Chapter 10

Culture, Religion, and Corruption/ Prosperity (A), (B), (C), (1), (2)

Several empirical studies have considered three proxies of culture: religion (Volonté, 2015; Acemoglu et al., 2001; Paldam, 2001; Granato et al., 1996); language (Volonté, 2015); and ethnic measures (Alesina et al., 2003). However, cultural proxies often overlap with cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001) as well as with countries and their institutions (Volonté, 2015). The triad “Protestantism, English, and common law” is a typical example of interrelated overlapping characteristics associated with similar governance regimes (Volonté, 2015) and lower corruption (La Porta et al., 1999). The first three sections below elucidate some of these relationships. The fourth identifies those elements of Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies that may help clarify cultural differences. Section 10.5 explores the concept of syncretism as a process associated with cultural amalgamation, which, in Christianity, has predominantly occurred in Roman Catholicism when blended with ethnoreligious traditions.

10.1 Culture and Corruption (2)

Cultural determinants may drive corruption and its associated variables (i.e. GDP, institutions, democracy) at the same time (Lambsdorff, 1999, p. 14). Now, however, the causality arrow runs theoretically and empirically from culture to corruption, rather than vice versa (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 17).

The most important cultural characteristics defining the level of corruption in a country are generalised trust, religion, and acceptance of hierarchy (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 17). These factors are interrelated (La Porta et al., 1999). Hence, high levels of generalised trust, a large share of Protestants, and low acceptance of hierarchy mean less perceived corruption in a country (Lambsdorff, 2006).

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Several studies have shown that corruption is more frequent in countries with a high degree of ethnic fragmentation (see, among others, Mauro, 1995; La Porta et al., 1999; Treisman, 2000; Alesina et al., 2003). However, neither Serra (2006) nor Elbahnasawy and Revier (2012) found any significant effect of fractionalisation on corruption. One possible explanation for these dissimilar conclusions might be related to the embedding of all ethnicities in a single indicator of fragmentation across different samples.

My empirical models (Part V) also include linguistically and ethnically aggregated and disaggregated measures as cultural proxies. Thus:

Empirical Expectation

- 8). *I expect no conclusive results for ethnic fractionalisation given the possible overlapping of cultural proxies (Volonté, 2015) with other variables and given the varied conclusions of previous empirical results with aggregated measures.*

10.2 Culture and Institutions/Prosperity (2), (3), (5)

Various cultural aspects have direct empirical relations with institutional/prosperity/transparency outcomes: (1) *trust* (e.g. a higher level of trust implies less litigation). Education also favours trust; (2) *family ties. Familialism* (a significant reliance on family ties) is linked with lower civic sense and less trust. Thus, medieval corporations that were established based on such nuclear families underperformed; (3) *individualism* encourages personal accomplishments and innovation, contrary to collectivism; (4) *generalised morality*, which is limited to small circles in hierarchical societies; and (5) *work attitudes*, in the classical Weberian sense of the Protestant work ethic (Alesina & Giuliano, 2015, pp. 902–910).

10.3 Culture and Religion (B), (C)

The relationship between culture and religion is complex and subject to ongoing debate. Globalisation has “de-cultured” and “de-territorialised” world religions from their cultural and geographical origins (Roy, 2010). Likewise, secularisation, most of all in Europe or in specific political contexts (e.g. Communism) has partially driven religion out of the cultural sphere (Berger, 1999; Roy, 2010). Conversely, religion may represent most cultural values depending on context (e.g. for Orthodox Jews, Christian Pentecostals, or Muslim Salafists) or a minor part of such values (e.g. for Jewish atheists, secular Protestants, or Catholic non-believers).

Alesina and Giuliano (2015) leave unmentioned the relation between religion and the cultural traits mentioned above (Sect. 10.2, with the exception of the fifth aspect). However, religion is a decisive institutional and cultural expression, and as such

governs social relationships (Volonté, 2015; Stulz & Williamson, 2003; La Porta et al., 1997). Consequently, the cultural and institutional influence of religion underlies the phenomenon that prosperity, transparency, and institutions reinforce each other (Lambsdorff, 2006; Treisman, 2000).

Trust

Regarding *trust*, sufficient empirical evidence links values, attitudes, and beliefs (including trust) with religion and prosperity outcomes (Arruñada, 2010; Barro & McCleary, 2003; Guiso et al., 2003; La Porta et al., 1997). Arruñada (2010) compared the values and personal outcomes of Protestants and Catholics in a 32-country sample, based on data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) Survey. The author analysed differences in the theology, church organisation, and social practice of Protestantism and Catholicism. Different indices and indicators of social ethic (e.g. social control, the rule of law, and homogeneous values) and work ethic (e.g. positive working hours) were examined. Some significant findings of Arruñada can be summarised as follows:

- Compared with Roman Catholics, Protestant principles influence individuals to be less attached to close networks of friends and family, possess more homogeneous standards, be more involved in collective social control, and support institutions more (Arruñada, 2010, p. 891).
- Arruñada (2010) and Guiso et al. (2003) found statistical evidence for the fact that Roman Catholics are significantly more tolerant of tax fraud than Protestants. Roman Catholics are statistically less supportive of political and legal institutions and are more willing to cover for their delinquent friends when dealing with the police (Arruñada, 2010, p. 907).
- Protestants hold more homogeneous values than Catholics. Greater homogeneity reduces exchange and transaction costs and promotes impersonal trading and markets (e.g. those in commerce, finance, and industry) (p. 907–908). In turn, Roman Catholicism tends to promote personalised exchange and is less favourable to impersonal commerce (p. 890, 908) (e.g. in medieval times or in most rural areas in Latin America).
- Better-educated Protestants trust churches and religious organisations more, whereas better-educated Catholics trust them less. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church has greater conflict with its educated laity. Education tends to substitute for religion in Roman Catholicism, whereas it complements religion in Protestantism (p. 906).

