionaries in their global missions lacked indigenous pastors, leaders, and cultural adaptations to local cultures.²⁰

Additionally, scholars like Jakob Thorsen identify links between contemporary Charismatic practices and pre-colonial religion. He writes:

¹⁹ The story of the “Duquesne event,” as it is often referred to in both confessional and scholarly literature, is a fairly ubiquitous feature of the CCR mythology, and (along with the Notre Dame baptism in the Spirit, when mentioned) is told with remarkably little variation between scholars and organizations. These scholars and organizations include those referenced in the previous footnote. I am somewhat skeptical as to the historicity of this story, and speculate that it may be the product of a single scholar or organization who has then been copied by others. I am interested in the development of CCR orthodoxy, including the CCR’s canonical origin story, but that is not a topic I devote further time to in this paper. For the purposes of this paper, the origin story I report above is important as part of the CCR mythos, and not necessarily as a historical account.

²⁰ Cleary, *Charismatic Catholicism*, 101. In this quote, “indigenous” appears to refer not to native peoples/groups but to people born and raised in Brazil

The elements of ecstasy and healing are probably the most direct link between Charismatic Catholicism and traditional popular religion in Latin America; Charismatic healers and prayer groups have some of the same functions as those of the wise women, the traditional healer or shaman (*curandero/a*), or even the witch (*brujo/a*) in earlier times, namely to serve as bridgeheads to a supernatural world inhabited by angels and demons.²¹

The ideas and practices espoused by the Charismatic Renewal are not alien to Latin America, which has likely helped it become as popular and influential as it is on much of the continent. Afro-diasporic religions like Candomblé also helped seed the ground for charismatic Christianity, especially among Afro-Brazilians.

Candomblé is an African-derived religion practiced in Brazil, often alongside Catholicism.²² J. Lorand Matory writes:

Since the colonial period, Candomblé and similar religions have variously been persecuted, tolerated, and encouraged--often all at the same time. As when it missionized other countries, the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil often encouraged the integration of pre-Christian iconography, celebratory practices, and ethnic identities into the local practice of Christianity.²³

Candomblé centers ecstatic experience in a way similar to charismatic Christianity, which elicited discomfort from Catholics concerned with maintaining a contemplative focus in Catholicism. While the CCR has received

²¹ Jakob Egeris Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice and Catholic Parish Life: The Incipient Pentecostalization of the Church in Guatemala and Latin America*, (Leiden, Brill, 2015), 56

²² In particular, the Bahia state--once the home of a major slave port--in northeastern Brazil has a large population of Afro-Brazilians and practitioners of African-derived religions like Candomblé, with the state's capital, Salvador, known as the "Rome of Afro-Brazilian religion." Candomblé and other African-derived religions in Brazil act as, among other things, a method of "ethnic affirmation" for Afro-Brazilians and serve as a core component of the black consciousness movement. See Stephen Selka, *Religion and Politics of Ethnic Identity in Bahia, Brazil*, (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2007), 2; Stephen Selka, "Ethnoreligious Identity Politics in Bahia, Brazil." *Latin American Perspectives*, (2005), 72

²³ James Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion : Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005), 160

plenty of discomfort and backlash of its own, the fact that it has mostly been accepted by the Brazilian institutional Church in a relatively short amount of time may be attributed to the fact that Candomblé and other African-derived religions paved the way for the inclusion of ecstatic worship styles in Brazilian culture.²⁴ Carnaval, the Brazilian pre-Lent celebration, also has roots in African and Afro-Brazilian culture. Carnaval elevates music and celebration in an ostensibly Catholic context in a similar way to the CCR. Things like ecstatic/charismatic experience were already part of cultural expression in Brazil, but the CCR has framed those practices in a more explicitly Catholic light.

Media and CCR Growth in Brazil

In 2000, there were CCR-affiliated prayer groups in around 6000 of Brazil's 8600 parishes as well as many independent Charismatic groups.²⁵ The movement has only continued to grow since then, heralded in part by the booming popularity of Padre Marcelo Rossi starting in the 2000s. Rossi's initial career was as an aerobics instructor. He suffered from muscle dysmorphia (sometimes called "vigorexia") and describes himself as having been "addicted" to bodybuilding, even taking steroids. Brazilian racing icon Ayrton Senna²⁶ reportedly spurred Rossi to "turn to God" after Senna raised his

²⁴ The relationship between the CCR and Candomblé is at least a book-length topic of its own. My discussion of it is fairly limited here, in part because I lack ethnographic resources concerning relations between practitioners of each. However, this is a worthwhile topic for further research.

