

Article

Latin American Megachurches in A Changing Culture: An Integrative Review and An Exploration of Future Research Directions

Fernando A. Mora-Ciangherotti, PhD

Av. Los Andes, Res. Tamarindo, Urb. Las Minas, San Anronio de Los Altos, Miranda-Venezuela, 1204
famora@sgu.edu; famorac@gmail.com

Abstract: Several review articles about megachurch studies have been published recently concentrating their work on USA, Europe, and other parts of the world, with just a few references about Latin American megachurches. For that reason, this article aims to identify some of the characteristics of Latin American Evangelical megachurches by looking at relevant literature, especially that produced in the region, in Spanish and Portuguese, which is usually overlooked by researchers in Global North. Since this research field is still limited in Latin America, areas where further work is necessary are identified. Three general catalysts for the emergence of megachurches in the region, *church growth methodologies*, *Pentecostalization*, and *theologies of growth*, serve as guides to organize the review process. The discussion shows several potential areas of research in a variety of fields such as theology, ecclesiology, organizational theory, leadership, gender studies, and ethics, are proposed from the review.

Keywords: megachurches; church growth; Pentecostalization; prosperity theology; dominion theology; cell groups; contemporary worship music; spiritual warfare

1. Introduction

Recently, the field of megachurch research has had several reviews and collective works that are contributing to its consolidation around the world (Bauman 2022) (Hunt 2020) (Cartledge, et al. 2019). Although these publications stress that the number of Latin American megachurches is increasing in correlation with the impressive growth of Protestant and Pentecostal evangelicalism in the region, the research efforts to understand the nuances of such expansion remain frustratingly low. Lack of research funding and established research groups in the region, underestimation of religious studies in universities around the region, and the overlook of Spanish/Portuguese language literature in articles originating in Europe and USA, influence the few articles cited in the reviews mentioned. Nevertheless, the increasing presence of large Pentecostal and Evangelical churches in the forefront of social and political issues of Latin American society makes it necessary to understand better the field and its different ramifications.

The prevailing model of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in Latin America (from now on referred in this article simply as *Evangelical* churches, since in the region there is no distinction, and because nowadays the vast majority of Protestant churches in the region are Pentecostal) was a network of small garage congregations, or groups meeting in refurbished low-income houses, or rented small commercial spaces in poor neighborhoods of growing cities, which were sprouting everywhere, led by amateur pastors with limited hands-on Biblical training. The hegemonic Catholic church considered these evangelical groups as sects that were stealing its members with an imported faith. In many countries, religious control was the norm, since Catholic authorities were quite influential in governmental decisions, making it very difficult for evangelical groups to operate freely, obtain legal status, own properties, have recognized seminaries, have access to

mass media, hold public crusades, and many other restrictions. Despite the fierce resistance of the Catholic bishops, evangelical churches kept on expanding, especially among the poor in the immense Latin American metropolitan centers that developed between 1950 and 1980 when urban population reached almost 80% in many countries.

These small congregations represented a somewhat secure refuge from the anomie produced by large metropolitan centers, and they became the main reproductive instrument for the initial Evangelical growth (Semán 2019). Christian Lalive D'Epinay (1968) believed that the small evangelical congregation was a protective environment for rural migrants searching for work and better living conditions in the megacity. For Lalive D'Epinay the Evangelical church reproduced the structures of solidarity left behind in the rural fields, helping migrants bear the burden of city life, extreme poverty, homesickness, low-skilled jobs, and governmental indifference. This close-knit community provided a survival social network, mimicking the paternalistic model of an extended rural family, where the pastor served as a father-like figure, much like the farm landlord in their rural home. The church was seen as a radical *substitute society*, separating individuals from active integration and participation in civil society. Emil Willems (1967) considered that Evangelical churches tended to be more democratic and egalitarian, without the need for a clerical elite to maintain paternalism. Conversion to Christ meant starting a process of sanctification within a church community that provided discipline, strict moral standards, psychological and economic security, training to sustain life in megacities with dignity. Willems considered the evangelical church as a *compensatory society* that affirmed believers to become social actors in a society in transition. In both cases, social anomie acted as a catalyst for the search of a new religious community, with a new social network, and a new world vision and norms that made urban life more bearable. These theories do not explain why a large number of migrants, displaced and marginalized populations, affected by the cyclic Latin American crises, converted to Evangelical Christianity, joining its churches, and becoming active agents for future expansion and church planting efforts.

More recent explanations explore the changes in religious plurality in the region, particularly towards the end of the 20th century, as a contributing factor (Burity 2020). Gill (1999) offers a *supply-side explanation* to Latin American evangelical growth, in which religious diversity and affiliation increased when regulations favoring Catholicism were progressively loosened. Having the monopoly of belief did not mean that the whole population was adequately served, in fact, poor areas, especially the new *barrios* and *favelas*, did not have enough parishes, much less clergy presence on a regular basis¹. Evangelical churches came to fill the gap providing religious goods and services required by the poor populations. A phenomenon seen as a form of *patched Catholicism* where Pentecostal churches recreated the traditional popular patronal festivities with new liturgical expressions, messages, and symbols (Bastían 1994, p. 183).

In this regard, an interesting example of the supply-side dynamic of growth occurred in Argentina in 1954 during the 58-day crusade of evangelist Tommy Hicks, which was favored by the government of Juan Domingo Perón, who deliberately opposed the Catholic hierarchy to facilitate the event (Wynarczyk 2021). Caravans of sick people came searching for miracles from suburbs and other regions as well as from neighboring countries. Authorities estimated that six million people attended the crusade, with over 400,000 people gathered on the last day alone. By the opening of this small crack in the ironclad monopoly of faith of the Catholic church, Argentine Evangelicals discovered that they could reach multitudes that needed what they could offer, giving rise to a new evangelistic fervor and the emergence of the leadership that was going to be responsible for the consolidation and growth of the Argentine Evangelical church in the following decades (Zielicke 2012). The model was copied by other Latin American evangelists such as the Argentine evangelists Omar Cabrera, Carlos Anacondia, Luis Palau, Alberto Motessi, and

¹ In some Latin American countries, civil wars left some towns without priests for many years, giving rise to a form of popular religion, a syncretism of Catholicism, African and Amerindian beliefs.

the Puerto Ricans José Joaquín “Yiye” Ávila, Jorge Raskie, and Eugenio Jiménez Rivera, and many others from all over the continent, who travelled to many cities spreading the message of the gospel and meeting with politicians and authorities wherever they went (Zaldivar 2015).

This is an example of how reducing legal barriers or softening regulations to new religious movements, fosters diversity, religious mobilization, and church growth (Finke 1990). More broadly, the more systematic, although non-uniform, process of deregulation started in the region during the 1970s, prompted the growth of the Evangelical population from 4% in 1970 (the break point to religious instability) to 19% in 2014 (with a fast-growing slope), with a corresponding drastic reduction of Catholic population to 69% (PRC 2014). A numerical change that demonstrate the large proportion of religious transformations in the region characterized by an expansive Evangelical church (Pérez Guadalupe 2017), and the loss of control by the Catholic Church (Bastián 1994, 179), anticipating even more changes in the following decades.

Knowing that in Latin America most of the Evangelical growth still comes through small, self-reproducing, Pentecostal congregations located in the peripheries of megacities, it is worth asking: What has been the role of megachurches in the expansion of Protestantism in the region? What is the real impact of the megachurch model and its leaders in Latin American society? And what is the future of this ecclesiological model in the region? One of the most important changes introduced by megachurches was the shift of their missiological target towards the middle and upper classes of Latin American society, where the Catholic church was very strong. This missiological mutation implied drastic changes in discourse, aesthetics, style, methods, and social participation of churches. Somehow, the fierce and pious Evangelical churches, led by uneducated leaders, with extravagant rituals and practices, became acceptable to the affluent and educated social classes. The movement from what the Catholic bishops stigmatized as an invasion of *sects*, towards a more respectful status of a *church* had been started (Koehrsen 2017). The cracks opened in the monopoly of the Catholic church in Latin American society, were soon followed by a weakening of its hegemonic presence and the subsequent migration of its middle-class members to the new megachurches, which offered attractive programs and channels of participation contextualized to these socio-economic sectors of Latin American society (Bravo 2020). Evangelical megachurches were able to learn techniques to identify the customer's needs and desires, and to innovate in the provision of novel programs and services, that could reach other sectors of Latin American society, particularly the younger generations. This paradigmatic shift required that churches and ministries had the liberty to adapt and experiment with new forms of worship, preaching narratives, theology, and ecclesiology. To be effective in evangelizing their new missional targets, successful megachurches also had to release themselves from their denominational straitjackets. Pablo Deiros, who led the transformation of a historic Baptist church founded in 1883 by Swiss missionaries into the megachurch *Iglesia del Centro* in Buenos Aires (Hong 2011), stated that denominationalism “was in terminal state and deserved a decent burial” (Deiros and Wagner 1999, 52-53). Moreover, the era of foreign mission control also ended, which meant that a new age of indigenous independent non-denominational churches, led by autocratic, entrepreneurial pastors, loosely connected through rapidly spreading leadership and church networks was started. Referring to the Brazilian case, Paul Freston stated that “Protestantism (was) *national, popular and rapidly expanding*” (Freston 2001, 11) and that newly arrived foreign churches no longer created an impact in the country.

The growth of megachurches in Latin America is an interesting case of how a marginal, underestimated religious group, represented by a myriad of small congregations in the periphery of megacities and in rural areas, progressively becomes protagonist of political and social processes in the different countries of the region. These congregations were formed outside the locus of control of North American and European missions and denominations, many of them being indigenous and independent, connected through complex church networks. These aspects and the sociological and anthropological characteristics of the Latin American context make the field of megachurch studies in Latin

America unique. However, in the current literature about megachurches this trajectory is overshadowed by the dominant narratives about megachurches in the Global North as the main sources of innovation and of theological reference. In Latin America, those growing congregations, with Sunday attendance beyond the 2000 people landmark, with their culture, methods, and socio-political influences, “have become the most attractive churches within the contemporary evangelical landscape, especially for younger emerging social classes” (Ihrke-Buchroth 2013). This article aims to identify some of the characteristics of these Evangelical megachurches by looking at the literature published, specially from Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries, which is usually overlooked by researchers in the Global North.

2. Methodology

A total of 131 published works directly related to megachurches in Latin America were considered for this review (Additionally, 56 other references serve to provide context or background, or as theoretical support), 91 of them since 2010. The search engines of *Scielo* (Scientific Electronic Library Online); *Redalyc* (Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal-Network of Scientific Journals of Latin American and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal); and *Google Scholar* were employed, as well as sets bibliographic data obtained by the author in three previous projects on cell groups, prophecy, and worship. Although preference was given to articles in peer-reviewed journals in Latin America and elsewhere (60 articles), especially those published in Spanish and Portuguese, also books (29), book chapters (18), reports (3), congress presentations (2), doctoral (9) and master’s thesis (2), blog reports (1), and news websites (7) were considered in the analysis. Undergraduate thesis, very common in Latin American universities, were not cited, although many of them, addressing issues related to megachurches, were obtained, and filed. The bibliographic research focused on Spanish speaking Latin America, although references to some Brazilian megachurches that have strong links in the region are made whenever necessary. A considerable amount of research has been done regarding the extraordinary growth of the Brazilian Pentecostal *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (IURD) which tends to overshadow other Evangelical megachurches in Latin America, for that reason, these publications were not considered in the review.

The search for these references was based on a contextualized modification of the classification proposed by Bauman (2022) which considered several topics concerning the global study of megachurches, such as: *Geographical focus* (country or regional emphasis), *Growth* (numerical expansion, theories, methods), *Worship* (liturgical changes, use of contemporary music, technology), *Leadership* (models, theories, abuses), *Demographics/Social Context* (generational changes, growth of pluralism, globalization), *Gender and Sexuality* (women in ministry, theological influences, cultural changes), *Theological Orientation* (healing/deliverance, prophecy, spiritual warfare, prosperity, dominion, mission, social gospel, eschatology, kingdom theology), *Activities and Practices* (small groups, crusades, conferences, large gatherings, media ministries, social services), *Administration/Marketing* (business models, branding, franchising, social media, commodification, organizational models, networking), and *Political/Social Processes* (political participation, public image, governmental influence/interference, regional issues). This classification allowed to observe in which areas the research efforts have been stronger over time, and which have been neglected. For example, publications in the *Political/Social Processes* category have been growing since 2016, becoming the most important one of those considered for this paper. As we will see in more detail later, this demonstrates the growing interest of researchers on the influence of megachurches in political processes in the region, and regional journals dedicating special issues on the topic². On the contrary, the *Worship* category has very few publications, which shows that despite the popularity and the big changes produced by contemporary worship music in the Neopentecostal megachurches

² See for instance the 2020 Vol. 3 (6) of *Encartes Journal* from Mexico, and the 2021 Vol. 23 of *Ciencias Sociales y Religión* from Brazil.

in the region, there is an absence of research about worship theology, historical developments of church music, cultural influences, and technological advances.

Another aspect to consider regarding the methodology is the uneven geographical distribution of the publications with Argentina (31), Colombia (15), Guatemala (10) and Mexico (10) contributing with over 50% of the country specific works. Other publications (28) were classified as considering topics covering regional issues in Central America or the South Cone. The results for Argentina, Colombia and Guatemala are not surprising since megachurches in these countries participated actively in the Pentecostalization of Latin American Evangelicals, the development of successful growth methodologies, and the politization of churches and the actual participation of pastors and leaders in electoral campaigns and their involvement in governmental positions. In the case of Mexico, megachurches have been influential in worship innovation and new church paradigms which have called the attention of researchers. Some of the journalistic research projects have expanded the scope to other regions and countries such as Peru, Venezuela, Chile, Honduras, and Costa Rica. But there is still a lack of academic research coming from these nations.

Once the research papers were collected, coded, and classified, it was decided to do an integrative review (Snyder 2019) of their content and importance according to three broad catalysts to the emergence of megachurches in Latin America: *Church Growth Methods*, *Pentecostalization*, and *Theologies of Growth*. The definition of each one of the catalysts is discussed in the following section, and the literature regarding each one of them is analyzed. These catalysts were chosen because they integrate some of the explanations to the extraordinary growth of Evangelical/Pentecostal churches in the region in the latter part of the 20th century and especially in the 21st century. This integrative review approach, although requiring a more demanding literature search (Torraco 2016), allows the assessment and critique of the published material, in order to see many aspects that have been previously overlooked, to propose new areas of research, and to uncover the contributions of Latin American megachurches to their counterparts in the Global North. For example, while small groups are considered as important tools in seeker-sensitive megachurches in the Global North, they have a completely different intrinsic value in their implementation within Latin American megachurches. Similarly, the way that theologies of growth are regarded by Latin American Evangelicals who have been a powerless minority until recently, has a whole different connotation than for USA churches who seek to regain their traditional influence over government and society.