Similarly, after surveying prominent empirical works linking trust and religion, Volonté (2015) observed:

Protestants exhibit a higher level of trust in contrast to Catholics, which promotes trade and thereby economic development (La Porta et al., 1997; Glaeser & Glendon, 1998; Guiso et al., 2006). [...] Religion and trust are therefore also related to organizational issues. Stulz and Williamson (2003) contend that the Calvinist Reformation promoted decentralization and the creation of multiple churches, and aimed to guard against concentrations of power. In contrast, Roman Catholicism, which is recognized as a religion whose congregations place their trust in people “who know more”, has a centralized hierarchical structure with the

Pope as its authoritative head (Levine 1979; La Porta et al., 1999; Stulz & Williamson, 2003, p. 319 as cited in Volonté, 2015, p. 84).

The veneration of the pope as the authoritative head of a hierarchical, centralised structure is the archetypical example of *vertical trust* (Volonté, 2015, p. 84). In turn, Protestants tend to be sceptical of hierarchies. The reformations historically promoted decentralisation (i.e. multiple churches) and democratisation (i.e. priesthood of all believers), and thus protected ordinary people against concentrations of power (*horizontal trust*) (Woodberry, 2012; Witte, 2002; La Porta et al., 1999; Stulz & Williamson, 2003; Levine 1979 as cited in Volonté, 2015, p. 84).

A typical example of horizontal trust refers to common goods (e.g. milk or fruit) left on display for customers to buy using open cash bowls (without supervising cashiers). For Mangalwadi (2011), such traditions exist mostly in historically Protestant countries and derive from applying the moral principles of the Biblical Decalogue. Consequently, regardless of a higher authority (e.g. a priest or a government) overseeing farm produce, God always watches (over) humans (producers and customers). Such a simple principle of accountability has profound reinforcing implications for the value-creating and value-adding chain (Mangalwadi, 2011, pp. 251–254). In non-Protestant societies, following Mangalwadi's example, low trust (or vertical trust) implies hiring an overseeing cashier, adulterated milk, inspectors accepting bribes, and a higher price for a lower quality item. Accordingly, such economies are much less competitive than Protestant economies. But the distinct values persisting through the present owe more to the historical and institutional weight of religion (than to its contemporary influence), even regardless of the secularisation of societies (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). As Glaeser and Glendon (1998) observed, “current social norms may still be the legacy of prior religious beliefs” (p. 431). Likewise, Inglehart and Baker (2000) assert:

While the majority of individuals have little or no contact with the church today, the impact of living in a society that was historically shaped by once-powerful Catholic or Protestant institutions persists today, shaping everyone—Protestant, Catholic, or other. . . (p. 36).

Familialism

Familialism and *low generalised morality* characterise Roman Catholicism as discussed (Sect. 10.4.1) (Esping-Andersen, 1996; Van Kersbergen, 1995; Arruñada, 2010; La Porta et al., 1999). In turn, individualism stems from the French Revolution and secularism was indirectly influenced by the Protestant Revolutions (Sect. 8.3.4.4). Arruñada (2010) found statistically, and consistent with the argument of Putnam (1993) that Catholics give more importance than Protestants to family ties. This more significant role of the family, according to Arruñada, corresponds to Catholics' proclivity for occupational options that promote production within families, which can lead to nepotism and obstruction of institutional functioning (Arruñada, 2010, p. 908).

Investigating these cultural features, various empirical studies (e.g. Granato et al., 1996) have found robust practical interrelations between GDP growth and Protestantism based on cultural measurements (World Values Survey of a 25 cross-country

sample). Likewise, Hayward and Kimmelmeier (2011), combining individual and national levels using cross-national panel data, reported that Protestantism persistently fosters capitalism but independently of active religiosity (cultural Protestantism).

Religion has shaped culture to a significant extent in Europe and the Americas (Anderson, 2007; Paldam, 2001; Huntington, 1991). Therefore, my research model places religion inside the “culture box” and maintains that it has manifold relations with variables beyond culture (e.g. institutions; Fig. 2.1). The next sections further analyse the implications of cultural factors, religion, and corruption in Latin America.

10.3.1 The Cultural Influence of Religion in Latin America

10.3.1.1 Corruption in Latin America

Some Latin American cultural characteristics prone to corruption are corporatism, authoritarianism, centralism, formalism (double standards), particularism (allegiance within an inner circle), and the dispensing of favours expected of certain roles (Nef, 2001, pp. 159–174). Therefore, corruption and culture are associated in Latin America as an ethical problem arising from society’s moral deficiency where traditional values persist (Uildriks, 2009, p. 9).

Hofstede (2001) reached similar conclusions after making a first empirical, quantitative approach to exploring the differences in thinking and social behaviours across 72 countries (using 116,000 questionnaires distributed across IBM, the multinational enterprise). Notwithstanding fierce criticism of the representativeness of the samples and of the categories utilised for analysis, Hofstede’s pioneering work provides a numerical glimpse of cultural variables in relation to institutions and prosperity. The author’s results were extrapolated, then generalised in six “cultural dimensions” (Hofstede, 2001).

One of the six dimensions used by Hofstede is the “Power Distance Index” (PDI). PDI is the extent to which the least influential individuals in a society expect and accept an unequal distribution of power (Hofstede, 2014). According to the PDI index, most Latin American countries present high scores, contrary to the low PDI scores in North American and North European countries. Table 10.1 summarises the consequences of different PDI scores for political systems, religious life, and organisations, among others (Hofstede, 2001).

As shown, institutionalised religion and the state have established hierarchical power relations in Latin America, thus a high-power distance may be expected on this continent. In contrast, after the Reformation, the institutional disbanding of Roman Catholicism in Northern Europe and the non-institutionalisation of religion in North America led to more social equality.