²⁵ Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice*, 22-23

²⁶ It is difficult to overstate Senna's influence in Brazil; when the triple Formula 1 World Champion died, the country held three days of national mourning.

hands and gave thanks to God after his first win in Formula 1.²⁷ Rossi joined a CCR prayer group, got degrees in philosophy and theology, and was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1994 at age 33. He has released 27 musical albums, with his seventeen solo studio albums (released 1998 to 2017) selling almost 20 million copies.²⁸ The music sung during his masses is off his own albums. These days, Rossi can attract the same size crowds as Pope John Paul II did in Brazil, once needing to move his mass to a racetrack after the soccer stadium planned as the original venue proved too small.²⁹ His weekday masses regularly attract thirty thousand people, with larger crowds on Sunday, and the television and internet broadcasts of the services allow and many more people to access them remotely.³⁰

Padre Marcelo Rossi's masses are something to behold. The crowd cheers after each song and scripture reading as if at a concert – to be sure, this is a Catholic Mass, and follows the basic format common in the Roman rite,³¹ but it is a Mass that blurs the lines somewhat between religion and entertainment. The homily feels like a twenty-five-minute conversation. Padre Marcelo moves his hands constantly as he talks, miming and gesturing to emphasize his speech. He comes to the edge of the stage, leaning forward on the railing and bending down slightly. Perhaps he uses a teleprompter, perhaps he

²⁷ “‘Eu Era Um Monstro’, Conta Marcelo Rossi, Que Era Viciado Em Musculação,” G1

²⁸ In 2002 he won a Latin Grammy award in the “Best Christian Album” category for *Paz*, and he was nominated again in 2004 for *Maria Mãe Do Filho de Deus*, in the revised category “Best Christian Album (Portuguese Language)” but did not win.

²⁹ Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice*, 23

³⁰ Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, 142

³¹ In that regard, it stands in contrast to the beach liturgies conducted by another Charismatic priest, Padre Zeca, which the Rio Archdiocese stopped since they were considered too unorthodox.

doesn't, but there is no obvious script or notes that he is speaking from, which creates a sense of intimacy. He speaks softly and kindly, and chuckles occasionally. He seems utterly relaxed. There are cheers when he finishes, and then the music resumes. The diversity of the band mirrors that of the congregation, including men, women, and people of varying ages and skin colors. John L. Allen Jr., then a journalist for the *National Catholic Reporter*, attended one of Padre Marcelo's masses in 2009 and wrote about the experience.

The crowd was in the middle of a song when Rossi stepped on stage. Though some pious souls might be ambivalent about the obvious pop feel of much of the music, I can at least report that it's really, really good pop, the kind of music that runs through both the body and the mind, and that stays with you afterwards. ... Rossi would flash the crowd a thumbs-up, cup his ear to indicate that he wanted the volume pumped up, and tap his heart to signal gratitude for the response. At a few points he put his finger to his lips to tell the people inside to be silent, allowing the thousands of voices from outside to be heard. In some ways the Mass was like an emotional roller coaster ride, repeatedly building to a fevered crescendo, only to come back down for moments of deep reverence. People were respectful of the key moments, such as the proclamation of the gospel and the eucharistic prayers, but they also seemed to know when it felt right to send up a chant of "Hey, Hey, Hey, Jesus is King!" (which sounds much more lyrical in Portuguese) and when to offer raucous applause. ... The Mass proceeded, punctuated by the same alternating cycle of pop-music exuberance and deep reverence. At the end, Rossi and the priest with whom he concelebrated placed a large host into a gleaming monstrance. All the lights were turned off as people lit small candles, producing a shimmering sea of light. As a haunting ballad played in the background, Rossi slowly came down from the stage and made the rounds of the hall, holding the monstrance aloft. It was the most spiritually evocative moment of the evening, with the vast crowd silently riveted on the monstrance as it followed its course back to the altar.³²

³² Allen, John L. "In Brazil, a Catholic Mass You'll Never Forget." *National Catholic Reporter*, September 11, 2009.