3. Catalysts for the emergence of Megachurches in Latin America

3.1. Church Growth (CG) Methods

Better known in Spanish as *Iglecrescimiento* (*Iglesia-Church*, *Crecimiento-Growth*), it is regarded as a scientific methodology to measure the numerical growth of a congregation and to diagnose the reasons for its stagnation, or slow growth rate. The movement gained notoriety at the School of World Mission (SWM) of the Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, California), under the guidance of its founder Donald McGravan, and later by C. Peter Wagner. McGravan was a missionary in India where he formulated his initial theories by observing the obstacles that the caste system imposed on evangelism (McGravan 1970). Wagner also spent many years in Bolivia, describing in a book his observations on the extraordinary growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America (Wagner 1973). Other currents which added refinements to CG also became popular in Latin America, such as Christian Schwartz's *Natural Church Development*, which emphasized church health (Råmunddal 2014). CG theory and practice focused on proposing hypotheses about the causes of congregational growth, articulating the results in a scientific language, and, on characterizing and classifying church growth, such that interventions and optimizations could be proposed. Four essential principles characterize CG methods (Watson and Scalen 2008): 1) *Quantitative measures* of success (attendance, economic income from tithes and offerings, number of new believers, number of cell groups); 2) Adaptation of message and

style according to the context of *homogeneous social groups* (HSG) whose sociological characteristics had to be determined; 3) Application of contemporary *marketing techniques and organizational structures* that promote efficiency; 4) Fostering the value of working through *networks* of churches and leaders.

During the 1970s and 1980s, CG experts investigated the reasons for the extraordinary numerical expansion of the Latin American churches, trying to understand the ecclesiological models to see what could be systematized and reproduced in the North American context. Paradoxically, some ideas initiated in churches in the Global South, were theoretically and methodologically refined by these researchers who ended up producing the novel CG literature (Bialecki 2015). One of these successful models was the *cell structure*. Experts in quantitative CG methods discovered and designed new tools and procedures, based on the cell group structure developed by David Cho in Korea, that could be offered to those congregations that had stagnated in their growth. The model served to affirm one of the most notorious postulates of church growth, introduced by Donald McGravan and popularized by C. Peter Wagner (Wagner 1978), the *homogeneous unit principle*, which states that: *people prefer not to have to cross social, racial, or linguistic boundaries to convert to the gospel*. Cell groups represented those homogeneous units of the larger heterogeneous body that was the megachurch, where thousands of those smaller communities could interconnect.

After the 1973 10th World Pentecostal Congress celebrated in Seoul, and Cho's speaking tour in Latin America in 1984, churches were eager to adopt the Korean model of cell churches with the help of experts from SWM and Cho's own CG institute. Churches and denominations around the world were amazed by the unlikely growth of the *Yoido Full Gospel Church* (YFGC) in a country that was not traditionally Christian. Many Latin American pastors traveled to Korea or attended regional workshops where the new concepts and methods were presented, ending up copying or adapting the model, with an important numerical growth in a short span of time (Comiskey 1997). One of the outstanding examples is the indigenous *Misión Cristiana Elim* of El Salvador (Danielson 2013), which is currently ranked as the largest church in Latin America and the third in the world (Roberts and Yamane 2016, 324), with a growing presence in the USA among Hispanics, due to the large Salvadorian migration (Danielson and Vega 2014). Founded in 1977, Elim has an estimate of 10000 cell groups that meet every Saturday, but the church also holds meetings every day of the week and six on Sunday at their central location. Elim holds a traditional Pentecostal theology, including the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the sign of glossolalia, and the belief in healing, with very conservative approaches to life, in a way resembling those close-knit sectarian substitute societies observed by Lalive D'Epinay. Somewhat contrary to the trend of Latin American megachurches leaders, Mario Vega, Elim's current pastor, has been moving towards a more progressive theological stand. In this regard, he has sought the help of groups such as *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* (FTL)³ in order to apply holistic mission principles (*Misión Integral*) (Clawson 2012) to complex issues of Salvadorian society, such as "political corruption, environmental issues, joblessness, and gang violence" (Wadkins 2018). Perhaps troubled by the paradox of such a large Evangelical growth, about 36% of the national population (Christian, Gent and Wadkins 2015), and the scarce social transformation that is observed in the country, Vega is conscious of the role of megachurches not to remain indifferent, but to influence and promote changes (Vega 2013, 54).

Fraternidad Cristiana, founded in 1979, was the first congregation in Guatemala to implement the Korean cell church model (Reu 2019), and now claims to have over 15000 members. Tobias Reu sees that the cell structure contributes to the formation of a leadership mentality in the members, because "the system requires the steady recruitment of volunteers to minister to domestic mini-congregations" (p. 751), who are trained in leadership skills and challenged to move up the ladder to roles such as area supervisors. The

³ About the hermeneutics of the FTL see for instance (Ávila Arteaga 2011).

training fosters a *multiplication effect* that CG requires, producing leaders that multiply themselves. This urge to make cells grow and multiply will be seen in all cell-based megachurches in Latin America. Church size, expressed in the number of cells, “is an indication that they are doing something right” (Garrard 2021, 204), that the congregation has God’s favor. Moreover, by staying close to the realities of the neighborhoods where they live, cell leaders “take the gospel to the people, to lead by example, to induce others to become leaders, and to be a light in the darkness” (Reu 2019, p.757), in a society where crime and violence abounds, and where families struggle to survive poverty, under the indifference and neglect of politicians and governmental officials.

By the end of the 1980s, a large majority of cell churches in the region followed Cho’s system or its variations. Some, although not the majority, started to combine the classical worship service and program-based model with cell groups, termed by SWM experts as the *metachurch* (George 1991), where cells were just another program and did not involve most of the members. Others began to look for alternative methods. This was the case of Colombian pastors Cesar and Claudia Castellanos of *Misión Carismática Internacional* (MCI) at Bogotá (Colombia), who had implemented the Korean model in 1986 but were seeing a very slow progress. By 1991, they had managed to establish some 70 cells in five years, so they progressively began to tweak Cho’s classical model to accelerate growth. The results were immediate with 1,200 cells in 1994, reaching about 45,000 cells by 2001 (Comiskey 1999). Besides MCI, many Colombian churches adopted MCI’s model (Beltrán 2012), now known as G-12 system. Among them: *Manantial de Vida Eterna* (Bogotá), *Centro Cristiano Internacional* (Cúcuta), *Misión Paz a las Naciones* (Cali), *Centro Bíblico Internacional* (Barranquilla), *Misión Carismática al Mundo* (Cali), *Sin Muros Ministerio Internacional* (Bogotá).

Thousands of churches in Latin America and the rest of the world that adopted the G-12 model. For example, at London’s megachurch *Kensington Temple*, G-12 implementation began in its small Hispanic church, which grew very quickly, prompting the implementation of the model to the whole congregation (Kay 2006). Likewise, many Brazilian churches welcomed massively the model. However, due to MCI’s franchising scheme used to distribute the model, many congregations tried it at first, but along the way they decided to abandon or adapt it. To ensure trademark uniformity, churches were required to: establish a covenant relationship with MCI; become certified to be able to use the written materials; implement all the steps in the training path; follow all the recommendations for the conformation of the groups (size, homogeneity, etc.); continue to use the number twelve as a symbol of identification with the original model; and also, participate in the activities programmed by the network such as conferences and/or trainings (Comiskey 2014). The logical and expected result, quantifiable and guaranteed by the franchiser, was an accelerated growth of the church. Organizational sophistication is one of the aspects that becomes evident in these megachurches, by incorporating training curricula (such as the *G-12 Escuela de Liderazgo*, or the *Fraternidad Cristiana Facultad Teológica*), coaching, and tight accountability of the leaders, some sort of macdonaldized coordination and control can be implemented (Mora 2022). Church interrelations, based on G-12 franchising system, have been fundamental to the development of very large church networks in Latin America, where other religious goods and ideas are also exchanged, as recent research among Baptists churches in Argentina has shown (Marzilli 2019, 259). Nevertheless, many churches resisted to pay license fees, made minor modifications, or changed their nomenclature, but kept the essence of the model, even launching their own brand. Such as Abe Huber’s MDA (*Apostolic Discipleship Movement*) in Santarém (Brazil), whose *Igreja da Paz* megachurch has approximately 65,000 members, representing 22% of the city population, and 87% of the city’s evangelical community (Brevi de Moura e Devecchi Ordonez 2018). *Igreja da Paz* is currently the second largest church in Latin America after *Misión Elim* (Roberts & Yamane, 2016).

At a symbolic level, the trend towards internationalization and globalization is evident in the names given to G-12 churches such as the *Misión Carismática Internacional* of Bogotá, the *Mundial do Senhor Jesus Cristo* pastored by Valnice Milhomens in Brazil, or the

Movimiento Carismático Internacional of Lima-Perú (Santos Andrade 2010). Not all G-12 churches (or disaffiliated but maintaining a similar model) can be considered megachurches, but several are among the largest in Latin America, such as *Casa de Dios* in Guatemala, led by apostle Cash Luna (E. Gomes 2021), where a modified D-12 system was implemented. The size and active presence of the churches through the cell groups in neighborhoods give them extraordinary convening power and influence which can be exploited at a political level. This is the case of *Igreja Batista de Lagoinha* in Minas Gerais, the fourth largest in Latin America, where one of its main leaders is Damares Alves, Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights, of Jair Bolsonaro's government. Through the exploitation of symbolic and mystical elements, the managerial activity of the pastor of a cell church is equated with that of an apostle, prophet, or patriarch (or matriarch), who possesses a special revelation for the revival and transformation of his nation and the world. For the senior leader of the megachurch, cell growth and continued leadership training will eventually lead to reach a city, an entire country, and other nations, through a well-trained army of leaders and members under his/her covering.

Even though Rich Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Einstein 2008), became very popular in the region after the publication of its Spanish translation, followed by many regional workshops and conferences (Madambashi 2011), it is more difficult to observe the influence of the *seeker sensitive* methodologies of church growth in Latin America. Some churches adopted the model with enthusiasm (Corpeño 2011), however, the Pentecostal background of many pastors, apostles, leaders, and church planters made them rely more on other Spirit-filled or pneumatological dimensions of growth. Nevertheless, some researchers associate the influence of Warren and others on the development of the managerial aspect of Latin American megachurches. Some sort of translation of the management and coaching mindset, with its continuous demands on training and professionalization, became part of church life (Schäfer, Tovar and Reu 2013). More recently, the term *post-denominational* (PD) has been proposed to refer to churches that are congregating Christians dissatisfied with traditional Pentecostalism and Neopentecostalism (Ibarra and Gomes 2022). This definition is quite broad and does not include the *New Apostolic Reformation* or Neopentecostal churches that are, for the most part, post-denominational. In a way this categorization is similar to what Donald Miller described as *new paradigm churches* (NPC) (Miller 1999), a type of churches that are more culturally engaged, and where styles - musical, communicational or esthetic - dress codes, and ambiance, are more attractive to younger generations, relying much more on technological means to reach their audience (C. Ibarra 2019).

At first glance, the Brazilian *Bola de Neve Church*, started in the year 2000, which appeals to younger surfers and skaters of São Paulo's suburban area, could be classified as PD or NPC. Despite the use by its founder, *Apostle Rina* (Rinaldo Luís de Seixas Pereira), of younger generations' slang in his messages, and the group having symbols that identify the members with the Brazilian beach and sports subculture, as well as a musical style and branding that tries to bring a flavor of a relaxed youth culture, including Carnival parades using the traditional *batucada brasileira* and sharing the performances in social media (Oosterbaan and Santos Godoy 2020), the structure and theology of the church are quite like other Neopentecostal or NAR churches in the country (Pinto Ribeiro and Da Silva Cunha 2012). In contrast, less legalistic PD/NPC megachurches propose a different model of Christianity that is adapted to the cultural understanding "about choice, individualism, autonomy, the importance of the self, therapeutic sensibilities" (Sargeant 2000, 31). In these churches, the problem of sin is minimized, strict rules disappear, focusing on attracting people to church, using all the resources and techniques available. This entails building a creative core of professional people capable of innovating in the way the Gospel is communicated, deconstructing the Gospel message to make its proclamation a more relevant, pleasant, and creating a satisfying experience during church meetings (Ibarra & Gomes, 2022).

Some churches in Latin America can be classified under the label of seeker sensitive, PD, or post-evangelical (PE), few of them are megachurches in the classical numerical

sense, but many are in the virtual space that the social, mobile, analytical and cloud technology allows. Ibarra (2019), Ibarra (2021), Ibarra and Gomes (2022), and Ibarra and Gomes (2021), have studied some of these churches in Northern Mexico. *Ancla* church in Tijuana (Baja California), founded in 2015, is a megachurch of over 5000 young members, that relies on a creative team that exploits visual arts and graphic design for the worship services and the positioning of the brand through social networks. Edson Gomes (2020) studied *Más Vida Guadalajara* a multi-site church that evolved from a neopentecostal congregation founded in 1983, and which currently has a Sunday attendance of over 1500 people in its central campus in Morelia, and many more in other satellite sites such as Guadalajara, Toluca, Querétaro, León, Ciudad de México, Acapulco, León, Dallas, Orlando, and Caracas. Both churches, *Ancla* and *Mas Vida*, have strong links with other megachurches in the USA that follow similar practices and methodologies. These churches develop advanced branding strategies and digital *customer relationship management* (CRM) methods to position themselves in the market and follow up with their members (Gomes Rego 2020). This is a technology-boostered way of applying the homogenous unit principle to reach middle class younger tribes that reject any identification with traditional Evangelical Christianity. It is difficult to determine if the main growth of these churches comes from new converts or from second or third generation Latin American Pentecostals, that are inserted in current alternative subcultural movements in major cities of the continent (Espinosa Zepeda 2017), whose aesthetics, musical tastes, irony, critique of traditional Christianity, and new hermeneutics of the Gospel, turn out to be too difficult to understand or accept by traditional churches (Wilder and Rehwalddt-Alexander 2010).