Table 10.1 Different Power Distance Index (PDI) and its consequences for social and political systems, religious life, and organisations (adapted from Hofstede, 2001)^a

	High PDI scores (Latin American countries)	Low PDI scores (North American and North European countries)
Type of government	Autocratic or oligarchic	Pluralist governments based on the outcome of majority votes
Government stability	Sudden changes (instability)	Stable governments stressing equality
Political spectrum	Polarisation between left and right with a weak centre	Political parties tend to occupy the centre
Tax system	Tax system protects the wealthy	Tax system aims to redistribute wealth
Religion	Success of religions stresses stratification (hierarchical)	Success of religions stresses equality
Theories about society	Elitist (Machiavelli, Mosca, Pareto)	Pluralist (More, Marx, Weber)

^aNote: PDI provided information for only less than 20 observations for the 65 countries analysed here. Furthermore, PDI overlaps with other proxies of culture and institutions (Volonté, 2015). Therefore, I excluded the PDI index from analysis due to lack of data and risk of endogeneity, and no results were obtained from this variable

10.3.1.2 The Divorce Between Law, Social Norms, and Morals in Latin America

Various factors—corruption, crime, violence, and institutions’ loss of prestige—account for the systematic divorce between law, social norms, and morals in most Latin American countries (Mockus et al., 2012).

Table 10.2 shows the respective regulatory systems (divorced in most Latin American countries). The three columns frame the three regulatory systems (law, social norms, and personal morals). The behavioural motivation mechanisms are deployed in the two rows, depending on whether they are positive (incentives above) or associated with negative reasons or punishments (penalties below). Mockus’ (2012) conceptual proposal shows that rather than abiding by a single regulatory system, humans are subject to three interacting systems. Such interplay can be harmonic (e.g. in northern Europe) or may generate multiple shocks (as in Latin America) (Mockus et al., 2012, p. 7).

Arruñada (2010) coincides with a similar distinction of these three regulatory systems, which he refers to as “enforcement mechanisms” (parties) (Table 10.2). The author describes that under “third-party” enforcement, specialised authorities such as government rulers, prosecutors, and public forces check community members’ behaviour and discipline those who break the laws. In turn, enforcement by a “second party” depends on sanctions and verifications by the party who bears the brunt of the violation’s repercussions. Thus, peers in groups are second parties in economic exchanges, and they may also sanction non-compliant partners by various means, such as humiliation, bullying, ostracising, or even deprivation. Finally, through the “first party” enforcement mechanism, human beings sanction

Table 10.2 Behaviour regulation mechanisms

<i>Carrots and sticks</i> (Mockus et al., 2012):	± <i>Laws</i>	±± <i>Social norms</i>	±±± <i>Personal moral standards</i>
<i>Enforcement mechanisms</i> (Arruñada, 2010):	<i>Third party</i>	<i>Second party</i>	<i>First party</i>
(+) Incentive (carrots)	Admiration or respect for the law (or recognising the importance of fulfilling it)	Admiration and social recognition (trust—reputation)	Spiritual or self-gratification of conscience (peace of mind)
(−) Penalty (sticks)	Fear of legal sanction	Fear of shame or social rejection	Fear of damnation or guilt

(Adapted from Mockus et al., 2012, p. 7; Arruñada, 2010, p. 892)

themselves with psychological compensations. Accordingly, individuals determine their actions in response to their understanding of a moral code, which also contains many essential economic preferences, such as thriftiness and hard work. In Christianity, concepts such as “salvation” and “everlasting life” fall into this “first party” category of regulatory mechanisms (Arruñada, 2010, p. 892).

For Arruñada, religion directly influences personal moral standards, as well as less clearly influencing social norms and law. For Mockus, law, culture, and morality tend to be congruent in ideal democratic societies. Culture is more demanding than law, and morality is more demanding than culture. The behaviours valid in light of individual morality usually enjoy social approval, although the opposite is not always true. In turn, what is culturally approved is usually legally allowed, although some acceptable legal behaviour is rejected for cultural reasons (Mockus, 2001, p. 3).

In contrast, the divorce from these normative systems occurs in most Latin American countries and applies to corruption and all forms of illegal behaviour (at times even extending to violence). A typical and extreme example is that the right to life is a fundamental right upheld in all Latin American constitutions. However, social organisations (or cultural groups) intent on eradicating the fundamental respect for another person’s life have proliferated in Latin America. For such groups, it often becomes even necessary to demonstrate that “you are capable” or “brave enough” to take another person’s life so as to gain greater respect or stronger group affiliation. This thinking needs to be understood in terms of the divorce of law and culture. It can, however, also be analysed in terms of a divorce between morality and culture. It is also possible that due to fear, recognition, or shame an individual ends up accepting certain group rules even if these go against one’s conscience (e.g. “I prefer not to be considered a ‘snitch’ even though I know I am doing something with which I morally disagree”) (Mockus et al., 2012, p. 6).

In sum, individuals not only respond to the coercive power of the law but, much more stalwartly, they also obey their cultural and moral principles (Mockus et al., 2012, p. 7). Historically, the Roman Catholic Church has influenced the three regulatory systems in Latin America. Thus, a negative influence on the coherence

of these systems may be expected when considering Catholic “relativist morals” (Sect. 10.4.1) and restrictive concordats and corporatist legal instruments (Sect. 8.3.4.6).¹ In contrast, the application of the Biblical Decalogue principles in the legal systems of historically Protestant countries (Sect. 8.3.4) introduced coherent moral, social, and legal accountability standards towards God and the neighbour (Fig. 8.4). The previous discussion justifies reviewing the distinct theologies of historical Protestantism and Roman Catholicism as the root-cause of their differences (see below).

10.4 Roman Catholic and Protestant Theologies, and Corruption/Prosperity (1), (3), (6)

The following sections examine the influence of religion in terms of theological approaches within Roman Catholicism, then explore the same within Protestantism.