Before Marcelo Rossi came on the Charismatic scene, Jesuit Father Ed Dougherty (known in Brazil as Padre Eduardo or Padre Edo) was the movement's biggest celebrity. Padre Edo is an American priest and one of the main figures credited with beginning the Brazilian Charismatic Renewal. He started the nonprofit Associação do Senhor Jesus (Association of the Lord Jesus or ASJ) to produce mass media to promote Charismatic Catholicism in Brazil. Initially, "major funding [for ASJ] came from the United States, but later most financial support came from Brazilians, including seventy thousand member-contributors of the ASJ."³³ This speaks to Brazilian Catholics' confidence in and engagement with the burgeoning Charismatic movement. Dougherty and ASJ created the TV show "We Announce Jesus" in 1980 and faced intense criticism from the Brazilian Bishops Conference which saw it as "disembodied (from social reality), Pentecostal, ... and contrary to the pastoral orientations" of the conference.³⁴ Dougherty believes strongly in the medium of television, and has said that "I have no doubt that if Jesus Christ were here--like we are here--he would be on television."³⁵ In 1990, he founded TV Século 21 (21st Century TV), an educational and religious network. Dougherty has studied business and often discusses the CCR in marketing terms, once saying "We have the best product, which is God, [and the] best price, which is for free."³⁶ On TV Século 21, Padre Edo held a five-hour-long Mass program on Sundays. Edward Cleary describes it:

³³ Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, 101

³⁴ Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, 116

³⁵ *Televangelism in Brazil*, (Films Media Group, 2007), 5:34

³⁶ *Televangelism in Brazil*, (Films Media Group, 2007), 5:20

The show is taped in a stadium-style studio that holds two thousand people--white and black, middle class and poor--in its enthusiastic audience. A layman acts as master of ceremonies, Padre Eduardo runs in and out of view of the camera during the five-hour program. Back stage [sic] he walks quickly to the counseling center with its banks of telephones to deal with individual cases or he speaks to clients on a cell phone ... he appears in Sunday celebrant vestments or a clerical suit. He speaks Portuguese almost perfectly. The show includes a Catholic Mass. The rest of the show includes Padre Eduardo speaking in tongues; ten Carmelite nuns praying for [audience members on request] ... and a break in the seriousness with an interlude given to a stand-up comic.³⁷

The final forty-five minutes of the program are devoted to the benediction, where “incense is used in abundance and discreetly placed smoke machines increase the cloudlike atmosphere.”³⁸

Liberation Theology and the Brazilian Church

To some Catholics, particularly those involved with or sympathetic to the liberation theology movement which is influential in the Brazilian institutional Church, a movement like the CCR, focused as it is on spiritual or otherworldly matters might seem unproductive in the face of massive social and economic inequality and unjust structures of power that are in need of challenging and reshaping. The CCR has certainly seemed to some liberation theologians--most prominently Leonardo Boff, who I discuss below--like a threat to the work of liberation theology in Latin America and Brazil in particular.

However, the growth of the CCR has not ended up hurting liberation theology in the way some scholars and commentators worried it would. Perhaps more importantly, the divides

³⁷ Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, 118-119

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 119

between participants in Charismatic and liberationist groups is fluid at best, with participants in each often dabbling if not fully engaging in the other.

In recent years, many Brazilian liberation theologians are warming to the CCR despite their initial resistance. For example, the prominent Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff was highly critical of the movement in the 1980s. He was one of the first major figures to attack it and had opposed ecclesial recognition of the CCR.³⁹ However, in his 2015 book *Come, Holy Spirit*, Boff reversed course and expressed his support for the Charismatic movement, writing “Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) complements this experience [of liberation] with a much-needed emphasis on prayer and spirituality.”⁴⁰ In contrast to his previous belief that the CCR would undo or undermine liberation theology, in *Come, Holy Spirit* Boff writes that “to contrast the Church of Liberation with the Charismatic Church would imply a biased, reductionist perspective.”⁴¹