The recent spread in the region of global brands based on the megachurch model, needs to be considered regarding the spread of PD or PE churches in Latin America. For example, the Los Angeles based *Mosaic Church*, considered one of the most innovative churches in the USA (Marti 2005), started a new branch in Mexico City in 2018, which is growing very quickly, and another one in Quito (Ecuador) in 2020. Hillsong started a church in São Paulo (Brazil) in 2016 with over 3000 people in attendance. Also, another Hillsong congregation was opened in Buenos Aires in 2017, following the same methodology as in Brazil, quickly reaching about 4000 people attending every Sunday (Infobae 2017). It has been shown that Hillsong prefers to do church planting in urban centers (*global cities*) that are influential, with high tech resources, that serve as hubs for “highly skilled labor, cultural elites, expats, migrants, and tourists” (Klaver 2018), such as professional Brazilian migrants in Sidney (Rocha 2016) (Rocha 2017). *Ancla*, *Mas Vida*, Hillsong, and Mosaic churches tend to attract millennial believers that are part of the creative and technology industries, who are transitioning from Neopentecostalism to this new style of church (Klaver 2018). Rocha has recently coined the term *Cool Christianity* (Rocha 2021) to refer to a “*fashion-celebrity-megachurch industrial complex* that makes Christianity attractive to middle-class youth who do not find a home in more conservative churches”. This new kind of congregations that use the “novelty, transgressive force, and emotional edge of the religious experiences” (p. 132) to attract globalized post-evangelical young urbanites seems to be the *fourth wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism* (Fernandes 2022). It would be interesting to determine if this trend is a generational issue, in which millennials and generation Z believers do not identify with the faith of their elders and embrace more open theologies and less predictable churches, or, if it is a contemporary version of the fascination of Latinos with the “culture and lifestyles of the global North” (Rocha 2017, p. 126).

3.2. Pentecostalization

According to the research by *Leadership Network* (Bird nd), of the twenty largest Evangelical churches in Latin America (see Table 1), except for one, all are Pentecostal/Neopentecostal, and surprisingly, one belongs to the new post-evangelical trend mentioned previously, but it also has a Neopentecostal background. Another important observation is that the majority were founded after 1980, which corresponds to the period of fastest and largest growth of Evangelical congregations in the region. Certainly, there is a very

strong link between Pentecostalism and church planting and growth that has served as a catalyst for this extraordinary expansion.

Table 1. Largest Megachurches in Latin America (Modified from Leadership Network list).

Sunday Attendance	Name of Church	City-Country	Theological orientation	Date founded
50000	<i>Misión Cristiana Elim</i>	San Salvador, El Salvador	Pentecostal	1977
50000	<i>Catedral Evangélica de Santiago (Jotabeche)</i>	Santiago, Chile	Pentecostal	1911
50000	<i>Igreja da Paz</i>	Santarém, Brasil	Neoentecostal	1993
50000	<i>Batista da Lagoinha</i>	Belo Horizonte, Brasil	Neopentecostal	1957
42000	<i>Comunidad Cristiana Agua Viva</i>	Lima, Perú	Neopentecostal	1985
26545	<i>El Lugar de Su Presencia</i>	Bogotá, Colombia	Neopentecostal	1993
25000	<i>Misión Carismática Internacional</i>	Bogotá, Colombia	Neopentecostal	1983
25000	<i>Lluvias de Gracia</i>	Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala	Neopentecostal	1991
25000	<i>Ministerio La Cosecha</i>	San Pedro Sula, Honduras	Pentecostal	1977
20000	<i>Fraternidad Cristiana</i>	Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala	Pentecostal	1979
20000	<i>Casa de Dios</i>	Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala	Neopentecostal	1994
20000	<i>Visión de Futuro Church</i>	Santa Fe, Argentina	Neopentecostal	1972
20000	<i>Ondas de Amor y Paz</i>	Buenos Aires, Argentina	Neopentecostal	1983
20000	<i>Misión Paz a las Naciones</i>	Cali, Colombia	Pentecostal	1999
15000	<i>Rey de Reyes</i>	Buenos Aires, Argentina	Neopentecostal	1986
12000	<i>Comunidad Apostólica Hosana</i>	Ciudad de Panamá, Panamá	Pentecostal	1980
12000	<i>Movimiento Carismático Internacional</i>	Lima, Perú	Neopentecostal	1998
10000	<i>Centro Familiar de Adoración</i>	Asunción, Paraguay	Pentecostal	1985
10000	<i>Tabernáculo Bíblico Bautista</i>	San Salvador, El Salvador	Fundamentalist Baptist	
10000	<i>Más Vida</i>	Morelia, México	Neopentecostal Postevangelical	1984

There is a worldwide process of *Pentecostalization of Christianity*, including the Catholic church. In Latin America, this became more obvious after the 2006 Pew Research Center study (PRC 2006) which showed that at least one of every four Latin American were Christian believers that had experienced the charisms of the Spirit (speaking in tongues,

divine healing, prophesying, deliverance) and who were involved in lively and exciting churches where they could nurture their personal faith and express their missionary agency. Due to its expansive nature and mobility, a Pentecostalized form of Christianity has become globalized. The Pentecostalization of the church was identified very early by CG researchers at SWM who thought that it would be an important improvement to McGravan's original pragmatic theories and methods (Cook 2000). SWM Scholars tried to identify which elements of Pentecostalism were conducive to explosive numerical growth, such that other groups, regardless of their denomination or theological orientation, could implement them. During the 1980s, pragmatism met revival, and spiritual power anointed technical knowledge, such that churches could be awakened and grow. Following Charles Finney's idea that revivals needed to be "worked up" and promoted (Johnson 1969, 353), a global search for Pentecostalized supernatural CG methods was initiated, providing an impressive new set of tools that could be offered to facilitate growth (Bialecki 2015, p.181).

Latin America proved to be a very fertile for this search and became a test ground for the new ideas that came up (Swartz 2020). At a time when the YFGC in Korea was growing very fast, some Argentinian megachurches called the attention of the experts. Wynarczyk (1989) studied the beginnings of the megachurch *Visión de Futuro* founded by Omar Cabrera (father). The congregation, currently led by Omar Cabrera Jr., is still quite strong and growing as seen on Table 1, having evolved from classical Pentecostalism to Neopen-tecostalism, and lately as part of the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) (Koehrsen 2016). CG experts were particularly interested in the intuitive forms of *power evangelism* and *spir-itual warfare* that Omar and Marfa Cabrera cultivated in their ministry (Wynarczyk 1989, p. 23-25). C. Peter Wagner visited Cabrera in Argentina in 1985 to study the model (Holvast 2009, 55), later calling him the *Chief Apostle* of the Argentine revival (Wagner 1998, 21). He even acknowledged that Cabrera inspired him with the idea of the direct relationship between strategic spiritual warfare and church planting.

Similarly, through the public crusades started by Carlos Anacondia in Buenos Aires, shortly after the end of the Malvinas war, deliverance ministries became very popular first in Latin America, and subsequently in the rest of the world (Marostica 2011). Pablo Bottari, a leader of the megachurch *Iglesia del Centro*, became director of Anacondia's healing and deliverance tent during Anacondia's massive crusades (Gunther Brown 2006). Bottari compiled and systematized deliverance manuals based on the observation of Anacondia's practices, and from his own learning while running the tent (Bottari 1998). Rationalization of these procedures facilitated their dissemination all over the world, becoming an im-portant influence on other procedures and programs put together by megachurches, such as deliverance rituals of G-12 franchise megachurches, *Catch the Fire soaking* prayer, or *Bethel Church Sozo* inner healing program (Weaver 2015). Today, Bottari's deliverance manuals, or versions of them, can be found on countless Christian bookstores around the world, showing the popularity of Pentecostal deliverance ministries in the Evangelical church at large.

Following the footsteps of Carlos Anacondia, around 1992, Claudio Freidzon, an As-semblies of God pastor, led a new wave of spiritual power that manifested through wor-ship, unusual spiritual manifestations, and miraculous healings during the services at the *Rey de Reyes* church in the Belgrano neighborhood of Buenos Aires (see Table 1). Although at the time the church had over 2,000 members, Freidzon was restless and longing for a more intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit (Freidzon 1996). After a visit to Benny Hinn at the *Orlando Christian Center* (Florida-USA), many spiritual manifestations started at *Rey de Reyes*. Suddenly, the power of the Holy Spirit started to move among the Argen-tine middle-class. As in those crusades in stadiums, the expectation for healing and deliv-erance in each meeting remained, but the places, the audience, the aesthetics, the music were more acceptable to the professional middle-class strata. The movement, coined as *La Unción*, triggered a wave of renewal and revival in the country and beyond that lasted several years (De Seixas Andrade and Raimondo 2016). *La Unción* was fundamental for the initiation of several revivals that occurred in the latter part of the 20th century such as the Toronto Blessing and its ramifications in the UK, and Pensacola in the USA (Deiros

2018, 1039). Algranti studied *Rey de Reyes* as a prototype of middle-class Latin American Neopentecostal megachurch. Through ethnographic research during several years, several aspects of the life of the church were considered, especially its transit from a classical Pentecostal congregation to its radical move to a less evangelized area of the city, moving theologically to a gospel of spiritual healing, prosperity, and warfare (J. Algranti 2008b). Algranti studied in depth the characteristics of the leadership in the megachurch (2005), its implications in Argentine civil society (2012), gender relations within the megachurch (2007), as well as the practices of healing and deliverance (2008a).

Another area that CG experts considered fundamental was the discovery of a sophisticated prayer method called *Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare* (SLSW) which relays on a technique called *spiritual mapping* (SM) (Holvast 2009). In the 1980s, it was proposed that the reasons churches were not growing had to do with demonic opposition rooted in the sinfulness of the cities and territories, or in the wicked spiritual inheritance of people groups. Therefore, it was necessary to identify those sources of evil through SM and then pray them away through intense periods of worship, intercession, fasting, and publicly naming and rebuking those spiritual forces. One of these prototypes for territorial spiritual deliverance was the highly publicized transformation of Almolonga in Guatemala, which through intense hours of fasting and prayer by local churches, overcame poverty and became an agricultural miracle (Garrard 2020). René Holvast (2009) points out that Argentina was the great laboratory where many of the concepts of spiritual warfare were initially tested. Eduardo Silvoso, one of the pioneers of SM, proposed and developed a prototype for the evangelization of any city, based on spiritual warfare techniques, followed by intercession, evangelism, and conquest (Holvast 2009). *Plan Resistencia* sought to take a city for Christ, between 1989-1992, by using innovative spiritual warfare techniques that would cast out the principalities and powers that were stalling Evangelical growth (Wynarczyk 1995). During the 1990s, the city of Resistencia (El Chaco, Argentina) became the model for the taking of over 200 cities on five continents, making spiritual warfare an essential tool in the CG arsenal (Silvoso 1998). In 1994, Wynarczyk (1995, p. 167) noted the new emphasis, by observing the ministry of Buenos Aires megachurch pastor Héctor Aníbal Giménez, of *Ministerio Ondas de Amor y Paz*. Giménez expanded his deliverance prayer from exorcising demons of illness and personal oppression to spiritual warfare against territorial powers in La Pampa and Río Negro (Argentina), after their SM revealed the genocide of indigenous people that occurred during the XIX century, which was affecting the spiritual, social, and economic atmosphere of those regions. This kind of thinking became so prevalent in all Latin America that, at some point in their history, every megachurch in the region engaged in SM/SLSW.

Two Central American churches are at the forefront of using SM/SLSW in their growth practices (Garrard 2020). In Guatemala, Dr. Harold Caballeros, pastor of *El Shaddai* megachurch (O'Neill 2012), has been an active promoter of SM/SLSW as part of the toolkit for church growth, after they discovered that territorial spirits, that derived their power from the Mayan and Aztec worship of the flying serpent divinity of *Quetzalcoátl*, were controlling the area where they were building their church (Caballeros 1999, 29-32). Kevin O'Neill (2010) describes *El Shaddai's* practice of SM/SLSW when Dr. Caballeros was seeking his nomination for the presidency of Guatemala towards the end of 2006, when selected prayer warriors pledged to pray for 21 days in a row to destroy the principalities and demonic powers that controlled Guatemala City, seeking to produce a social and spiritual environment that favored the launch Dr. Caballeros' nomination.

In Costa Rica, Ronny Chaves, leader of several apostolic networks and apostle of *Centro de Adoración Mundial*, embraced the spiritual warfare movement from its early days (Carpio Ulloa 2021), becoming an enthusiast practitioner and innovator⁴. Through SM

⁴ In 1997, acting on prophetic words, Chaves and Ana Méndez from México organized an expedition to the base camp of Mount Everest, some 5,400 meters high (although the original goal was to reach the top), to carry out what they called

Chaves discovered spaces or corridors in Costa Rica where evil forces moved freely to provoke negative influences on God's people. High places in the four cardinal points of the country, and the Catholic *Basílica de Los Ángeles*, were identified as dominated by territorial spirits, and where intense SLSW had to be conducted (Carpio Ulloa 2021, p.15). These places in Costa Rica have been subject of spiritual battle through prayer over the years, but more so as evangelicals become more involved in politics, showing how SLSW translate into mundane political practice. On one side, megachurches motivate and provide space for continuous intercessory prayer, but on the other, they empower individuals to get actively involved in political actions (Marshall 2016). SLSW became a tool during the 2018 presidential campaign of Evangelical Fabricio Alvarado, when churches launched an offensive of spiritual warfare led by Chaves to "conquer the territory (and) take a position in the places of government, education and the economy" (Murillo 2018). Caballeros and Chaves have presented their SM/SLSW methods in countless conferences of their apostolic networks, serving as a preparation for the introduction of *dominion theology*, as part of Latin American megachurch theological basis.

One last sign of Pentecostalization to be considered is the widespread diffusion of *contemporary worship music* (CWM) and the associated drastic changes in Pentecostal liturgy that developed. Until the 1970s, music in Evangelical churches in Latin America was quite simple, occupying a secondary place in relation to preaching. However, the restorationist wave that started in the 1950s led to the development of a much more sophisticated *Davidic Model* of worship (Perez 2021). This paradigmatic change in liturgy implied a substantial modification of the services, especially with regard to its times and flows, the incorporation of symbols such as banners and flags, and choreographies; rituals were created and recreated of sanctification, purification, sacramental washings, spiritual warfare walks, anointing with oil; and, a new freedom was allowed for the expression of various bodily, emotional and spiritual manifestations such as falling to the ground, laughing, shouting, crying, or dancing in the Spirit. The disruption caused by the innovations introduced by the praise and worship (P&W) movement was described, as early as 1994, as a true revolution of "the liturgy and the contents of community worship" (Deiros and Mraida 1994, 149-151). For many megachurch pastors, the changes in musical style and the new liturgy were excellent catalysts for numerical growth since they made services colorful and attractive (Schwarz 2001). Contemporary musical styles became popular within churches, and pragmatism became the norm to decide about the theology of the lyrics, the inclusion of some genre, style or musical instrument, or any new artistic form or bodily expression for worship, even the use of stage lighting, display of images, and other digital paraphernalia (M. Mansilla 2006).