10.4.1 Roman Catholic Theology and Political Culture

10.4.1.1 Roman Catholic Theology

Selling (2018) explains Roman Catholic theological ethics in terms of personal intention, that is, good (“virtues”) versus evil (“vices”). This Roman Catholic notion derives from its traditional recognition of four “cardinal virtues” established by Greek philosophy and by the three “theological virtues” of Paul’s Epistles. Thus, Greek philosophy (especially Aristotelian) once again carries more weight than Scriptural “virtues”, of which there are only three (as formulated in the New Testament), (see Sects. 8.2.1.1, 8.3.4.1, 8.3.5, and 9.1.1). Therefore, Roman Catholicism acknowledges as “virtue” the Aristotelian “non-absolute” and “mean” relative point between two extremes (Selling, 2018, p. 9). As such, “good and evil” depend on analysing specific acts, circumstances, and intentions as harmful or beneficial for each person. Accordingly, no “ruling” moral standard would be adequate (not even the Scriptures):

Even clear commandments, such as “thou shalt not kill” admit of exceptions that have been enshrined in [Catholic] church teaching for centuries (Selling, 2018, p. 8).²

Selling (2018) acknowledges that Roman Catholicism “does not subscribe to the vast majority” of the laws of Judaism (p. 10). In other words, Roman Catholicism

¹Note: I do not define specific variables for this divorce of mechanisms, neither in regression analysis nor in QCA models. However, *legal origin*, *concordats*, and *population adherents* may serve as proxies, and are therefore included in the empirical setting (Chap. 16 and Part VI).

²Joseph Selling is Emeritus Professor of Moral Theology at Catholic University Leuven. He is also the author of the book “Reframing Catholic Theological Ethics” (Oxford University Press, 2016).

does not endorse most Old Testament laws that Jesus and the Apostles, as Jews, followed (Bruce, 2007). Moreover, the moral law that Catholicism explicitly teaches from the Old Testament’s Decalogue is elaborated with the help of supplementary meanings through a “natural law reasoning” (Selling, 2018, p. 10). Consequently, the Catholic Decalogue diverges from the original books (King James Bible, 1769, Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5), which were “written with the finger of God” (King James Bible, 1769, Exodus 31: 18; Deuteronomy 9: 10). The wording of the Ten Commandments, moreover, even varies in Catholic Catechisms of different languages beyond their translation (Fig. 10.1).

	A	B	C
	The Ten Commandments (<i>King James Bible</i> , 1769, Exodus 20, 1-17)	Catholic Catechetical Formula in English	Roman Catholic Catechism in Spanish (author’s translation)
1	And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.	1. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.	1. You shall love God above all things. (<i>Amarás a Dios sobre todas las cosas</i>).
2	Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.	...? (<i>Commandment eliminated from the Roman Catholic Catechism</i>)	...? (<i>Commandment eliminated from the Roman Catholic Catechism</i>)
3	Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.	2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.	2. You shall not take God’s name in vain. (<i>No tomarás el nombre de Dios en vano</i>).
4	Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.	3. Remember to keep holy the LORD’S Day.	3. You shall sanctify the feasts (holidays). (<i>Sanctificarás las fiestas</i>).
5	Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.	4. Honor your father and your mother.	4. Honor your father and your mother. (<i>Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre</i>).
6	Thou shalt not kill.	5. You shall not kill.	5. You shall not kill. (<i>No matarás</i>).
7	Thou shalt not commit adultery.	6. You shall not commit adultery.	6. You shall not commit impure acts. (<i>No cometerás actos impuros</i>).
8	Thou shalt not steal.	7. You shall not steal.	7. You shall not steal. (<i>No hurtarás</i>).
9	Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.	8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	8. You shall not say false testimony or lie. (<i>No dirás falso testimonio ni mentirás</i>).
10	Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s.	9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.	9. You shall not consent impure thoughts or desires. (<i>No consentirás pensamientos ni deseos impuros</i>).
		10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.	10. You shall not covet the property of others. (<i>No codiciarás los bienes ajenos</i>).

Note: Author’s highlighting and emphases

Fig. 10.1 The Bible’s Decalogue compared with the Decalogue of Roman Catechism (English and Spanish) (adapted from A) The Holy Bible. The Authorised (King James) Version. Cambridge Edition: (1769); (B) Catechism of the Catholic Church—The Ten Commandments (Vatican, 2018); (C) Catecismo de la Doctrina Cristiana (Comisión Episcopal de Enseñanza de Madrid, 1962, pp. 6–7)). Note: Author’s highlighting and emphases

Figure 10.1 shows the pronounced differences between the Decalogue of the Holy Scriptures (A) and the Roman Catholic Catechism in Spanish (C). The Decalogue of the Roman Catholic Catechism in English (B) stands between the Scriptures and the Spanish Catechism. The Roman Catholic Catechism contains fundamental alterations in the First Table of the Commandments (the first four Commandments relative to loving God; see and compare with Fig. 8.4). The Second Table (concerning loving one's neighbour) remains relatively similar with some minor changes.

While the First Commandment concerns monotheism (A and B), in (C) the wording is completely different, bringing into play other related Biblical ordinance but not the original (Figs. 8.4 and 10.1). Similarly, the Second Commandment of the Decalogue (to make no graven image) is arbitrarily removed from the Roman Catechism (B and C). This makes sense when considering the core practice of venerating images and icons in Roman Catholicism. Such reverence is common to different religious systems (e.g. Babylon, Egypt, Rome); in contrast, however, the Holy Bible condemns it as idolatry (Fig. 8.4).

While the Third Commandment remains relatively similar, the Fourth Commandment varies significantly in A, B, and C. In A, it mentions keeping the Sabbath (Saturday). In B, it refers to the LORD's Day (which is open to interpretation, i.e. Sunday Mass), and in C to "sanctifying the festivals". The three variants differ noticeably, as a result of the interplay between Jewish (Sabbath) and pagan factors (sun worshipping: Sunday) in early Christianity (Bacchiocchi, 1977).

The wording of the other commandments has remained similar, some minor changes aside. Nonetheless, the Roman Catechism contains several articles that further relativise the application of the Commandments, for instance:

Regarding the Ninth Commandment:

The gravity of a lie is measured against the nature of the truth it deforms, the circumstances, the intentions of the one who lies, and the harm suffered by its victims. If a lie in itself only constitutes a venial sin, it becomes mortal when it does grave injury to the virtues of justice and charity (2484, Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican, 2018).

However, the Holy Bible does not mention the existence of "venial sins" such as "soft lies". On the contrary, Jesus said:

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (King James Bible, 1769, Matthew 5:37).