Latin American liberation theology emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Published in 1971, Peruvian theologian and priest Gustavo Gutiérrez’s *A Theology of Liberation* was “the first systematic statement” of liberation theology, according to David Tombs, who describes the key elements of Gutiérrez’s work as follows:

First, his *methodological principle*, which was based on theology as critical reflection; second, the *terminological innovation*, which focussed on the theme of

³⁹ Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice*, 25; Cleary, *How Latin America*, 64

⁴⁰ Leonardo Boff, *Come, Holy Spirit: Inner Fire, Giver of Life, and Comforter of the Poor*, (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2015), 22

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22. Though Boff may be indicative of liberationists who are connected to the Brazilian institutional Church, given that his attitudes have roughly tracked with that of the country’s Catholic Bishops Conference, there is some divide between liberation theologians (and liberation theology-involved or -influenced lay people) who are and aren’t connected to the Church. There is a strong likelihood of continued tension between liberationists and Charismatics, at least in some places/contexts, “on the ground” in Brazil.

liberation; third, a *pastoral option of political commitment*, which addressed the challenges for the church in Latin America as it sought to ... express solidarity with the poor and protest against their poverty⁴²

A Theology of Liberation was not the first or final articulation of what is commonly referred to as liberation theology, but the text is the movement's "founding theological publication" because it laid out a concrete framework for a new way of, as Gutiérrez said, "doing theology."⁴³ Liberation theologians use Marxist social analysis and approach theology from the perspective of people in need of and working for liberation.⁴⁴ Liberation theologians see the Church (in conjunction with humanity and the world) as having "radical autonomy" to change the world and help people.⁴⁵ Latin American liberation theology fostered suspicion towards theology claiming to be "apolitical," as such claims of political disinterest are often themselves indications of a political position; specifically, one interested in preserving the status quo.⁴⁶ Typically, liberation theologians are also against popular religion and mystical approaches to religion, and promote demythologization and secularism to allow people to face the 'real' problems of an "adult world," in the words of Gutiérrez.⁴⁷ Gutiérrez does not give a specific definition of popular religion as he opposes it, and definitions of popular religion vary among scholars, but typically the term refers to elaborations on organized religion that are

⁴² David Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, (Boston, Brill Academic, 2002), 120

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 136 and 123, respectively

⁴⁴ In the case of Latin American liberation theology, the subjects of liberation are typically the poor, though there are feminist and queer theologies of liberation as well.

⁴⁵ Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice*, 63

⁴⁶ Ian Linden, *Global Catholicism: Diversity and Change since Vatican II*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2009), 119

⁴⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988), 42

generally based in the local culture. Practitioners may connect their popular religious practice to their involvement or belief in religious orthodoxy and orthopraxis, but it is not officially part of organized religious practice. “Liberation theology, as part of the modernism associated with Vatican II, first opposed popular religion as a type of superstition and false consciousness”⁴⁸ and even in instances where liberation theologians have changed their overall stance on popular religion, their approach to it remains intellectual--theorizing and taxonomizing it--and treats it separately from Catholicism as a whole.⁴⁹ In this regard, it differs from Charismatic Catholicism, which has incorporated and implicitly accepted popular religion--and popular culture in general--as part of the movement.⁵⁰

One prominent feature of liberation theology in Latin America is the *comunidades eclesiales de base* (Base Ecclesial Communities or Base Christian Communities; CEBs). Odina and Justo González argue that “Much of the ethos of the CEBs found its expression in what became known as liberation theology, many of whose main exponents had been and continued being part of CEBs and therefore claimed that in a way they were expressing the actual theology of the people.”⁵¹ Proto-CEBs developed amidst shortages of priests in Brazil before the first articulations of liberation theology. These proto-CEBs were grassroots groups that met in homes and schools under lay leadership to provide

⁴⁸ Alberto Melloni, *Movements In the Church*, (London, SCM Press, 2003), 129. In this case, secularism refers to the separation of religion from public life/policy, not skepticism or abandonment of religion in general.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 122-130

⁵⁰ Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice*, 56

⁵¹ González and González, *Christianity in Latin America*, 254

religious education and support to members of a parish community in the absence of a priest. Over time, many of these groups moved into more social action and organizing projects as well, and/or ended up serving as a sort of community center and providing things like literacy programs, arts and crafts instruction, and child care classes.⁵²