Very little has been published that assesses the extent of these influences throughout the region during the initial years. Important neo-Pentecostal megachurches in Venezuela (*Iglesia Evangélica Pentecostal Las Acacias*, IEPLA) (Berryman 1996, 133) (Burch 2016), and Colombia (*Comunidad Cristiana de Fe* of Cali), were poles from where the Davidic model was disseminated and multiplied, but these experiences have not been studied yet. Almost simultaneously there was also the emergence of the Latin American P&W movement, led by Marcos Witt and others⁵ (Gladwin 2015). Meanwhile, the influence of the

Operation Ice Castle. By doing SLSW with a team of 26 intercessors, they expected to defeat the demonic fortress of the *Queen of Heaven*, which, according to their SM, was located territorially in the Himalayas..

⁵ In the mid-1980s, a Christian worship music scene emerged in Mexico, made up of several names, groups, songs, and albums from that country. Among the initiators are Marcos Witt, along with Marcos Barrientos, Jesús Adrián Romero, Cesar Garza, Coalo Zamorano, Lorena Warren, Edgar Rocha, Emmanuel Espinoza, Miguel Cassina, the *Torre Fuerte* group made up of Héctor Hermosillo, Heriberto Hermosillo and Álvaro López. As well as other Central American worship leaders such as Danilo Montero, Juan Carlos Alvarado, and Jaime Murrell, who somehow shared ideas, resources, and productions for several years, in what could be considered as the incipient Latin American worship and praise scene. Independent record labels also appeared to promote such music, such as Marcos

Davidic model and restorationism on the CWM mainstream in Latin America was supported in Witt's writings and teachings and through his own record label (Witt 1993)⁶. The rise of the well-known and influential Christian record label Integrity/Hosanna Music (IHM) (Perez 2020), which produced many albums in Spanish, also helped to make the P&W movement grow exponentially. In the process, many megachurches began to offer good salaries to worship leaders, apart from providing an impressive physical space, and all the audiovisual equipment necessary to do their own productions, prioritizing popular rhythms and styles, seeking excellence in sound quality, professional artistic execution and the use of well-studied scenery and lighting (Bowler and Reagan 2014). It should not surprise that, Marcos Witt was pastor and musical director of the Hispanic ministry of *Lakewood Church*, one of the largest megachurches in the USA. Other well-known Mexican worshipers, Coalo and Lorena Zamorano, accompanied Witt in these functions until 2013, when they went on to lead the Hispanic ministry at *Champion Forest Baptist Church*, one of the largest megachurches in Houston. When Witt left in 2012, he was replaced by Danilo Montero, another of the pioneers of the P&W movement in Latin America.

One megachurch that employed CWM as part of its growth strategy is the Brazilian congregation *Renascer em Cristo*, founded by Estevam and Sonia Hernandez (De Souza 2011). Through careful marketing, using various strategies and communication channels to convey their message, such as radio and television, festivals and live concerts, mega-shows in stadiums with internationally recognized bands, production and release of CD's, and video streaming, the church contributed to the creation of a vast market for Christian music in the growing young evangelical population of the country (Dolghie 2005). The release of its first record label, *Gospel Records*, was in 1989. The worship record series called *Renascer Praise* (more than 18 titles), started to be recorded in 1993, obtaining a Grammy nomination in 2014. Along the way, the megachurch signed distribution contracts with companies such as *Sony Music* in 2010 and *Universal Music* in 2013. De Souza (2011, p. 23) showed that *Renascer em Cristo* developed a cultural product that trespassed the Evangelical segment, gaining space to the secular music market, thus attracting young people to the megachurch.

According to the logic of the musical market, the search for new ways of musical expression, the intensive use of technological resources to perform on public stages, and the constant innovation and creation of new styles, are characteristics of worship music in megachurches (Evans 2017), which is only possible due to the financial power of these organizations. This is the case of *Casa de Dios* church in Guatemala City, which organizes the *Lumination* electronic music event, characterized by high professional quality and complex production, using sound, screens, pyrotechnics, dance, directed by DJs who lead those gathered into a multisensory show, with the intention of "connecting" the audience with God (Gomes 2021). The use of electronic music, dance and lighting is an innovation in P&W practices of megachurches (Moberg 2015). The technological deployment, the youth of the performers, the sophistication of the stages, the apparent freedom of the attendees to dance and move, speaks of a prosperous and relaxed environment, where new artistic forms are appropriated and transformed for the preaching of the gospel to a new generation.

3.3. Theologies of growth: Prosperity, Wealth Transfer, and Dominion

Witt's *CanZion Producciones*, Marcos Barrientos' *Aliento Music Group*, Jesús Adrián Romero's *Vástago Producciones*, as well as some well-known evangelical publishing houses that had an interest in P&W music, such as *Editorial Vida*.

⁶ A brief analysis of the writings of Marcos Witt, shows that they emphasize, among other things, the typological model of the tabernacle of David, relying on in Psalm 22:3 and Psalm 100; they highlight the preponderant role of musicians as *Levites* within the organization of the music ministry of the church; they motivate the search for the presence of God through P&W music; they describe the spiritual warfare that takes place through music; apart from touching on other topics such as spontaneous worship and prophetic songs (Witt, 1993, p. 203-218).

In Latin America, traditional Evangelical theology had preached an extreme pietism, where money and possessions were considered as temptations and deceptions of the world (Semán 2001). The new logic of the gospel of prosperity forced megachurches to think about the here and now, to extend the kingdom of God through competition and the free market, establishing business models whose profits were to be reinvested in the growth of ministries and churches, and in achieving new positions of power in society. Formulated in the USA out of the *law of faith* teaching of Kenneth Hagin, prosperity theology centered initially on physical and emotional health. Hagin had the influence of the *new thought* movement through the teachings of Essek William Kenyon whose hermeneutics of the gospel was based on the prevailing American cultural values of “pragmatism, individualism and upward social mobility” (Quesada Chaves 2019). Hagin’s teachings were later expanded to material prosperity by Kenneth Copeland who included the laws of *blessing* and a of *sowing and reaping* (Bowler 2013). After several additions and refinements, the resulting theological corpus is a combination of verbal declarations with symbolic and ritual practices, whose thematic axes focus on faith, physical and emotional health, material wealth, and personal victory (Heuser 2016).

In Latin American megachurches, the basic formulation of prosperity theology must be expanded to include, on one side, what has been termed as the *transfer of wealth principle*, and on the other, *dominion theology*. For that reason, I will refer to the different combinations of prosperity, dominion, and wealth transfer teachings and principles, as *theologies of growth*, which will vary depending on the context and the country. The term “theologies of self” has also been proposed because they focus and emphasize human capacity-building (Garrard 2012, p. 196), something that can be considered as a form of human or social capital. In this regard, church *membership* measures the *religious capital* of megachurches, an indication of its “religious positioning, economic power, and political and social visibility” (Beltrán 2003). Discourses of growth, prosperity, increase, power, and dominion are common because there is a need to constantly increase the religious capital of the megachurch. Nevertheless, in the current megachurch literature in Latin America, there is a lack of in-depth consideration of theologies as driving forces behind this kind of churches.

The most common observation is that most megachurches use some contextualized version of *prosperity theology*. For example, behind the growth of MCI in Bogotá, there is a prosperity theology using a *ladder of success* as a metaphor of continuous growth, elaborated by César Castellanos in times of national turmoil, violence, and terrorism. Other Colombian megachurches followed the same approach, encouraging economic prosperity, offering salvation by a powerful and rich Christ, enabling the elaboration of a Christology of success and self-empowerment (Jiménez Becerra 2013). The same holds true in the prosperity formulated by Claudio Freidzon in Argentina, after the end of the dictatorship period and a time when the country suffered the economic mismanagement by the democratic governments during the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, the prosperity message of megachurch apostles Cash Luna and Rony Chaves, and other representative figures of Neopentecostalism and megachurches in Latin America, has been studied using a post-colonial approach (Barrantes Montero 2020). An interesting study from the standpoint of the members of MCI in Bogotá showed that, despite their precariousness, they give and tithe, beyond their real possibilities, making donations with their credit cards, paying high monthly interest rates to finance the activities of the megachurch, as an act of fidelity to God (R. Bartel 2016). Another fascinating investigation with a special focus on women, showed the approach of megachurch *Rios de Vida* (Cartagena, Colombia) to combat poverty through entrepreneurship, mixing in their message coaching and spiritual warfare as tools to facilitate the startups of their members (Ramos 2021). *Business and spiritual coaching* is described as one of the “more successful products of the church” offered by Neopentecostal entrepreneurial gurus (p. 214).

The *transfer of wealth* is based on an interpretation of Proverbs 13:22b (Avanzini 1989), which states that the wealth of sinners will be inherited by Christians, in a long-term process that would lead the church to access this wealth (Wagner 2015). In other words, immense fortunes, capitals, stock shares, productive companies, real estate, cash money,

cryptocurrencies, which were amassed by entrepreneurs, merchants, companies, and governments, would eventually make a transition of hands; from the sinners who generated and accumulated them, to the righteous who would now use them for the mission of bringing the dominion of the kingdom of God on earth. Megachurches have the mission of receiving (stewardship) and multiplying (entrepreneurship) money for the mission, which means, among other things, to play in the field of capitalist speculation through the financial markets, to create innovative ventures, or to look for investment options that produce the best returns on investment (ROI) for the kingdom. This calls for a new breed of *marketplace apostles* (Mora, 2022), formed from a base of neoliberal professional millennials and middle-aged religious entrepreneurs, independent from denominational attachments, many of them oriented to the technology sector (H. W. Schäfer 2021).

Gaiya (2015) proposed to differentiate between *centripetal* and *centrifugal* megachurches, depending on how they view their social commitment and the way they transfer this wealth. *Centripetal* megachurches, are inward looking, channeling the bulk of their human and financial resources towards the church, obtained from the monetary contributions of their members, usually tithes and sacrificial offerings. *Centrifugal* megachurches are more outward looking, investing their resources to influence the social and political environment, according to their vision and spirituality, progressively evolving towards a more deliberate political participation. It is surprising how little churches invest in social projects, dedicating the largest part of their income to centripetal growth. In Colombia, around 54% of the churches did not have any consistent social work, and those that did, engaged mainly in food distribution (60 %), education, health, psycho-social care, family conflicts/domestic violence, and job training (Lozano 2008, 264). Another study of megachurches in the UK categorized five key areas of involvement such as: “meeting basic material needs; employment; life skills; children and youth work, and neighborliness” (Cartledge, et al. 2019, p. 109). Many Latin American megachurches are involved in some of these categories, sometimes with budgets provided by governmental programs, but their business models, their degree of commitment, and the amount of time dedicated to the projects do not allow for long-term sustainability. There are quite important centrifugal megachurches that have had consistent social work for several years that have not been researched yet. For instance, *Iglesia Evangelica Pentecostal Las Acacias (IEPLA)*, located in a lower middle-class neighborhood in Caracas, close to poor barrios in the nearby hills, opened a community center with different services in the 1990s which is still functioning. IEPLA had one of the first successful drug rehabilitation programs in Venezuela (*Hogar Vida Nueva*) and supports a theological seminar with majors specializing in social ministries. According to Miller & Yamamori, IEPLA had “one of the most extensive networks of social ministries that we encountered” (2007, 10). IEPLA could be classified as a *Progressive Pentecostal* megachurch whose members “claim to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus and seek to holistically address the spiritual, physical, and social needs of people in their community” (Miller and Yamamori 2007, p. 2)

Other centrifugal megachurches prefer to enter the political arena, moving from a purely holistic social approach to a more politicized and aggressive public activism. For example, *Iglesia Maranatha* of Valencia (Venezuela) started distributing a bowl of soup in poor locations in the country, progressively evolving to participate in presidential and regional elections. Maranatha’s pastor and *apostle*, Javier Bertucci (Mora 2022), was a presidential candidate in 2018 against Nicolás Maduro, obtaining 11% of the votes. Currently, he leads three legally constituted associations in Venezuela: a religious organization, a non-profit civil association, and a political party. Despite a series of questions and possible commercial scandals, including lawsuits in progress, there is a network of companies that support and supply the projects of these three associations in areas as diverse as oil, agriculture, food imports, health supplies, books and stationery, and construction companies, with offices in several Venezuelan cities and in other countries. The civil association oversees direct social aid and evangelistic outreach through workshops in neighborhoods and low-income sectors. Maranatha megachurch and associated political party, managed to present 4,430 candidates in 335 municipalities in the country in the 2019 municipal

elections, surpassing the main traditional and seasoned political parties. Their most recent achievement was to obtain four seats in the National Assembly, in the legislative elections of December 2020, becoming the second opposition group in the congress. Without an elaborate political theology, Bertucci's Maranatha megachurch has managed to place itself where they can influence governmental decisions, through an apostolic access to the spheres of power.

The increased "politicization of Pentecostalism occurring in megachurches has a theological basis [...] identified as *Dominion Theology*" (Heuser 2021, 190). Therefore, the theology underlying the priorities and practices of any megachurch must be considered more carefully, making it necessary to modify the definition of a megachurch from the purely numerical (>2000), to one that incorporates how the church understands and engages with society, and what initiatives it takes to change it. *Dominion Theology* (DT) is very important to understand megachurch political activism, however, there is a theological gap in most of the megachurch reviews done so far (Heuser 2021, p. 194). DT became part of restorationist Neopentecostal theology due to a subtle, but fundamental, change in eschatology. By switching from a *premillennial* to a *postmillennial* posture, where the church must obtain a hegemonic control of society before Christ's second coming, a new age of activism was started to achieve dominion. It is important to clarify that most of the ideas that relate dominion theology to political theology were worked out by non-Pentecostal intellectuals, within the so-called *Christian Restorationist* movement in the US (Garrard 2020), who formulated the main tenets in areas such as education, family law, economy, ecology, government, arts and entertainment, and others (McVicar 2015). However, Neopentecostal megachurch pastors and NAR leaders simplified the scope of their mission to what they called the *mandate of the seven mountains* (M7M) of society: *to go and gain hegemonic control of government, family, economy, education, religion, media, and arts/entertainment, in every nation of the world*, such that all areas of society submit to the rule of Christ upon his return (Rev. 11:15) (Enslow 2008).