Here is another example of the relativisation of the Sixth Commandment in the Roman Catechism:

The prohibition of murder does not abrogate the right to render an unjust aggressor unable to inflict harm. Legitimate defense is a grave duty for whoever is responsible for the lives of others or the common good (2321, Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican, 2018).

Here, too, the Scriptures state that Jesus commanded the opposite:

but I say unto you, *That ye resist not evil*: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you* (King James Bible, 1769, Matthew 5:39–44; my italics).

Furthermore, meaningful variations on content and wording are also evident in the English and Spanish versions of the Roman Catechism. The Roman Church-State is Catholic. Although this means it is “universal”, its Commandments are taught differently in English-speaking (predominantly Protestant) contexts than in Spanish-speaking (predominantly Roman Catholic) ones. Similar differences in wording can also be found in the Catechism’s version of the Decalogue in other languages (e.g. compare German with Portuguese or French versions). Since the Catechism eliminated the Second Commandment, the Ninth Commandment was divided in two (thus creating two new Commandments).

10.4.1.1.1 Roman Catholic Theology in Practice

According to Arruñada (2010), Roman Catholicism favours varied moral values, given the content of its moral code and primarily due to its methods of enforcement (p. 895). The double or “diverse moral standards” in Roman Catholicism encourage a “selective charity”, thus favouring friends and relatives (*familialism*) over strangers. Regarding enforcement, the “salvation by works” and “purgatory-based” theologies, along with the private confession of sins to a priest, imply heterogeneous subjective moral standards for judging individuals according to the clergy’s subjectivity and individual circumstances. In other words, moral norms are adapted according to individual circumstances, and descend from medieval “casuistry” (Arruñada, 2010, p. 895). Moreover, this concurs entirely with the Aristotelian “non-absolute” and “mean” relative point defining “good” or “bad”. Therefore, the various predicted statistical results could be expected (see Sect. 10.3).

Another widespread moral tradition refers to the duality between official Catholic discourse and de facto practice. Examples include the constant scandalous abuse of children by priests. For instance, the recent exhaustive Pennsylvania report found that the Roman Catholic hierarchy covered-up for more than 300 priests who had abused over 1000 children in Pennsylvania alone. Although the leaders of the Catholic Church publicly condemn child abuse, in practice the Church hierarchy systematically covers up such scandals (Grand Jury of Pennsylvania, 2018) (see Sect. 8.3.3.2).

10.4.1.2 Roman Catholic Political Culture

Political culture is a system of principles, values, expressive representations, and empirical views that describe the context within which political activity occurs (Verba, 1965, p. 513). *Familialism* and the predominance of the male breadwinner model are two values propagated by Catholic political parties (Esping-Andersen,

1996; Van Kersbergen, 1995). Catholic political culture “[. . .] is transmitted mainly through nationwide institutions, to the population of a society as a whole—even to those who have little or no contact to religious institutions” (Inglehart & Baker, 2000, p. 36; Emmenegger, 2011, p. 339). Therefore, the social effect of Roman Catholicism does not depend on religiosity (Esping-Andersen, 1996, p. 66; Figueroa, 2016).

Various scholars, including Arruñada (2010), Lambsdorff (2006), and Treisman (2000), have analysed the adverse consequences of *familialism* on corruption. Societies are perceived as less corrupt when impersonal values are more important than particularistic or family values (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 19). Thus, the adverse impact of Roman Catholicism on corruption stems mainly from the institution. The Roman Church-State transmits values such as the acceptance of hierarchy, *familialism*, double standards, and relativism to the population via education, for instance. Moreover, the pressure to compete with Protestantism has often forced the Catholic Church to strategically adopt more pro-social and more democratic postures in several countries (Gill 1998, 2013; Anderson, 2007; Woodberry, 2012; Wilde et al., 2010) (see Sect. 8.2.1.2). The next two sections briefly consider two current aspects of Roman Catholic theology: ecumenism and liberation theology.

10.4.1.3 Ecumenism: All Roads Lead to Rome

Ecumenism and its adjective, *ecumenical*, are defined as “promoting or tending toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation”; “of, relating to, or representing the whole of a body of churches”; and “worldwide or general in extent, influence, or application” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Etymologically, the term derives from Greek *Oikos*, “home”. This root is the same for concepts such as *Oikos-logos*: ecology (the study of home) or *Oikos-nomos*: economy (the administration of home). Sixteenth-century late Latin understood “oecumenical or ecumenical” as “belonging to the universal [Catholic] Church”. One Roman Catholic deacon and university professor interviewed for this study termed ecumenism as “a process of bringing the separated brethren from the Catholic Church (Protestants, among others) back ‘home’”.

However, as Engelhardt (2007) has noted:

Contemporary Christians are separated by foundationally disparate understandings of Christianity itself. Christians do not share one theology, much less a common understanding of the significance of sin, suffering, disease, and death. These foundational disagreements not only stand as impediments to an intellectually defensible ecumenism, but they also form the underpinnings of major disputes in the culture wars. . . (p. 25).

Yet, the “ecumenical movement” fosters unity among Christians according to opportune occasions and the needs of the Roman Church-State. These include efforts to eliminate words that complicate mutual relations between denominations and to promote dialogue between competent experts from different churches and communities (Abbott, 1989). According to the Jesuit Walter Abbott, as the challenges of honing ecclesiastical communion are progressively resolved, the Catholic Church

expects all Christians to be reunited in a single “Eucharistic” celebration, into a unity which, for him, rests solely within the Roman Church (Abbott, 1989, pp. 347–348).

The Christian desire for unity is indeed founded on the Scriptures (King James Bible, 1769, John 17:11). However, the downscaling to a Christendom centred exclusively on the Roman Catholic Church-State reflects a nostalgia for a monopolistic medieval Church (Agnew, 2010). This notion was expressed by Joseph Ratzinger (the former Pope Benedict XVI) when he referred to the medieval continuum from the Roman Empire to the “Holy” Roman Empire as “European identity” (Ratzinger & Pera, 2006; Agnew, 2010). For Ratzinger, the Christendom “crisis” began with what he calls “Germanic Protestantism”. Hence, the Protestant Reformation forcefully broke the continuity of the (Catholic) European identity and subordinated the power of the Church to the state, thus creating what he calls “unholy”/Catholic nation-states (Ibid). The Roman Church-State, longing to return to the monopolistic medieval Church, has therefore incessantly sought to bring back “home” the “separated brethren”.