As Vatican II was coming to a close, the Brazilian bishops issued a pastoral plan in which all believers were invited to become involved—the *Plano de Pastoral de Conjunto*, or Plan for a Joint Pastoral Practice. As justification for this plan and its reliance on CEBs, the bishops declared that these small community-based groups provided the best way “to renew our parishes, whose structures are increasingly revealed as inadequate.” ... The most common agenda for CEB meetings included a time of sharing and solidarity, discussion and analysis of the social conditions in their own communities and their causes and possible solutions, prayer, and Bible study.⁵³

Frequently, this Bible study was focused specifically socioeconomic liberation through revolution, which in turn prompted many people to engage in social activism.⁵⁴

Though liberation theology espouses socialist politics and the CCR has largely avoided explicit political statements, members of both groups have behaved similarly (and conservatively) in past Brazilian elections. In 1994, the two biggest players in the general election were Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (referred to simply as Lula) of the democratic socialist Workers’ Party and Fernando Henrique Cardoso of the center-left, but comparatively conservative, Brazilian Social Democracy Party. In one survey, 46% of Charismatics reported having voted for Cardoso, while 22% voted for Lula.⁵⁵ Only Pentecostals voted for Lula in smaller amounts. Lula was “the political darling of the

⁵² González and González, *Christianity in Latin America*, 250

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 251-252

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 253

⁵⁵ Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*, 99

progressive church,” and liberationist leaders hoped and assumed he would garner significant support from CEB members.⁵⁶ They were to be disappointed, however, as CEB members also favored Cardoso, with 40% reporting voting for him versus 31% voting for Lula.⁵⁷ This voting breakdown suggests that however different the political ideals or social connotations of the CCR and liberation theology may be, practitioners of both vote in ways that are similar to each other and not necessarily related to their CCR or CEB involvement.

In an ethnography about CEBs and CCR groups in Garanhuns, Brazil, Marjo de Theije argues against the “supposed antagonistic relationship” the two groups are assumed to have.⁵⁸ Not only are many of the people in the town actively involved in both the Charismatic and liberation theology groups, but CEB members who become involved with Charismatic worship report feeling that they are “more Catholic” than they were prior to their Charismatic involvement, suggesting that for many of the people involved in the movement Charismatic Catholicism operates as simply another dimension of Catholic engagement rather than a separate set of social or confessional commitments.⁵⁹ Theije’s work also challenges the dichotomy of liberation theology as focused on politics and improving the world while the Charismatic renewal is focused on individual

⁵⁶ Ibid., 99. It is worth noting that, since not all CEBs are necessarily liberation-focused, readers should not assume that “CEB members” and “liberation theology supporters” are completely synonymous. However, the two things are closely enough associated that researchers typically use CEB involvement as a proxy for liberation theology involvement/interest.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 99

⁵⁸ Christian Smith and Joshua Prokopy, *Latin American Religion in Motion*, (New York, Routledge, 1999), 112

⁵⁹ Cleary, *How Latin America*, 65

experience at the expense of social action.⁶⁰ In Garanhuns, it was the Charismatic group that founded and constructed a day care center for street children and staffed it with volunteers. At the same time, “most area CEBs continue not to engage with political activism and projects” despite the parish priest’s urging.⁶¹ Liberation theology communities can and do inspire social activism, but it is not clear that they are much more active or effective than Charismatic communities.⁶²

Among scholars, Charismatic and liberation-focused Catholics in Brazil are often assumed to be in opposition; for example, Edward Cleary presents the Charismatic movement as “a revitalization movement that offers a clear and popular alternative to liberationist CEBs” and Pedro Ribeiro de Oliveira views CEBs and the Charismatic movement as in a conflict that will end when one overwhelms and absorbs the other and becomes the dominant expression of Catholicism in Latin America.⁶³ There is scant evidence that a divide in fact exists among Catholics in Brazil; contrary to what many theologians had feared, the CCR has not drawn members away from liberation theology groups and in fact many people involved with CEBs are also in Charismatic prayer