Although this is a relatively new movement, many megachurches in Latin America adopted it as a missional statement. For example, the *Pacto de Caracas*, signed in 2010 by 70 apostles and megachurch pastors from all over Latin America, contains a contextualized version of the M7M (Wojtowicz, Montenegro and Laffit 2011). In this accord, ideas on how Latin American Evangelical megachurches and networks had to be involved in topics as diverse as politics, pluralism, the media, economy, health, family, creation care, social action, natural disasters, human rights, armed conflicts, justice, interracial society, arts, globalization, were established. For example, regarding regional political processes and their participation in them, the declaration contained in the final document, clearly describes the dominionist agenda that animates Neopentecostal and NAR megachurches in the region, and the urgent need for these religious actors to get aggressively involved in politics (Wojtowicz, Montenegro, and Laffit 2011, pp. 14-15). In the following 12 years, we saw the unfolding of a new Latin American Evangelicalism, led by megachurches, politically active and gaining power and public presence every day. As one researcher put it, "Evangelicals came to stay, stayed to grow, and grew to conquer" (Pérez Guadalupe 2017, p. 214). Megachurches and the NAR networks have been the main drivers of dominion theology in Latin America, influencing the vertiginous rise of evangelical political activism in the last decade (Aguilar De La Cruz 2019). The change in the narrative of apostles, prophets, and megachurch pastors, committed to the mandate of the seven mountains (M7M), has served as catalyst to participate in campaigns to elect evangelical officials or sympathizers, as well as public protests about issues linked to the religious conservative agenda, such as opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage, and even some environmental issues.

By combining powerful leadership networks and a theology that imperatively justifies sociopolitical activism, and the attention of followers through advanced use of social media platforms (Córdoba Moreno 2021), a hyperactive involvement in politics is now commonplace among megachurches (Goldstein 2020). In Colombia, the political involvement of César and Claudia Castellanos is widely known (Pérez Guadalupe and Carranza

2021). Since 1989 they founded their own political party, taking advantage of the religious capital that represented the growth of MCI due to its innovative G-12 cell model. As the G-12 model advanced, the capacity for political mobilization also grew, contributing to the Colombian right-wing agenda (Beltrán and Quiroga 2017). The influence of the megachurch was demonstrated in a quite palpable way during the plebiscite for the Colombian peace accords on October 2 (2016) (R. Bartel 2016), where the influence of Evangelical megachurches was decisive for the success of the NO campaign (Beltrán and Creely 2018). O'Neill (2010, p. 62), describes the cell groups of the Guatemalan megachurch *El Shaddai* as a combination of "classroom, self-help group, and emotional laboratory" where a form of Christian citizenship is developed, a place where contemplation becomes action. Other authors have observed that the discipline that the cell groups promote, help megachurch pastors to mobilize believers to participate in national politics (Reu, 2019) (Algranti, 2012). For example, in *Alas de Águila* church in Altos de Chiapas (Mexico), through a transformation of the G-12 model, pastor Esdras Alonso, created the *Army of God*, a kind of elite squad with military ranks, whose function is to actively participate in the regional and national politics (Feria Arroyo 2017).

The transformation into votes of the religious capital of megachurches, has been fundamental to promote a neoconservative Evangelical agenda in Latin America (Barrera Rivera 2021), with some electoral success and several setbacks as well. One of the countries where the implementation of dominion theology has been quite successful is Guatemala. Since the times of Jimmy Morales as president, megachurches lobbied to approve different family protection laws, the change of Guatemalan embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem (Althoff 2021), and by alleging that its members were communists, anti-Zionists and promoters of gender ideology expelled the UN International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICG), which had been operating since 2006 as an autonomous body collaborating in complex cases of corruption and human rights violations (Aguilar de La Cruz 2019). More recently, the new Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei, signed the approval by the congress of a *Public Policy Law for the Protection of Life and the Institutionality of the Family* with the support of the megachurches and evangelical denominations. This law penalizes abortions with a minimum of up to five years in prison, apart from combating any group that is "inconsistent with Christian morality", curtailing the rights of the LGBTQ+ population, declaring Guatemala "pro-life capital of Ibero-America", and as country "without the right to abortion" (Barrientos and Pérez 2022).

The implementation of the M7M by megachurches can also be extremely contradictory and to some extent dangerous sometimes. Achieving a leading role in the political arena may imply the display of conflicting ideas, such as some megachurches supporting leftist governments, as happened with Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, or, on the contrary, aligning with right-wing politicians such as in the case of former Peruvian presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori's support from Peruvian megachurches *Comunidad Cristiana Agua Viva* and *Movimiento Misionero Mundial* along with other pastors (Amat y León Pérez and Condor Vargas 2021). In the first case, in one of the few investigations on the politicization of Evangelicals in Venezuela during the government of Hugo Chávez, megachurch pastor Guido Raúl Avila, leader of the REDIMA international apostolic network, after the failed *coup d'état* in April 2002, stated his complete support for Chávez believing that "God is in control of Venezuela" (Smilde 2004). Avila added that God had told him that he would be Chávez' pastor, something that he tried, even organizing large prayer events in his favor, along with other megachurch pastors and apostles such as Jorge Porras Benedetto from Maracaibo and Jesús Pérez from *Catedral Renacer* in Caracas. Another contradictory position by a megachurch is the case of Colombian *Iglesia de Dios Ministerial de Jesucristo Internacional* (IDMJI) which through its political party MIRA was one of the few Evangelical churches that supported the SI to the peace agreements in 2016, but which later on, in 2018, backed up the election of right-wing candidate, Iván Duque, and decided not to support the peace bill in the congress, because of its gender inclusive language (Coral Gómez 2020). IDMJI is one of the few Neopentecostal megachurches led by a

woman in Latin America, but it holds views that oppose women sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ rights.

4. Discussion

This article has reviewed a representative sample of the published research about megachurches in Latin America. One of the first observations is the clear unbalance in the study of megachurches in Spanish-speaking Latin America. Most of the research projects have been done in Guatemala, Argentina, and Colombia, perhaps because in these countries, megachurches brought some innovation that was attractive for academic research. Guatemala was the first Latin American country where Evangelicals entered in the political arena occupying governmental offices, in part due to the role that megachurches played in the process. Argentina was fundamental for the Pentecostalization of Latin American churches, through its revivalist Evangelical culture that was appealing to the middle classes of a continent that was opening to new religious expressions. Colombia went from a very small percentage of Evangelicals, to close to 20% in just a few years, due to the activism of many megachurches all over the country, which created methods of church growth that influenced congregations all over the world. However, this logical emphasis, has overshadowed the role of many other megachurches around the region, which also need to be studied in their context.

The theological and ecclesiological evolution of megachurches is another important aspect that needs to be investigated. Most of the articles reviewed classify megachurches within Neopentecostalism (Tec-López 2020), however, for many of the flagship congregations, there has been an evolution towards becoming *neoapostolic* churches, which implies quite drastic changes in theology, particularly the adoption of restorationism as a guiding principle. This means the weakening of denominationalism, or its total disappearance, and the formation of continuously expanding and interconnecting church networks, in many cases with megachurches serving as hubs. Christerson and Flory (2017) refer to this new movement as Independent Network Christianity (INC). Networks arise from large congregations or megachurches, around which other smaller churches that have been planted or adopted decide to associate under the leadership and coverage of the apostle or main leader of the umbrella congregation (Kay 2006). Also, *ritual exchange* can be seen as a facilitator to the formation of church networks (Robbins 2009), such as the networks formed in northern Mexico around Christian music as an element of ritual exchange (Ibarrá 2019).

Another element that has been part of ritual exchange is the methodology of cell groups. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the G-12 model as a catalyst of networks in Christerson and Flory's study⁷, and in many other scholarly works about megachurches. Perhaps, as suggested by Garrard (2021, p. 206), because the G-12 model is the product of "South-South religious transnationalism". Currently, there is a critique on megachurch scholarship because it doesn't challenge the "self-sufficiency of the West and its cultural forms" (Mellquist Lehto 2021, 61). For that reason, despite many studies mention MCI, almost no attention has been devoted to its dense network, and how it has maintained its cohesion and progressive global expansion over time. In an earlier work, Alves showed the connections of a network of Latin American leaders instrumentalized from G-12 events, where the nodes of Castellanos, Anacondia, Cabrera Jr., Freidzon, and Huber, to name a few, stand out (Alves 2011). This study carried out more than a decade ago needs to be updated using the new technological and social network tools that have been developed, not only for the case of the G-12, but for other emerging Latin American megachurch and apostolic networks. In a similar fashion more research regarding reverse mission and the development of church networks abroad would be an interesting direction to follow

⁷ They limited their work to those networks that originated in the United States, beginning with Bethel Church and Harvest Church in California and IHOP in Kansas City

considering that many Latin American megachurches have started branches mainly in Florida, California, New York, Texas, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and the UK (Oro 2014).

One unifying element has been the progressive popularization of the new teachings of dominion theology. The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be fundamental for the strengthening of these networks around conspirative theories, many of which use the dominion language of reconstructing society, leading the nations, and creation stewardship, according to biblical laws before Christ's second coming. The involvement in politics by evangelicals, with the increasing sophistication of dominion theology, has been transformed into a new missional target for megachurches. It is no longer enough to do SM/SLSW, according to the new narrative, it is necessary to conquer the seven mountains of society, through any possible means. In the words of Edir Macedo, founder of the *IURD* in Brazil, it is God given "political nation-building project" (Pérez Guadalupe 2017, p. 11). To be fair, not all Latin American megachurches get involved in large scale electoral politics, but they try to find space developing long-term sustainable social projects. However, it would be important to conduct research by Latin Americans to document these projects and their social impact considering the complexity of poverty and marginalization in these nations.

Progressively, some aspects of Pentecostalism present in the small *barrio* churches became more palatable for the open market of middle-class Latin Americans. Latin Americans from any social background were attracted to spiritual experiences, including wild visitations of the Holy Spirit manifested in being "slayed" by its power, uncontrollable laughter, prophetic words, deliverance, and miraculous healings. During several years, the presence of these manifestations was considered a sign of God's blessing upon a church. But some form of routinization has been on the making over the years, bringing up questions that require answers. Have these experiences been repackaged by Latin American megachurches in a different format? For example, the G-12 franchise includes a series of retreats called *Encuentros*, there is minimal research about these intense spiritual events, their specific impact, and how they relate with the overall culture of the megachurch. Have they changed over time? It is also important to find out if other programs are being implemented that come from other global megachurches that have routinized the charisma of their revival times (McClymond 2016). Are there special programs or spaces outside of church services where Pentecostal/Charismatic experiences can be experienced? As megachurch services in Latin America become more "friendly", like conferences with good music, where the spiritual needs of people can be satisfied in an amusing and less intense way, the "wilder" spiritual manifestations and gifts' expressions must be moved to more private environments. This seems to be the trend of some megachurches around the world, such as Hillsong, which is a Pentecostal church at its core, but where rarely you see this kind of display in any of their services (Klaver 2021). Many of the new PD congregations represent a mutation of the Neopentecostal churches that originated them, changing the liturgical structure and the soundscape of their gatherings (Ibarra 2019, p. 282). Lastly, have megachurches given more space to new healing methodologies that revolve around self-help, psychological inner healing, or coaching? This goes hand and hand with the proliferation of growth theologies where individuals are encouraged to seek individualistic solutions to their issues (Semán 2005), obtained from sermons, videos, and books of megachurch pastors who act as therapeutic experts in a wide variety of fields (Rocca 2013). Especially, in what has been called *inner healing*, which draws heavily from psychoanalysis and self-help therapies (Algranti, 2008a). For example, in the case of *Más Vida* (México) there is a syncretism of ideas that combines "self-help, coaching, modern secular influences, globalized pop culture, supernatural beliefs, and biblical issues" (Gomes Rego 2020).

It is surprising the lack of research in CWM, despite its widespread popularity. In one of the few studies, Gladwin (2015) showed how Latin American CWM contributed to make Neopentecostalism more attractive to middle classes and to younger generations of churchgoers. Mariela Mosquera also makes a detailed account of how music and youth culture became fundamental for the spread of *La Unción* in Argentina, and the growth of

many megachurches in the South Cone (Mosquera 2016). Megachurches provided the space for worship leaders to compose and produce music, and to experiment with new styles and rhythms. Many worship bands have come out from well-known Latin American megachurches, influencing all the region with their music, but very little attention has been paid to their contributions to evangelical expansion. Even, the enduring work of Marcos Witt, well-known pioneer of CWM in Latin America, has not been appropriately studied, except for a handful of works (Vélez-Caro and Mansilla 2020) (Gladwin 2015). Due to its origin in the Davidic worship movement, Witt's theology advocates for "an anointed priestly and professional praise and worship", which "creates a charismatic classism and clericalism" (Gladwin 2015, p. 210) that permeated the megachurch movement, making CWM an instrument for the making of a certain type of evangelical celebrity culture. Perhaps one of reasons why megachurches' music lacks understanding of social struggles, of the perils of the marginalized or poor, and rarely, if ever, makes any critique to Latin American social inequalities. This becomes worse when megachurches adopt standardized worship music from *Hillsong*, *Bethel Music*, *Vineyard*, or *Elevation Worship*, because this translated music was originally composed in a whole different social context. In a similar way, very few attempts to understand the value and influence of translated and globalized CWM in Latin America have been published (Mora 2022).

Cell groups as *social spaces* have received little attention in the literature from an organizational standpoint (Frigerio 2020). In a study in Argentina among young believers (Mosquera 2019), 86.3% of respondents opted "for a type of pastoral care that is more sensitive and intimate, prioritizing face-to-face relationships and reciprocity" (p. 157). Besides, cell groups create social capital through the interconnections inside and across groups, which can help congregants in "navigating migration, securing jobs, negotiating politics, and so on" (Bauman 2022, p. 123). According to O'Neill (2010) the cell groups of *El Shaddai* go beyond simple religious meetings, "allowing believers to craft a sense of self, to link that self to the fate of their nation" (p. 62). The discipline that cell groups promote, as well as the leadership that is exercised at the internal level of the group, added to the training that the network provides, are spaces where habits of thought and behavior are forged (Reu 2019), producing some form of *Christian citizenship* that transforms contemplation into action. Regarding the role of evangelicals in Argentine politics, Algranti (2012) suggested that the most important impact of megachurches was at the level of the small groups, where cell leaders can encourage their disciples to participate in the political scene, beginning at the local or municipal level.