The efforts of Roman Catholicism to initiate and maintain such an ecumenical enterprise have been undeniably successful worldwide. The Encyclical *Dignitatis Humanae* has fostered ecumenical relations after Vatican II (Cook, 2012, p. 33). Although Vatican II has promoted reconciliation attitudes towards other religions, it has not “marked a huge disruption in the beliefs and practices of the [Catholic] Church” (Agnew, 2010, p. 48). In turn, historical principles (i.e. *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*) that initially gave rise to Protestantism—meaning literally to *Protest* against Rome’s tyranny and demagoguery—have evidently capitulated today in many Protestant denominations. The following cases exemplify this phenomenon that has facilitated ecumenical relations.

Lutheranism

Roman Catholicism and the Lutheran Church have publicly and progressively agreed on several critical issues in numerous documents (i.e. Joint Declarations) with statements such as:

This Declaration on the Way (In Via) to unity seeks to make more visible the unity we share by gathering together agreements reached on issues of church, ministry, and eucharist. This Declaration, [...] is neither at the beginning nor the end of the journey toward unity (Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, 2015, p. 1).

Particularly remarkable is the Report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity—“From Conflict to Communion”—on the occasion of the Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of 500 years of the Reformation in 2017. Through this joint official report, the Lutheran Church has relinquished various fundamental principles that originated five centuries ago with Martin Luther, among others the *Sola Scriptura*. Lutherans now accept statements previously inconceivable such as “The Bishop of Rome by virtue of his office is ‘pastor of the whole Church’” (LG 22 as cited in LWF & PCPCU, 2013, p. 69). Likewise, in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (June 1998), Roman Catholic and Lutheran scholars reached a consensus on the question: How is one saved? This formerly dissenting view was crucial to the Protestant Reformation—i.e. salvation

by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone (*Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*), instead of “salvation by the works” of Catholicism (Cook, 2012, p. 34; Arruñada, 2010). Furthermore, Bergoglio’s (aka “Pope Francis”) visit to Sweden in 2016, to commemorate the 499th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation (Sweden, once a strongly Lutheran country and now secularised), was far more than simply a milestone in Catholicism’s efforts to regain its “separated brethren”.

Anglicanism

The Anglican Church’s frequent reference to “the middle way between Protestantism and Catholicism” is another important example of the Protestant “homecoming”. Anglican theology and practices have moved ever closer to Roman Catholicism (Abram, 2018; Doe, 2010, p. 243; Doe & Sandberg, 2010). In 2011, for instance, the Roman Catholic Church-State received seven Anglican priests and 300 members from six congregations. Several others are rapidly progressing towards full communion with Rome (Cook, 2012, p. 33).

Pentecostalism

The ecumenical contacts between the Neo-Pentecostal movement and the charismatic Catholic movement are surprisingly close. In Latin America and beyond, the classical topics of controversial theology between Catholicism and Protestantism, and between liberalism and fundamentalism, are no longer obstacles for theological re-annexation. In fact, confessional boundaries are no longer obeyed (especially in Protestantism) in practising its faith (Schäfer, 1997).

Mainline Protestantism

Mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics now share common denominators and jointly oppose secularism. Issues such “as homosexual marriages, abortion, and religion in the public square have proved to be common ground for both groups” (Cook, 2012 p. 34; Miller, 2012, 2017; Colson & Neuhaus, 1995).

Mainline Protestantism (and in general, secular societies) are “amnesiac societies” (Hervieu-Léger, 1993) since “they are less and less capable of maintaining the memory that lies at the heart of their religious existence” (Hervieu-Léger, 1999, p. 80). These features are such neither because societies are increasingly rational nor because they have “found satisfactory alternatives to the traditional forms of religion so crucial in their historical formation” (Hervieu-Léger, 1999, p. 80).

Engelhardt (2007) explains the capitulation of principles in Protestantism as a result of the secularising forces of surrounding societies. For the author, secularisation has debilitated “the historic, zealous commitment of the particular faiths to their particular founding doctrines, thus undermining the theological barriers to intercommunion” (p. 26). Popovich, an Orthodox author, has described this blend of secular thought and religious authority in the following terms:

Ecumenism is the common name for the pseudo-Christianity of the pseudo-Churches of Western Europe. Within it is the heart of European humanism, with Papism as its head (Popovich, 1994, p. 169).

Ecumenism and Religious Freedom

The name “Protestants” derives from the protestation against the papal proposition that its hierarchy and *status quo* should be reestablished in areas where the Edict of Speyer (1526) had already enforced religious freedom. The papacy at the Diet of Speyer II (1529) postulated, among others, the majority rule in matters of faith, the banishment of the Zwinglians, and death-punishment to Anabaptists. The opposition of the reformed princes to the papal proposals was crucial to the success of the Reformation, the liberties of Germany, and the rights of conscience (Wolgast, 1996; Cook, 2012; D’Aubigne, 1862). As Wolgast (1996) noted,

The protestation received legal status through the appeal that the Protestant princes and imperial cities lodged before two notaries in Speyer on 25 April, 1529. [...] in 1529 the individual conscience was established for the first time as a norm of decisions not to be outvoted in political negotiations. Against the positive law was set the conformity of the evangelical teachings to the scriptures; the legal act of protestation presupposed a religious decision (Wolgast, 1996, 4: p. 104).

Figure 10.2 presents parallels between Roman Catholic concepts of religious freedom at Diet of Speyer II (1529) and *Dignitatis Humanae* of Vatican II (1965), as well as the Protestant definition at the protestation of Speyer.