⁶⁰ Ibid., 111

⁶¹ Ibid., 116

⁶² Christian Smith and Joshua Prokopy also say “the typical image of the CCR [as apolitical, uninvolved in social stuff, etc.] can be attributed to the fact that observers usually emphasize the meaning of the movement in a national and international context, overlooking the peculiarities and distinctive traits of local elaborations of charismatic teachings. Just as the base communities are not necessarily liberation theology writ small, local [charismatic] prayer groups are not necessarily the direct expression of ideology of the national and international charismatic movement.” See: Smith and Prokopy, *Latin American Religion in Motion*, 112

⁶³ Cleary, *How Latin America*, 62; Pedro A. Ribeiro de Oliveira, “O Catolicismo: De CEBs à Renovação Carismática,” *Revista Brasileira Eclesiástica* 59 (December 1999)

groups and vice-versa.⁶⁴ Even in areas without established CCR groups, Brazilian CEBs increasingly feature Charismatic worship practices including those around music, giving testimonies, praise, and emphasis on the Holy Spirit. This Charismatic influence on CEBs is an example of Edward Cleary's conclusion that Charismatic Catholicism "has struggled to gain acceptance by the organizational Church while at the same time exerting a wide influence on worship styles and parish participation."⁶⁵

Pentecostalism

In discussing the CCR's relationships with other movements in the region, I would be remiss not to discuss the explosion of Evangelical Protestantism.

Pentecostalism is the continent's dominant Protestant sect, and in Brazil (where roughly half of Latin American Protestants live), other denominations including Presbyterians and Baptists have adopted more Spirit-focused, Charismatic or Pentecostal-esque worship styles.⁶⁶ Pentecostal worship, much like that of Charismatic Catholicism, emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit through baptism in the Spirit and charisms. Pentecostalism tends to put particular emphasis on believers' personal experience with (or of) God and particularly the Holy Spirit.

⁶⁴ Smith and Prokopy, *Latin American Religion in Motion*, 112; Cleary, *How Latin America*, 65

⁶⁵ Cleary, *How Latin America Saved*, 60

⁶⁶ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*, (Oxford, B. Blackwell, 1990), 60; Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*, 40

In some parts of Latin America, such as Columbia, the local CCR grew out of Protestant-Catholic interactions.⁶⁷ As a result, a strong current of ecumenicalism has marked the CCR in many areas. In Brazil, on the other hand, since the Charismatic Renewal arrived not via Protestants but via American Catholics (though they had themselves been influenced by Pentecostal theology and worship), the connections between Catholic and Protestant charismatic communities are weak, if present at all.⁶⁸ Linda van de Kamp writes that “since Pentecostal churches do not keep records of members and some people frequent the churches temporarily, it is difficult to say exactly how many people attend Brazilian Pentecostal churches, but the number is substantial.”⁶⁹ At a General Conference of Latin American Bishops (also called the Latin American Episcopal Council or CELAM) meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 1976, bishops identified the CCR as a way to combat the growing Protestant influence (and associated exodus from the Catholic Church), writing that “a correct and just appreciation of the Charismatic

⁶⁷ The Columbian CCR started in 1970, after a group of Protestants came to study a housing and social welfare project run by Catholics in Bogotá. One of those Protestants was Sam Ballesteros, a Mexican-American Baptist youth leader from California. Ballesteros became friends with Fr. Rafael García-Herreros, the Catholic priest who ran the project. Ballesteros shared his experiences with charisms and the Holy Spirit with an interested García-Herreros, who experienced “baptism in the Spirit” in 1970. Afterwards, García-Herreros spread Charismatic teachings through the community that funded and operated the housing project, and from there it moved through the country. The CCR was also promoted by Church hierarchy, particularly Bishop Alfonso Uribe Jaramillo. After encountering the movement in the early 1970s, Uribe Jaramillo arranged retreats for priests and both religious and lay people to promote it. In 1981, he founded the first Charismatic Catholic seminary in Latin America, which emphasized evangelization and spiritual gifts.

⁶⁸ That is not to say that the Brazilian CCR is not influenced by Pentecostalism--indeed, the emphasis on televangelism in the Brazilian CCR, a phenomenon not found across Latin America, was likely spurred on by the emphasis on televangelism in Brazilian Pentecostalism--rather, I want to emphasize that Brazilian Charismatic Catholic identity is constructed without explicit connections to (and perhaps even with explicit separation from) Brazilian Pentecostalism, in contrast to the CCR in other parts of Latin America.