At a time when many megachurch pastors are considering starting a political career, it is surprising the scarce number of papers addressing their leadership from a more theoretical standpoint. We can see that megachurches can be very complex organizations, where leadership practices are fundamental. For the most part, most articles classify megachurch leadership simply as *charismatic* in the Weberian sense, but also in the *pneumatological* sense, as these pastors and apostles must also demonstrate *signs and wonders* in their ministry. This means that, in the demonstration of leadership skills, there is an *organizational side* and a performative or *embodied side* that is public and visible. The term *pastorpreneurs* serves to describe this emerging ecclesial leadership class, proposing an "aesthetic approach" to study "the ways pastors authenticate their leadership through their bodily performances, observed on stage and screens, during church services and in the online world" (Klaver 2015). The story or testimony of the megachurch pastors, told in dramatics ways, following the steps of biblical prophets is an important source of leadership authenticity and divine calling, and the basis for the vision of the megachurch. Perhaps there is a commonality in Latin American pastors when they describe their transit through the different stages of *crisis*, *awakening*, *mission*, *objection*, and *signals of confirmation*, that characterize their vocational calling to become pastors of multitudes, since most of them started their ministries from the margins, trying to avoid denominational control, and competing with the hegemony of the Catholic church. The study of the rich variety of these *crucible experiences* in the formation of megachurch pastors as leaders has not been

attempted yet (Bennis and Thomas 2002). Washington, Van Buren, and Patterson (2014) have suggested that, through the practice of book writing, megachurch pastors exert “control over storytelling” which determines the vision and mission of the church. Since some Latin American megachurch pastors have been very prolific in book writing (although just a few have had a worldwide impact), the cultural offer of the megachurches bears the mark of the pastor or apostle, his family, and the church story, in a variety of products “that express conformity with the style and purpose offered by the institution” (J. Algranti 2015). The study of megachurch leadership authentication through books, video streaming, conferences, and networking is also an open area of research, in terms of understanding their views of leadership, theology, ecclesiology, organizational dynamics, and politics, through their written stories, reflections, as well as embodied messages.

Latin American cultural models of leadership like authoritarianism, paternalism, machismo, power hunger, risk avoidance, and uncertainty control (Romero 2004), require serious consideration among megachurch leadership. In a continent that has produced the likes of Fidel Castro, Augusto Pinochet, Hugo Chávez, Alvaro Uribe, Lula Da Silva, Cristina Fernández, Nicolás Maduro, Jair Bolsonaro, or Andrés López Obrador, it would be interesting to find out how different are megachurch pastors from these regional leadership stereotypes. For the most part, the literature tends to portray the Latin American leader as an “authoritarian-benevolent paternalistic figure that leads in a parental way, that engenders care and loyalty”, and follower submission (Castaño, et al. 2015). For Ronny Chaves, the leadership of megachurch pastors provide some sort of *apostolic fatherhood covering* to the church, since they are “fathers” who bring healing and are primarily interested in the well-being of their “spiritual children”. For him, this is one of the strategies of the Holy Spirit to heal the *father wound* of potential leaders, as a first step to building a better nation through Christian dominion (Chaves 2004, 20). However, given the size of the churches, this new father-figure seems still distant, only to be admired, revered, and obeyed through sermons, videos, books, tweets, and by following the vision of conquering the seven mountains of society.

Less researched still are the characteristics of female megachurch pastors and leaders, many of them with stories of unending struggle in a field dominated by patriarchy. In the list of the 50 largest Latin American churches there are no women pastors; when women are mentioned in this list it is in relation to the married couple. This is a widespread phenomenon, for example in the USA less than 1% of American megachurches are led by a female senior pastor (Mathews 2022). Referring to Chilean Neopentecostalism, Mansilla (2007) classifies female pastoral ministry in three phases: *penumbral*, legitimized by the position of the husband as senior pastor or apostle; *supplementary*, where women accidentally access the leadership position due to the lack of men in ministerial functions; and *autarkic* in which the woman reaches her position on her own account. Whatever the phase considered, women access to pastoral and leadership positions occurs through the most varied and unthinkable paths, disrupting patriarchal organizational dynamics, and constructing their leadership identity within a power struggle that crafts their subjectivity over a long-life itinerary (Méndez and Mora 2013).

Penumbra phase is the most common access to female pastorate, as many prominent women pastors are married to men who occupy high hierarchical positions, are founders of megachurches, or lead apostolic networks (Machado 2005). Usually, they act as *spiritual mothers* providing maternal care to all areas of the church where they participate (Méndez 2013), reaffirming her authority with the title of *Pastora* (Algranti, 2007). Even in the penumbra phase, women must discover ways to become accomplished ministers in the religious sphere, and submissive wives in the privacy of home, in what has been termed as *paradoxical domesticity* (Madrado 2017). These are women that constantly negotiate their preaching acuity, political abilities, entrepreneurial capabilities, and their social sensitivities with submission to the men of the church (Bowler 2019). In many cases, they are recognized as leaders but not as megachurch pastors, they take titles such as church administrators, prophets, teachers, advisors, managers, coaches, politicians, senators,

entrepreneurs, so long as they do not trespass the authority of the husband and keep family as their priority (Ramos 2021, p. 204).

The recent designation of women pastors in two of the largest seeker sensitive megachurches in the USA (*Saddleback Church* and *Willow Creek Community Church*), will make the topic of women leadership in megachurches an important area of research. A recent study suggests that PD churches in Mexico are open to female leadership (Ibarra and Gomes 2021) but mentions only a *treasurer/accountant* and a *chief designer*, as examples of female leadership. It is likely that the Neopentecostal background of some pastors of PD churches weighs heavily when deciding to innovate and promote women to senior leadership positions. This is the reason why many women leaders, frustrated by the male-dominated religious hierarchy, decide to live their "faith" in alternative ways, breaking with their original congregations and founding new churches or networks. These autarkic women pastors and their churches need to be investigated in comparison with those led by men. Along the same lines, many women develop ministries without the impositions of patriarchal ecclesiastical organizations, such as independent digital ministries, using social networks and Internet tools, that attract a sizable number of followers and with values that are compatible with megachurch theology and practices (Gaddini 2021).

The growing problem of misconduct, corruption and scandals provoked by Latin American megachurches is the last topic to discuss. Even though many charismatic megachurch pastors, apostles and prophets can start, lead, and reproduce successful organizations and movements, the tendency toward failure is higher than in other types of leadership models (Oakes 2010). One of the few works that, not only documents the amazing megachurch growth in Brazil, but which also considers the criticisms and shortcomings of these huge ministries, is the article by Smith and Campos (2015). Nevertheless, in recent years, the most common critical assessment has been made through journalistic investigations about the wrongdoings of several Latin American megachurch leaders (Ward, et al. 2020), and their contradictory, sometimes corrupt, involvement in national politics (Torres, et al. 2019). Also, popular culture portrays of corrupt Latin American megachurch pastors are growing in the region, either in novels (Gamboa 2019), or in popular streaming video series (Galindo 2021). Issues of sexual misconduct, money laundry, abuse, vote selling, are often mentioned in Latin America, but there is still an absence of serious academic studies on the subject. The looseness of megachurch network affiliation exacerbates the lack of accountability, enables the concentration of power in few individuals, limits megachurch organization to function mainly as family ventures with nepotistic leadership transitions, and hides the emergence of narcissistic personality disorder in the leadership, all of which could eventually lead to church problems, including criminal activities.

5. Conclusion

This review has demonstrated that the field of megachurch studies in Latin America is an open field of research. For the most part, the scholarship available has come from the sociological and anthropological studies of Neopentecostalism by research groups in universities in the region, therefore lacking strong ecclesiological and theological argumentations. It is very important to view megachurch studies from a regional and global perspective, overcoming the thought that Latin American megachurches are mere clones of North American prototypes. This article has shown that there are many examples that make the field unique, by considering original church growth methodologies developed in the region, the way Pentecostalization of Latin American Protestantism has occurred, and how theologies of growth have been adapted to Latin American idiosyncrasies. There is a vast room for ethnographical theological research to understand the many changes that have made Evangelicals in Latin America evolve, from the thought of the church as a "refuge", to a new political activism that seeks to bring Christian dominion of countries with corrupt and unjust governments, which would allow the reign of God to be established on earth, paving the way for the second coming of Jesus.

References

- Aguilar De La Cruz, Hedilberto. 2019. «Dominionismo: la corriente evangélica que compite por el poder político y económico en América Latina.» *Religiones Latinoamericanas: Nueva Época* 3 (Enero-Junio): 39-64.
- Algranti, Joaquín. 2005. «Rey de Reyes: hacia una problematización del poder.» *Sociedad y Religión: Sociología, Antropología e Historia de la Religión en el Cono Sur* 17: 19-37.
- Algranti, Joaquin. 2007. «Tres posiciones de la mujer cristiana: Estudio sobre las relaciones de género en la narrativa maestra del pentecostalismo.» *Ciencias Sociales y Religión/Ciências Sociais e Religião* 9 (9): 165-193.
- Algranti, Joaquin. 2008a. «De la sanidad del cuerpo a la sanidad del alma: Estudio sobre la lógica de construcción de las identidades colectivas en el neopentecostalismo argentino.» *Religião e Sociedade* 28 (2): 179-209.
- Algranti, Joaquin. 2008b. «Cuando lo invisible gobierna lo visible: Etnografía de los cultos de prosperidad en la iglesia evangélica pentecostal de Rey de Reyes.» *Perspectivas Latinoamericanas* 5 (12): 37-67.
- Algranti, Joaquín. 2012. «Megachurches and the Problem of Leadership: an Analysis of the Encounter between the Evangelical World and Politics in Argentina.» *Religion, State & Society* 40 (1): 49-68.
- Algranti, Joaquín. 2015. «El carisma como evidencia de sentido. Reflexiones sobre el papel de las mercancías y la religión en el espacio público.» En *Religión y espacio público. Perspectivas y debates*, edited by L. Bahamondes González y N Marín Alarcón, 15-39. Santiago de Chile: CRANN Editores.
- Althoff, Andrea. 2021. «Donald Trump y Jimmy Morales: entrelazamientos de política transnacional y religión.» *Ciencias Sociales Y Religión/Ciências Sociais E Religião* 23: e021024.
- Alves, D. 2011. «Conectados pelo Espírito: Redes de contato e influência entre líderes carismáticos e pentecostais ao sul de América Latina.» Doctoral Dissertation in Social Anthropology Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre (Brasil).
- Amat y León Pérez, Oscar, y Bethsabeth Giovanna Condor Vargas. 2021. *Propuestas y Estrategias Políticas de los Principales Nuevos Movimientos Religiosos en el Perú*. Investigación, Lima: Diakonia/Pan para el Mundo.
- Avanzini, John. 1989. *The Wealth of the World: The Proven Wealth Transfer System*. Tulsa, Oklahoma: Harrison House.
- Ávila Arteaga, Mariano. 2011. «The Hermeneutics of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana on its Fortieth Anniversary: Still Towards a Latin American Evangelical Contextual Hermeneutics Mariano Ávila Arteaga.» *Journal of Latin American Theology* (Wipf and Stock) 6 (1): 38-85.
- Barrantes Montero, Luis Guillermo. 2020. "La colonialidad del ser-espiritual Ejemplificación, mediante el evangelio de la prosperidad, como un aporte al pensamiento decolonial." Doctoral Dissertation, Doctorado en Estudios Latinoamericanos, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, San José (Costa Rica).
- Barrera Rivera, Paulo. 2021. «Religión contra democracia: El neoconservadurismo evangélico en el Perú del siglo XXI.» *Ciencias Sociales Y Religión/Ciências Sociais E Religião* 23: e021023.
- Barrientos, M., y C. Pérez. 2022. "No hay derecho al aborto", dice Giammattei en su discurso en el Congreso Iberoamericano por la Vida y la Familia. 10 de Marzo. Accessed March 18th 2022. <https://bit.ly/3ijuag8>.
- Bartel, R. 2016. *Underestimating the force of the New Evangelicals in the Public Sphere: Lessons from Colombia, South America*. Noviembre 11. Accessed March 18th 2022. <https://bit.ly/36tFG5W>.
- Bartel, Rebecca. 2016. "Giving Is Believing: Credit and Christmas in Colombia." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84 (4): 1006-1028.
- Bastían, Jean-Pierra. 1994. *Protestantismos y modernidad latinoamericana: Historia de unas minorías religiosas activas en América Latina*. Reprinted in 2011 . Ciudad de Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Bauman, Chad. 2022. «Global Megachurch Studies: The State, Evolution, and Maturation of a Field.» *Journal of World Christianity* 12 (1): 113-179.