After analysing several case studies and comparing Catholic concepts of religious freedom of Diet of Speyer II (1529) and *Dignitatis Humanae* of Vatican II (1965) (See Fig. 10.2), Cook concluded:

... the Catholic Church has not changed its hegemonic nature, only its method of achieving hegemony. Additionally, it strongly suggests that the [Catholic] Church’s efforts to arrest and counteract the Protestant Reformation (and any other religion) are far from buried in the past (Cook, 2012, p. 159).

The Protestant definition at the protestation of Speyer concurs with Martin Luther’s assertion: “I will preach it, teach it, write it, but I will constrain no man by force, for faith must come freely without compulsion”.³ However, not all strands

Catholic Definition of Religious Freedom	Diet of Speyer II, 1529	Protestants not forced to renounce faith	No propagation of non-Catholic teachings	Catholic jurisdictional authority retained	Celebration of Mass in Lutheran territory	No Catholic allowed to convert	Suspension of force or coercion
	<i>Dignitatis Humanae</i> of Vatican II (1965)	Does not deny or endorse religious plurality	Does not authorise erroneous teaching	Catholic jurisdictional authority implicit	<i>Libertas ecclesiastica</i> to fulfill [Catholic] mission	No Catholic conversions allowed	Immunity from coercion as civil right
Protestant Definition of Religious Freedom	Protestation of Speyer, 1529	Liberty to follow one’s convictions	Convictions based on God’s Word	Majority not to rule over minorities	Each is to respect the other	Rights of all guaranteed by law	No coercion

Fig. 10.2 Differences between Protestant and Catholic concepts of religious freedom (adapted from Cook, 2012, pp. 158–159)

³Martin Luther, “The First Sermon, March 9, 1522, Incovait Sunday,” (as cited in Tappert, 2017, p. 234).

of Protestantism had equally advocated this principle of religious freedom, especially when they acted as state religions and became dominant, magisterial, and conformist. Thus, Protestant dissenters (e.g. Anabaptists) have historically suffered persecution from both Roman Catholic and magisterial Protestant churches (Miller, 2012). As a nineteenth-century Protestant wrote:

Whenever the church has obtained secular power, she has employed it to punish dissent from her doctrines. Protestant churches that have followed in the steps of Rome by forming alliance with worldly powers have manifested a similar desire to restrict liberty of conscience. An example of this is given in the long-continued persecution of dissenters by the Church of England. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thousands of nonconformist ministers were forced to flee from their churches, and many, both of pastors and people, were subjected to fine, imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom (White, 1888, p. 443).

Yet, “the dissenting Protestant view of a separated church and state, always a minority position in England and the rest of Europe, and even in early colonial America, became the dominant position in the early [American] republic” (Miller, 2012, p. xviii). Nevertheless, barriers once erected by Protestantism against ecumenism have fallen in light of Roman Catholicism advocating religious freedom for all groups in pluralistic (Protestant) societies (Cook, 2012, p. 50). However, the same religious freedom is denied to “non-Catholics in political communities where Catholics are in the majority” (Pavan, 1989, pp. 4,51). Regarding these variations in the Roman Church’s pastoral strategy worldwide, Gill (1998) observes that the Catholic clergy lobby hard for religious freedom where Catholics are a minority and unhindered by existing Church bureaucracies, such as in Russia, certain countries in Asia, and Africa. In contrast, bishops actively advocate for legislation that limits religious freedom in Latin America and Poland, where the Catholic Church is the predominant religious actor. This phenomenon concurs with the assumption of parishioner maximisation, which dictates that if a church is on the defensive, its leaders will try to limit religious liberty. In turn, when a church is increasingly expanding, it will pursue legislation that promotes religious freedom (Gill, 2013, pp. 59, 227).

Similarly, Dowling, referring to such a Machiavelism, observed nearly two centuries ago:

There is one kind of Romanism to be exhibited in Protestant lands, and another and a widely different in Italy, Spain and other popish lands, where it reigns in its glory (Dowling, 1853, p. 626).

Consequently, it is not surprising that despite ecumenical discussions, tension still exists between Protestants and Catholics (Cook, 2012). On the one side, the Roman Catholic claim to absoluteness has always been regarded as a scandal and an offence (Pauwels, 1963, p. 585). On the other, some small dissenting Protestant denominations (so-called sects) are reluctant to accept Roman Catholic hegemony (see the biblical reasons discussed in Sect. 10.4.2.1) (Miller, 2012, 2017; Cook, 2012; Taggart, 1998). After all, scepticism towards Rome is evident, as:

Historically, the [Catholic] Church has sought to expand its resources and power in many countries. It has sought to maximize its wealth and resources and to enact laws and policies

that protect it against competitors such as Protestant Christianity and other faiths (Manuel et al., 2006, p. 4).

Peace among religious denominations is something which is undeniably desirable. However, there is a need for caution when considering that Protestant denominations have mostly relinquished their founding principles, while “Rome never changes” as per the Italian saying. Despite the progress after Vatican II (see Sect. 8.2.1.2), Roman Catholicism has not markedly altered its beliefs and practices (Agnew, 2010, p. 48) or its institutional founding principles (i.e. Canon Law) since medieval times (O’Reilly & Chalmers, 2014). The political repercussions of an ecumenism in “Rome terms” are beyond its theological or religious implications. History warns of the long medieval tyranny of a fused state and Church under the Aristotelian “government by one person” and its relativistic morals, keeping the masses ignorant. Breaking such a *status quo* carried a cost of countless wars and human lives (e.g. the Thirty Years’ War that led to Westphalian order) (Snyder, 2011; Agnew, 2010; Cook, 2012; Witte, 2002; Berman, 2003). Evidently, since Vatican II Roman Catholicism has become more tolerant, and thus “Europe has become ever more pluralistic religiously and thus ever less likely to be squeezed back into a singular Catholic mold” (Agnew, 2010, p. 52). Yet, the author warns:

Surely the trend towards a medieval Church redux is something about which we all should be concerned, not least because states and other agencies will undoubtedly find themselves recruited into one side or another in new “religious wars,” both rhetorical and actual (Agnew, 2010, p. 56).