⁶⁹ Linda van de Kamp, *Violent Conversion: Brazilian Pentecostalism and Urban Women in Mozambique*, (Woodbridge, James Currey, 2016), 4

[Catholic] groups can establish a point of attraction which offers an alternative to the disquietude of our times.”⁷⁰ Because of this, and because the CCR and Pentecostalism have grown in popularity at the same time, Charismatic Catholicism is commonly framed by scholars as merely, or at least primarily, a Catholic effort to compete with Protestantism.⁷¹ While this framing is true to an extent, it fails to capture the genuine enthusiasm of lay people for whom the CCR is much more than a competitive strategy. CCR participants have put charismatic ideas and practices into the Catholic Church. In Brazil, those ideas and practices are massively popular.

Catholic Charismatics report being more happy in and with the Catholic Church than they were prior to their involvement in the CCR.⁷² Though this may reflect some hindsight bias, it shows that for Charismatic Catholics CCR involvement is regarded as a specifically Catholic activity. Of those who joined the Latin American CCR in the 1970s, the majority were already active Catholics, and 80% had participated in other Catholic lay groups.⁷³ If the intention was to use the CCR to win back Pentecostals, it appears ineffective, but the movement has appealed to and reinforced the support of already active Catholics. CCR groups emphasize the ways the Vatican and other Catholic institutions have expressed approval for the Charismatic movement. Susan Maurer writes:

In contrast with the Protestant Pentecostals, whose experiences of baptism in the Spirit resulted in their leaving the mainline Protestant churches and forming

⁷⁰ *Comunicado Mensal* 1/76, quoted by Ibid., 70

⁷¹ Andre Chesnut, in works such as *Competitive Spirits*, is a major proponent of this.

⁷² Cleary, *How Latin America*, 60-64

⁷³ Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*, 74-75

splinter groups and new Protestant sects, the Catholics who had experienced the descent of the Spirit looked to the church and the documents of the Second Vatican Council for validation and acceptance of their experience⁷⁴

One American Charismatic Catholic, Bert Ghezzi, spoke of how, after having been baptised in the Spirit and praying in tongues with a group of Pentecostals, he was asked by his Pentecostal friends when he would be leaving Catholicism to join a Pentecostal church. He was “a little shocked” by the question, as he had no intention of leaving the Catholic Church and saw no conflict between it and being baptised in the Spirit. “I think there’s something significant about the fact that those of us who were baptized in the Holy Spirit then would never have thought about abandoning the Roman Catholic Church,”⁷⁵ he later said. A pamphlet published by the Charismatic Renewal Services is similarly clear that “as we move forward in charismatic renewal, we should be fully of the Catholic Church in our participation and activities in the Catholic Church.”⁷⁶ As I discuss further in the next section, the institutional Church has shown some wariness in dealing with the CCR. The Church has viewed the CCR, perhaps incorrectly, as a powerful tool to combat Pentecostalism in Brazil, but as the movement has become ever more popular and influential among Catholics, some in the Church appear concerned that the CCR risks taking on a life and following of its own, separate from Church control and allegiance.

⁷⁴ Maurer, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm*, 43

⁷⁵ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 248

⁷⁶ Clark, *Where Are We Headed?*, 20-21. Elsewhere, the pamphlet also says: "our goal should not be to have a Catholic Pentecostal movement, but to have a complete renewal of Christian life in the power of the Spirit."(9)

One, Holy, Catholic

Popes have been “positive but cautionary” when discussing the CCR.⁷⁷ Susan Maurer posits that the cautious but ultimately “benevolent” approach of the Catholic Church toward the CCR was influenced by its awareness of the Pentecostal movement in Protestantism and the breakaway sects it birthed, an outcome that the Catholic Church hoped to avoid.⁷⁸ Pope Paul VI said “nothing is more necessary to this more and more secularized world than the witness of the ‘spiritual renewal’ that we see the Holy Spirit evoking in the most diverse regions and milieu.”⁷⁹ This idea of the CCR as benefitting not only those directly involved in the movement but as a group performing a service to the whole Catholic Church (and perhaps Christianity in general), has come up in Pope Francis’ discussion of the CCR as well. Pope John Paul II noted at a CCR meeting in December 1979 that he had said a daily prayer to the Holy Spirit since the age of eleven, and explained: “that was my own spiritual initiation, so I can understand all of these Charisms.”⁸⁰ Though Pope John Paul II was largely supportive of the CCR, he also emphasized the position of the CCR as something *within* the larger Church, and warned of “the risk of favoring ... a purely emotional experience of the divine.”⁸¹ Similarly, Pope Benedict XVI stressed that “the institutional and charismatic dimensions” of the Church