- Beltrán, William, and J.D. Quiroga. 2017. «Pentecostalismo y política electoral en Colombia (1991- 2014).» *Colombia Internacional* 91: 187-212.
- Beltrán, William, and Sian Creely. 2018. «Pentecostals, Gender Ideology and the Peace Plebiscite: Colombia 2016.» *Religions* 9 (12): 418.
- Beltrán, William. 2003. «De la informalidad religiosa a las multinacionales de la fe: La diversificación del campo religioso en Bogotá.» *Revista Colombiana de Sociología* (21): 141-173.
- Beltrán, William. 2012. «Pluralización religiosa y cambio social en Colombia.» Tesis Doctoral, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris 3), Paris (Francia).
- Bennis, W.G., and R.J. Thomas. 2002. *Geeks and Geezers*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Press.
- Berryman, Phillip. 1996. *Religion in the megacity: Catholic and Protestant portraits from Latin America*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Bialecki, Jon. 2015. "The Third Wave and the Third World: C. Peter Wagner, John Wimber, and the Pedagogy of Global Renewal in the Late Twentieth Century." *Pneuma* 37: 177-200.
- Bird, Warren. nd. *World Megachurches*. Las access: May 4th 2022. <https://leadnet.org/world/>.
- Bottari, Pablo. 1998. «El ministerio de liberación en avivamiento.» En *Manantiales de Avivamiento*, edited by C. Peter Wagner and Pablo Deiros. Miami, Florida: Betania.
- Bowler, Kate, and Wayne Reagan. 2014. "Bigger, Better, Louder: The Prosperity Gospel's Impact on Contemporary Christian Worship." *Religion and American Culture* 24 (2): 186 - 230.
- Bowler, Kate. 2013. *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bowler, Kate. 2019. *The preacher's wife: The precarious power of evangelical women celebrities*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Bravo, Fabián. 2020. *Fe en tránsito: Evangélicos chilenos en los tiempos de la desinstitucionalización*. Concepción: CEEP Ediciones.
- Brevi de Moura, Ana C., y Solange A. Devechi Ordonez. 2018. «A aplicação de conceitos administrativos em instituições religiosas a partir da perspectiva do MDA.» *Revista Eletrônica de Graduação do UNIVEM - REGRAD* 11 (1): 309-324.
- Burch, Greg. 2016. "Bi-modal rhythms of celebration in Venezuela." In *Scripting Pentecost: A Study of Pentecostals, Worship and Liturgy*, edited by Mark J. Cartledge and A.J. Swoboda. London: Routledge.
- Burity, Joanildo. 2020. «The evangelical people: hegemonic construction, minority disputes and conservative reaction.» *Encartes* 3 (6): 1-35.
- Caballeros, Harold. 1999. *De victoria en victoria: Conceptos, experiencias y técnicas sobre guerra espiritual*. Miami, Florida: Caribe/Betania.
- Carpio Ulloa, María José. 2021. «El líder de la élite neopentecostal costarricense Rony Chaves y su discurso geoestratégico.» *Protesta & Carisma* 1 (2): online.
- Castano, Nathalie, Mary F. Sully de Luque, Tara Wernsing, Enrique Ogliastri, Rachel Gabel Shemueli, Rosa María Fuchs, and José Antonio Robles-Flores. 2015. "El Jefe: Differences in expected leadership behaviors across Latin American countries." *Journal of World Business* 50 (January): 584-597.
- Chaves, Ronny. 2004. *Paternidad Apostólica*. San José: Editorial La Artística.
- Christerson, Brad, y Richard Flory. 2017. *The Rise of Network. How Independent Leaders Are Changing the Religious Landscape*. New York (USA): Oxford University Press.
- Christian, Patricia B., Michael Gent, and Timothy H. Wadkins. 2015. «Protestant growth and change in El Salvador: Two decades of survey evidence.» *Latin American Research Review* 50 (1): 140-159.
- Clawson, Michael. 2012. «Misión Integral and Progressive Evangelicalism: The Latin American Influence on the North American Emerging Church.» *Religions* 3 (3): 790-807.
- Comiskey, Joel. 1997. "Cell-Based Ministry as a Positive Factor for Church Growth in Latin America." Ph.D. Thesis, School of World Missions, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena (CA-USA).

- Comiskey, Joel. 1999. *Groups of 12: A new way to mobilize leaders and multiply groups in your church*. Houston (TX-USA): Touch Publications.
- Comiskey, Joel. 2014. *De 12 a 3: Cómo aplicar los principios de G12 en su iglesia*. ebook. Amazon Digital Services LLC.
- Cook, David Lowell. 2000. «The Americanization of the Church Growth Movement.» *Journal of the American Society of Church Growth* 11 (3): 15-50.
- Coral Gómez, L. Valentina. 2020. «God's Maidservants: A Pentecostal Women (Counter)Narrative.» *Filanderas. Revista Interdisciplinar de Estudios Feministas* 5: 81-99.
- Córdoba Moreno, Juan David. 2021. «La nueva cristiandad y la construcción de sujetos políticos en Colombia: Análisis de las redes sociales de la Misión Carismática Internacional (2016-2019).» In *Religião, Política, e Sociedade*, edited by Júlio César Suzuki, Nayibe Castellanos Villasmil and Gilvan Cerqueira de Araújo, 51-82. São Paulo: FFLCH/USP, PROLAM/USP.
- Corpeño, Gerardo. 2011. «Neopentecostalismo emergente: Pistas para el futuro de iglesias neopentecostales jóvenes.» *Kairós* (48, enero-junio): 85-108.
- Danielson, Robert, and Mario Vega. 2014. "The Vital Role of the Laity in Revitalization: A Case Study of Misión Cristiana Elim." *The Asbury Journal* 69 (1): 64-73.
- Danielson, Robert. 2013. "Independent Indigenous Protestant Mega Churches in El Salvador." *Missiology: An International Review* 41 (3): 329-342.
- De Seixas Andrade, Rodney, and Gabriel Raimondo. 2016. «La Unción: Una mirada histórica y sociológica al fenómeno que avivó la Iglesia Argentina desde 1992.» *Acta Theologica* 20 (54): 781-806.
- De Souza, André Ricardo. 2011. «O empreendedorismo neopentecostal no Brasil.» *Ciencias Sociales Y Religión/Ciências Sociais E Religião* 13 (15): 13-34.
- Deiros, Pablo, and C. Peter Wagner. 1999. *Manantiales de Avivamiento*. Miami, Florida: Caribe/Betania.
- Deiros, Pablo, and Carlos Mraida. 1994. *Latinoamérica en llamas*. Miami, Florida: Caribe/Betania.
- Deiros, Pablo. 2018. *Historia del cristianismo en América Latina*. El Paso, Texas: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones.
- Dolghie, Jacqueline. 2005. «O gospel da Renascer em Cristo e suas relações com o campo protestante brasileiro.» *Ciências da Religião: História e Sociedade* 3 (1): 67-101.
- Einstein, M. 2008. *Brands of faith: Marketing religion in a commercial age*. New York (USA): Routledge.
- Enslow, John. 2008. *La profecía de los siete montes: Descubra la revolución de Elías que se aproxima*. Lake Mary, Florida: Casa Creación.
- Espinosa Zepeda, Horacio. 2017. «Hipster o la lógica de la Cultura urbana bajo el Capitalismo.» *Estudios sobre las Culturas Contemporáneas* XXIII (46): 111-130.
- Feria Arroyo, D. A. 2017. "Organización y estructura política de evangélicos en México. El caso de la organización neopentecostal Alas de Águila." In *Laicidad, imaginarios y ciudadanía en América Latina*, edited by F. Gaytán and N. Guerrero. Ciudad de México (México): Parmenia.
- Fernandes, Silvia. 2022. *Christianity in Brazil: An Introduction from a Global Perspective*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Finke, Roger. 1990. «Religious deregulation: Origins and consequences.» *Journal of Church and State* 32 (3): 609-626.
- Freidzon, Claudio. 1996. *Espíritu Santo tengo hambre de ti*. Nashville, Tennessee: Betania.
- Freston, Paul. 2001. *Evangelicals and politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frigerio, Alejandro. 2020. «Encontrando la religión por fuera de las "religiones": Una propuesta para visibilizar el amplio y rico mundo social que hay entre las "iglesias" y el "individuo".» *Religião e Sociedade* 40 (3): 21-47.
- Gaddini, Katie. 2021. «'Wife, Mommy, Pastor and Friend': The Rise of Female Evangelical Microcelebrities.» *Religions* 12 (758).
- Gaiya, Musa. 2015. «Charismatic and Pentecostal Social Orientations in Nigeria.» *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 18 (3): 63-79.
- Galindo, Juan Carlos. 2021. «El reino': la religión y las cloacas del poder en Argentina unidas para vencer. 14 de September. Accessed May 27th 2022. <https://bit.ly/39Zljyg>.

- Gamboa, Santiago. 2019. *Será larga la noche*. Bogotá: Alfaguara.
- Garrard, Virginia. 2020. «Hidden in plain sight: Dominion theology, spiritual warfare and violence in Latin America.» *Religions* 11 (12): 648.
- Garrard, Virginia. 2021. *New faces of God in Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- George, Carl. 1991. *Prepare your church for the future: Introducing the Meta-Church: Large enough to celebrate, small enough to care*. Tarrytown (NY-USA): Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Gill, Anthony. 1999. «Government regulation, social anomie and Protestant growth in Latin America: A cross-national analysis.» *Rationality and Society* 11 (3): 287-316.
- Gladwin, Ryan. 2015. «Charismatic Music and the Pentecostalization of Latin American Evangelicalism.» In *Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, editado por Monique Ingalls y Amos Young, 199–214. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.
- Goldstein, Ariel. 2020. *Poder evangélico*. Kindle version. Buenos Aires: Marea Editorial.
- Gomes Rego, Edson Fernando. 2020. "Cuando la fe se vuelve marca: la comunicación organizacional y el cristianismo emergente en el caso "Más Vida Guadalajara"." Master's Thesis in Culture & Science Communication, ITESO, Universidad Jesuita de Guadalajara, Guadalajara (Mexico).
- Gomes, E. F. 2021. «La Casa de Dios y de Cash Luna: Una megaiglesia centroamericana.» *Contextualizaciones Latinoamericanas* 14 (25): 25-36.
- Gomes, Edson. 2020. "ADN Más Vida: la identidad de una iglesia postdenominacional mexicana en crecimiento." *Ciencias sociales y religión/ Ciências sociais e religião* 22.
- Gunther Brown, C. 2006. «From Tent Meetings and Store-front Healing Rooms to Walmarts and the Internet: Healing Spaces in the United States, the Americas, and the World, 1906-2006.» *Church History* 75 (3): 631-647.
- Heuser, Andreas. 2016. «Charting African Prosperity Gospel Economies.» *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72 (1): A3823.
- Heuser, Andreas. 2021. "Outlines of Pentecostal Dominion Theology." In *Political Pentecostalism: Four synoptic surveys from Asia, Africa, and Latina America*, edited by L. Fontana and M. Luber. Regensburg (Alemania): Verlag Friedrich Pustet.
- Holvast, Rene. 2009. *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina 1989-2005: A Geography of Fear*. Leiden: Brill Publishers.
- Hong, In Sik. 2011. *¿Una iglesia posmoderna?: En busca de un modelo de iglesia y misión en la era posmoderna*. Buenos Aires: Kairós Ediciones.
- Hunt, Steve, ed. 2020. *Handbook of Megachurches*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ibarra, Carlos S. 2021. «Beards, Tattoos, and Cool Kids: Lived Religion and Postdenominational Congregations in Northwestern Mexico.» *International Journal of Latin American religion* 5: 76-103.
- Ibarra, Carlos S., y Edson Gomes. 2021. «La iglesia deconstruida y el Jesús alivianado: Inclusión femenina y LGBTQIA+ en tres comunidades cristianas de México.» *Descentrada. Revista interdisciplinaria de feminismos y género* 5 (2): e145.
- Ibarra, Carlos Samuel, and Edson Fernando Gomes. 2022. "Cristianismo postdenominacional y coronavirus: campo religioso e innovación en México y Estados Unidos." *Encartes* 5 (9): 174-196.
- Ibarra, Carlos. 2019. "Cristianismo postdenominacional, movimientos emergentes y deconstrucción religiosa en el norte de México." Doctoral Dissertation, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana (Mexico).
- Ihrke-Buchroth, Uta. 2013. «Religious mobility and social contexts within Neopentecostal megachurches in Lima, Perú.» Doctoral Dissertation, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Perú.
- Infobae. 2017. *Cómo es la iglesia millennial que llegó a la Argentina*. August 23. Accessed May 03 2022. <https://bit.ly/3kzzr4E>.
- Jiménez Becerra, Absalón. 2013. «El protestantismo e iglesias evangélicas en Colombia: sistema de creencia y práctica religiosa popular.» *Methaodos Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 2 (1): 105-117.
- Johnson, James E. 1969. "Charles G. Finney and a Theology of Revivalism." *Church History* 38 (3): 338-358.
- Kay, William. 2006. *Apostolic Networks in Britain: New ways of being church*. Milton Keynes (United Kingdom): Paternoster Press.

- Klaver, Miranda. 2015. «Pentecostal pastorpreneurs and the global circulation of authoritative aesthetic styles.» *Culture and Religion* 16 (2): 146-159.
- Klaver, Miranda. 2018. «Global Church Planting in the Media Age: Hillsong Church.» *Interculturelle Theologie. Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 44 (2/3): 234-246.
- Klaver, Miranda. 2021. *Hillsong Church: Expansive Pentecostalism, Media, and the Global City*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Koehrsen, Jens. 2016. *Middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina: Inappropriate Spirits*. Leiden: Brill.
- Koehrsen, Jens. 2017. «When Sects Become Middle Class: Impression Management among Middle-Class Pentecostals in Argentina.» *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 78 (3): 318-339.
- Lalive D'Epinay, Christian. 1968. *El refugio de las masas: Estudio sociológico del protestantismo chileno*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Del Pacífico.
- Lozano, Fabio. 2008. "Evangélicos y pobreza: Reflexiones a partir de un estudio de la acción social de las iglesias evangélicas en Colombia." In *¿El reino de Dios es de este mundo?: El papel ambiguo de las religiones en la lucha contra la pobreza*, edited by Genaro Zalpa and Hans Egil Offerdal. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores/CLACSO.
- Machado, Maria das Dores. 2005. «Representações de gênero nos grupos pentecostais.» *Estudos feministas* 13 (2): 387-396.
- Madambashi, Andrea. 2011. *Rick Warren's Popularity and Influence in Latin America*. May 29. Accessed April 28th 2022. <https://bit.ly/3s02cLH>.
- Madrazo, Tito. 2017. «Profeta Ana Maldonado: Pushing the Boundaries of Paradoxical Domesticity.» *Perspectivas* (Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI)) 14 (Spring): 140-153.
- Mansilla, Miguel A. 2007. «El neopentecostalismo chileno.» *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* (Depto. Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Arturo Prat) (18 Winter): 87-102.
- Mansilla, Miguel. 2006. «Del valle de lágrimas al valle de Jauja: Las promesas redentoras del neopentecostalismo en el más acá.» *Polis: Revista Latinoamericana* (Centro de Investigación Sociedad y Políticas Públicas (CISPO)) 14: <http://journals.openedition.org/polis/5190>.
- Mark, Cartledge, Sarah L.B. Dunlop, Heather Buckingham, y Sophie Bremner. 2019. *Megachurches and Social Engagement: Public Theology in Practice*. Leiden: Brill.
- Marostica, Mathew. 2011. «Learning from the Master: Carlos Annacondia and the Standardization of Pentecostal Practices in and beyond Argentina.» In *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, edited by Candy Gunter Brown. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marshall, Ruth. 2016. «Destroying arguments and captivating thoughts: Spiritual warfare prayer as global praxis.» *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2 (1): 92-113.
- Marti, Gerardo. 2005. *A mosaic of believers: diversity and innovation in a multiethnic church*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Marzilli, Pablo. 2019. "Cambios, desafíos e incógnitas en la iglesia que conocemos (Influencia y expansión de la Nueva Reforma Apostólica en las iglesias evangélicas)." Doctoral Dissertation, Departamento de Sociología, Universidad Católica Argentina, Buenos Aires (Argentina).
- Mathews, Heather. 2022. *Uncovering and Dismantling Barriers for Women Pastors*. CBE International. February 03. Accessed May 25th 2022. <https://bit.ly/3PFVSNf>.
- McClymond, Michael. 2016. «After Toronto: Randy Clark's Global Awakening, Heidi and Rolland Baker's Iris Ministries, and the Post-1990s Global Charismatic Networks.» *Pneuma* 37: 1-27.
- McGraven, Donald. 1970. *Understanding Church Growth*. Grand Rapids (Michigan-USA): Eerdmans.
- McVicar, Michael J. 2015. *Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.