⁷⁷ Maurer, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm*, 41

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 43

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 41

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 42

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 42

were “co-essential” and that charisms must be institutionalized just as the institution was becoming charismatic.⁸² Pope Francis has echoed his predecessors in emphasizing themes of unity both within the movement and between the CCR and the Church in general. Despite these nods to the CCR from the Church institution, no Charismatic Catholics were invited to the fifth CELAM which met in São Paulo, Brazil in May 2007.⁸³ Edward Cleary identifies this CELAM as the most important Latin American Church meeting since 1992, and the fact that Charismatics were not part of it speaks to their relative lack of institutional power (at least on the continent) even amidst official recognition from bodies like the Vatican.⁸⁴

Conclusion: Power and Influence

Over the course of this paper, I have worked to illustrate the influence of the CCR in Brazil. The CCR has introduced new worship practices into Brazilian Catholicism, and the fact that 56% of Brazilian Catholic churchgoers say they have witnessed practices like speaking in tongues, prophesying, and praying for a miraculous healing “at least

⁸² Ibid., 42-43. Cardinal Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI’s theology held some tension with the Charismatic movement. Regarding worship styles more generally, he once pointedly remarked: “the Second Vatican Council gave us the phrase *participatio actiosa*, the “active participation” of everyone [in a Mass] .. Unfortunately, the word was very quickly misunderstood to mean something external, entailing a need for general activity, as if as many people as possible, as often as possible, should be visibly engaged in action.” when actually “By the *actio* of the liturgy the sources mean the Eucharistic Prayer.”(Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 106) He sees the call for active participation as referring to something internal and invisible.

⁸³ For more about the conference in general, see Alejandro Crosthwaite OP, *Aparecida Conference (CELAM V)*, (SpringerLink, 2015).

⁸⁴ See Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism* 102. I have been unable to determine whether Charismatic Catholics were deliberately excluded or whether there are no Charismatics in sufficiently high-level positions of power to warrant an invite. In either case, the fact remains that the CCR did not have a seat at the table at this important event.

occasionally” at church speaks to the relatively far reach of the Brazilian CCR in the last several decades.⁸⁵ At the same time, I do not want to overstate the power--both popular and institutional--of the CCR. Around 27% of Brazilian Catholics identify as Charismatic Catholics--more than just a blip on the radar, to be sure, but still not the dominant orientation of Brazilian Catholics.⁸⁶ The CCR has an ambivalent relationship with power; it is visible and well-known in Brazil but remains excluded from formal avenues of power. Though it is becoming integrated with Brazilian pop culture, the biggest known predictor of CCR involvement is high levels of Catholic lay involvement in general and there is potentially a divide between those highly-involved Catholics who actively identify themselves with the CCR and Catholics who engage with the popular religion/culture aspects of the movement like music and enthusiastic TV masses but may not identify themselves with the movement or pay much attention to aspects like charismatic gifts.⁸⁷ Though my paper has largely focused on Catholics who identify themselves as Catholic and express commitment to the CCR, Catholics who do not affiliate themselves with the CCR but nonetheless behave in ways that exhibit Charismatic influence also speak to the way the CCR is bringing about changes in what is considered mainstream or acceptable Catholic expression.

⁸⁵ “Religion in Latin America.” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, (2017).

⁸⁶ In 2014, an estimated 123 million Brazilians identified themselves as Catholic--more than any other country--and as of 2016 33.7 million Brazilian Catholics are involved in the CCR. See: “Brazil’s Changing Religious Landscape.” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, (2014); Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, 26.

⁸⁷ I see this as an area for future research. For the study finding that increased involvement in previous/other Catholic lay movements and activities correlates with CCR affiliation, see Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*, 74-75

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