- Mellquist Lehto, Heather. 2021. "Global Christianity as method: Reorienting the study of American Mega and Multisite churches." *American religion* 3 (1): 55-81.
- Méndez, Nora, and Fernando Mora. 2013. "Leadership embodiment and resistance: The complex journey of Latin American Pentecostal women pastors." In *The embodiment of leadership*, edited by Lois Melina, Gloria Burgess, Lena Falkman and Antonio Marturano. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.
- Méndez, Nora. 2013. «Resistencia y Maternidad: Contradicciones en el ejercicio pastoral femenino pentecostal.» *Revista Venezolana de Estudios de la Mujer* 18 (40): 227-242.
- Miller, Donald, and Tetsunao Yamamori. 2007. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Miller, Donald. 1999. *Reinventing American Protestantism*. Los Ángeles, California: University of California Press.
- Moberg, M. 2015. "The Dance + Pray Worship Experience in Finland: Negotiating the Transcendent and Transgressive in Search of Alternative Sensational Forms and Affective Space." In *Congregational music-making and community in a mediated age*, edited by Anna Nekola and Tom Wagner, 231-246. Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate.
- Mora, Fernando. 2022. «Empaquetando el Discipulado: La marca G-12 y su impacto en la estructura y misión de las iglesias evangélicas neoapostólicas.» Sent to *Revista Ciencias Sociales y Religión/Ciências Sociais e Religião*.
- Mora, Fernando. 2022. «Singing from Our Soul: Worship Music Development in Latin American Vineyard Churches (1994–2017).» *Ethnodoxology: Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith* 10.
- Mora, Fernando. 2022. *La evolución de los apóstoles: Decodificando el ADN de la nueva iglesia evangélica*. San José: Editorial Abyad.
- Mosquera, Mariela. 2016. «"La Manifestación de los Hijos de Dios": Reconfiguración del Campo Evangélico, Emergencia del Sujeto Juvenil Cristiano en la Argentina (1960–2000).» *Revista de Ciencias Sociales Segunda Época* (30 Spring): 53-83.
- Mosquera, Mariela. 2019. «Dios y rock & roll: Cómo el evangelismo transformó el rock.» *Nueva Sociedad* (280 March-April): 147-157.
- Murillo, A. 2018. *El poder evangélico parte en dos Costa Rica a cinco semanas de las presidenciales*. 20 de February. Accessed July 30th 2021. <https://bit.ly/3jtaf0f>.
- O'Neill, Kevin Lewis. 2010. *City of God: Christian citizenship in post-war Guatemala*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- O'Neill, Kevin Lewis. 2012. «Pastor Harold Caballeros Believes in Demons: Belief and Believing in the Study of Religion.» *History of Religions* 51 (4): 299-316.
- Oakes, Len. 2010. *The charismatic personality*. Bowen Hills, Queensland: Australian Academic Press.
- Oosterbaan, Martijn, y Adriano Santos Gody. 2020. «Samba Struggles: Carnaval Parades, Race and Religious Nationalism in Brazil.» In *The Secular Sacred: Emotions of Belonging and the Perils of Nation and Religion*, edited by Markus Balkenhol, Ernst van den Hemmel y Irene Stengs. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Oro, Ari Pedro. 2014. «South American Evangelicals' Re-conquest of Europe.» *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29 (2): 219-232.
- Pérez Guadalupe, José Luis, y Brenda Carranza. 2021. «The diversity of political Pentecostalism in Latin America.» In *Political Pentecostalism: Four synoptic surveys from Asia, Africa, and Latina America*, edited by Leandro Fontana y Markus Lubert. Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet.
- Pérez Guadalupe, José Luis. 2017. *Entre Dios y el César: El impacto político de los evangélicos en el Perú y América Latina*. Lima: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.
- Perez, Adam. 2020. «Sounding God's Enthronement in Worship: The early History and theology of Integrity Hosanna! Music.» In *Essays on the History of Contemporary Praise and Worship*, edited by Lester Ruth, 75-95. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications.
- Perez, Adam. 2021. «All Hail King Jesus': The International Worship Symposium and the Making of Praise and Worship History, 1977–1989.» PhD Thesis, Duke University, Durham (North Caroline-USA).
- Pinto Ribeiro, Lidice Meyer, and Danilo Da Silva Cunha. 2012. ""Bola de Neve": Um Fenômeno Pentecostal Contemporâneo." *Horizonte-Revista de Estudos de Teologia e Ciências da Religião* 10 (26): 500-521.

- PRC. 2006. *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Washington (USA): Pew Research Center.
- PRC. 2014. «Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Continent.» *Pew Research Center*. Pew Research Center. 13 de November. Accessed April 21st 2022. <https://pewrsr.ch/3La2wz5>.
- Quesada Chaves, Marco Antonio. 2019. «Las huellas ocultas: La Teología de la prosperidad en América Latina a la luz de sus orígenes ideológicos en el movimiento del Nuevo Pensamiento.» *Repertorio Americano: Segunda Nueva Época* (29): 269-283.
- Ramos, Yirlean. 2021. "La agenda económica y política de los neopentecostales en Colombia: El neoliberalismo y el empoderamiento femenino en el siglo XXI." Doctoral Dissertation, Instituto de CSH Alfonso Vélez Pliego, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Puebla (México).
- Rämunddal, L. 2014. "Is Church Development 'Natural'? A Critical and Constructive Analysis of Christian A. Schwarz's Biotic Church Growth Theory." *Ecclesiology* 10: 313-336.
- Reu, Tobías. 2019. «Leadership in the Mold of Jesus: Growing the Church and Saving the Nation in Neo-Pentecostal Guatemala City.» *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 24 (3): 746-762.
- Robbins, J. 2009. «Pentecostal Networks and the Spirit of Globalization: On the Social Productivity of Ritual Forms.» *Social Analysis* 53 (1): 55-66.
- Roberts, Keith, and David Yamane. 2016. *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Sixth Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Rocca, Leandro. 2013. «Identidades desdobladas: Bernardo Stamateas como productor de bienes simbólicos.» *X Jornadas de Sociología*. Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires.
- Rocha, Cristina. 2016. "A Megaigreja Hillsong no Brasil: a constituição de um campo religioso transnacional entre o Brasil e a Austrália." *PLURAL, Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Sociologia da USP* 23 (2): 162-181.
- Rocha, Cristina. 2017. «"The Come to Brazil Effect": Young Brazilians' Fascination with Hillsong.» In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches y Tom Wagner. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rocha, Cristina. 2021. «Cool Christianity: The Fashion-Celebrity-Megachurch Industrial Complex.» *The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 17 (5).
- Romero, Erick. 2004. «Latin American leadership: El Patrón & El Líder Moderno.» *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal* 11 (3): 25-37.
- Santos Andrade, E. 2010. "A Visão celular no governo dos 12: Estratégias de crescimento, participação e conquista de espaços entre os batistas soteropolitanos de 1998 a 2008." Master's Thesis, Ciencias Sociales, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador (Brasil).
- Sargeant, Kimon. 2000. *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Schäfer, Heinrich Wilhelm. 2021. *El potencial de paz de las "iglesias libres" en los EE.UU. y América Latina: Oportunidades y obstáculos para la cooperación internacional*. Stuttgart: IFA (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen).
- Schäfer, Heinrich, Adrián Tovar, and Tobias Reu. 2013. «Cambios en el campo religioso de Guatemala y Nicaragua: de 1985 a 2013.» *Sendas* (Universidad Rafael Landívar) 1 (Mayo-Junio): 11-32.
- Schwarz, Christian. 2001. *Cambio de paradigma en la iglesia: Cómo el desarrollo natural de la iglesia puede transformar el pensamiento teológico*. Tarrasa: CLIE.
- Semán, Pablo. 2001. "La recepción popular de la teología de la prosperidad." *Scripta Ethnológica* XXIII: 145-162.
- Semán, Pablo. 2005. «¿Por qué no?: el matrimonio entre espiritualidad y confort. Del mundo evangélico a los bestsellers.» *Desacatos* 18 (May-August): 71-86.
- Semán, Pablo. 2009. «Las pequeñas iglesias pentecostales y el crecimiento del pentecostalismo en la Argentina.» *XXVII Congreso de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología*. Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires.

- Semán, Pablo. 2019. «¿Quiénes son? ¿Por qué crecen? ¿En qué creen?: Pentecostalismo y política en América Latina.» *Nueva Sociedad* (280): 26-46.
- Silvoso, Eduardo. 1998. «Dejando correr los manantiales de avivamiento.» En *Manantiales de Avivamiento*, edited by C. Peter Wagner and Pablo Deiros. Miami, Florida: Betania.
- Smilde, David. 2004. «Los evangélicos y la polarización: la moralización de la política y la politización de la religión.» *Revista Venezolana de Economía y Ciencias Sociales* 10 (2): 163-179.
- Smith, Dennys, y Leonildo Campos. 2015. «Concentrations of Faith: Mega Churches in Brazil.» In *A Moving Faith: Megachurches go South*, edited by James y Johnathan, 169-170. New Dehli: SAGE Publications.
- Snyder, Hannah. 2019. «Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines.» *Journal of Business Research* 104: 333–339.
- Swartz, David. 2020. *Facing West: American Evangelicals in an age of world Christianity*. New York: Oxford UNiversity Press.
- Tec-López, René. 2020. «El neopentecostalismo y sus caracterizaciones en América Latina.» *Política y Cultura* (UAM) (54): 105-132.
- Torraco, R. J. 2016. «Writing Integrative Literature Reviews.» *Human Resource Development Review* 15 (4): 404-428.
- Torres, Fabiola, Jonathan Castro, Melissa Goytizolo, Mayté Ciriaco, Jason Martínez, and Rocío Romero. 2019. *Serie periodística*. Accessed May 29th 2022. <https://bit.ly/3zmwpcD>.
- Vega, Mario. 2013. "La Iglesia Evangélica frente al siglo XXI." *Ciencia, Cultura y Sociedad* 1 (1): 51-54.
- Vélez-Caro, Constanza, y Miguel Ángel Mansilla. 2020. «La Nueva Canción Evangélica (1986–2012): Influencia de Marcos Witt en la Música y los Músicos Evangélicos.» *Religião e Sociedade* 40 (3): 241-267.
- Wadkins, Timothy. 2018. «From the blood of the martyrs to the baptism of the spirit in El Salvador.» *Religion Compass* 12 (9): e12284.
- Wagner, C. Peter. 1973. *¡Cuidado! Ahí vienen los pentecostales*. Miami (USA): Vida.
- Wagner, C. Peter. 1978. "How Ethical is the Homogeneous Unit Principle?" *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 2 (1): 12-19.
- Wagner, C. Peter. 1998. "Dios ha puesto su pueblo a orar." In *Manantiales de Avivamiento*, edited by C. Peter Wagner and Pablo Deiros. Miami, Florida: Betania.
- Wagner, C. Peter. 2015. *The great transfer of wealth: Financial release for advancing God's kingdom*. ebook. New Kensigton, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House.
- Ward, Rebeca, Beatriz Muylaert, Mathew Albasi, y et al. 2020. *Paraísos de Dinero y Fe: cómo el crimen organizado u negocios turbios*. August 16th. Accessed May 27th 2022. <https://bit.ly/3LPZqQd>.
- Washington, Marvin, Harry J. Van Buren, y Karen Patterson. 2014. «Pastor practices in the era of megachurches: New organizational practices and forms for a changing institutional environment.» *Religion and Organization Theory* (October 13th, online): 187-213.
- Watson, J. B., and W. Scalen. 2008. ""Dinning with the devil": The unique secularization of American Evangelical churches." *International Social Science Review* 83 (3/4): 171-180.
- Weaver, John. 2015. *The Failure of Evangelical Mental Health Care: Treatments That Harm Women, LGBT Persons and the Mentally Ill*. Jefferson, North Caroline: McFarland and Company Publishers.
- Wilder, Courtney, and Jeremy Rehwaldt-Alexander. 2010. «Christians in the Hipster Subculture: What Does the Gospel have to do with Skinny Jeans, Irony, and Indie Bands?» *Lutheran Education Journal* 143 (2): 112-120.
- Willems, Emil. 1967. *Followers of the new faith: Culture change and rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile*. Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Witt, Marcos. 1993. *Adoremus*. Nasville, Tennessee: Caribe.
- Wojtowicz, Bladimiro, Enrique Montenegro, and Marcelo Laffit. 2011. *El Pacto de Caracas: Respuestas apostólicas a los desafíos del siglo XXI*. Caracas, Región Capital: Editorial Amplitud 777.
- Wynarczyk, Hilario. 1989. *Tres evangelistas carismáticos: Omar Cabrera, Carlos Annacondia, Héctor Giménez*. Informe de investigación. Buenos Aires: Prensa Ecuémica.

Wynarczyk, Hilario. 1995. «La guerra espiritual en el campo evangélico.» *Sociedad y Religión* 13: 111-126.

Wynarczyk, Hilario. 2021. «Pentecostalismo y peronismo en la Argentina. Estudio de la movilización evangélica de 1954.» *Teología y Cultura* 23 (2): 154-176.

Zaldivar, Raúl. 2015. «Where are the evangelists? The phenomenon of evangelism in Latin American history.» In *The Reshaping of Mission in Latin America*, edited by Miguel Álvarez. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International.

Zielicke, Seth N. 2012. «The role of American evangelist Tommy Hicks in the development of Argentine Pentecostalism.» In *Global Pentecostal Movements: Migration, Mission, and Public Religion*, edited by Michael Wilkinson, 135-152. Leiden: Brill.