10.4.1.4 Liberation Theology: A Top-Down Movement

Among others, Protestantism, modernity, secular unions, and left-wing political groups increasingly began to threaten the hegemony of the Roman Church-State in Latin America and beyond. These developments made the Roman Church-State realise (at the beginning of the twentieth century) that it had overestimated its strong popular influence. Accordingly, it has endeavoured to build a “New Christendom” in Latin America since the early 1930s (Dussel, 1976; Vekemans 1976 as cited in Smith, 1991). Throughout, the “New Christendom” has served as a strategy to reassure the establishment of Roman Catholicism as the major cultural and institutional influence in modernising Latin America (Smith, 1991). As part of this strategy, the Roman Church-State took the side of “modernity”, ‘science’, and “progress” for the first time in history (Richard 1987 as cited in Smith, 1991).

Accordingly, “Catholic social teachings” and the innovations of Vatican II in the 1960s have concurred with this strategy. Other insurgent developments, including the rise of Marxism, the experience of Camilo Torres, and the Cuban revolution, brought forth a “progressive wing” of Roman Catholicism (Levine, 1981). Catholic theologians, such as Gutiérrez (1973), identified dependency theory, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in Latin America (see Sect. 5.4), as key to understanding the region’s socio-economic situation (Drexler-Dreis, 2017).

Accordingly, Catholic liberation theologians came to believe that the Latin America's main problem was its dependency on dominant capitalistic oppressors, which would be solved through "liberation" rather than more "development" (Smith, 1991, p. 237). The foundational episode of liberation theology took place during the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), held in Medellín, Colombia in 1968. This theology is an "elite-initiated" revitalisation movement aiming to force "redirections in the strategies and resources" within established institutions (Smith, 1991, p. 234).

Gutiérrez is considered the "father of the Liberation Theology". According to Gutiérrez, the aim of liberation theology goes beyond improving living conditions: it consists of a drastic structural shift, a lasting cultural revolution, and a social transformation; an ongoing, never-ending development of a *new man*, a new way to be an individual (Gutiérrez, 1973, p. 880). Gutiérrez tried to reconcile the Marxist ideal of an earthly, egalitarian society through revolution or insurgence with the heavenly salvation of the soul in Christian terms. These two notions are exegetically incompatible when comparing the use of violence as a means to achieve social ends with the application of biblical principles, such as those contained in the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount (see Sects. 8.3.4 and 10.4.1). Furthermore, a hypothetical communist synthesis has proven not to produce desirable social results (see Sect. 8.3.2; Fig. 8.3 and Table 8.2; Fig. 16.4; Truth Table 11 in Appendix 4.2).

Scheper-Hughes and Scheper (2015) observe that liberation theology was a significant and noticeable social movement in the 1970s and 1980s, which realigned several Catholic clergy members and nuns who had favoured the oppressed during several South American military dictatorships and Central American civil wars. Liberation theologians expanded on their message at the 1968 Medellín Conference of Latin American Bishops, during which the bishops committed to a new social/spiritual compact known as a "preferential option for the poor". This message urged the Latin American Roman Church to break away from its imperialist origins and favouritism for landlords, industrialists, and power elites. However, as the authors stress, liberation theology *never* became the mainstream or hegemonic Catholic theology in Latin America (Scheper-Hughes & Scheper, 2015, pp. 13–14). Regarding its political implications, liberation theology did not draw out what a new society would be like, except for a few examples of socialism. Furthermore, Vatican loyalists have successively replaced progressive bishops in Latin America since the 1990s (Berryman, 2020).

As liberation theology has not been dominant in the Latin American Roman Church, its institutional impact is even less pronounced in the global Catholic Church-State. It is of particular importance that liberation theology has not produced changes in the principles of canon law (although it could have influenced its interpretation) (C. Salinas, personal communication, April 27, 2020; J. Müller, personal communication, March 27, 2020). Gill (1998) notes that the emergence of Catholic scholars proclaiming a new liberation theology shocked the Church's higher echelons (p. 177). Likewise, Scheper-Hughes & Scheper's observation on the pledges of the Catholic hierarchy is subtly different from Gill (1998)'s

mixed-methods empirical analysis based on several Latin American cases. For Gill, more than four centuries of monopolistic hegemony of the Catholic Church in Latin America resulted in a lack of commitment to pastoral issues and a profound tendency to appease the political establishment in exchange for patronage and legislative approval for Church teachings. Yet, Catholic hierarchs had to rethink their political and pastoral strategies when religious rivals started gaining dramatic spiritual terrain in the weakest segments of several Latin American countries, starting in the 1930s. Thus, the Catholic hierarchy introduced a pastoral policy of a “preferential option for the poor”, during which competition for the souls of the disadvantaged became intense. This new pastoral strategy of the Roman Church clashed with military and authoritarian regimes that followed detrimental policies to the needy. Thus, when facing increasing religious competition, Church hierarchs abandoned their conventional coalition with the political establishment and rejected authoritarianism to sustain a credible commitment to helping the vulnerable. Human rights groups also contributed funds to this opposition, reducing the episcopacy’s dependence on the state. However, when there was little competition, bishops tended to disregard the “preferential option for the poor” to retain cordial ties with military rulers and maintain established privileges (Gill, 1998, p.71).

10.4.1.4.1 Marxism and Hegelian Dialectics in Liberation Theology

Catholic-Marxist alliances developed within the liberation theology movement quickly expanded across Latin America and beyond (Levine, 1981). Partly, due to such associations, the recalcitrant ultramontane Catholic wing (Rome, conservative bishops, and right-wing Latin American governments) have opposed liberation theology (Smith, 1991, p. 236).

To a large extent, liberation theology emerges from “Marxism’s influence” (Gutiérrez, 1973, p. 9). Fierro (1977) corroborated Gutiérrez’s views by arguing that this political theology results from the embodiment of historical materialism and dialectical logic into Western philosophy (Fierro, 1977, p. 2). Such Marxist dialectical materialism derives from Hegelian dialectics and idealism, which are based on the synthesis of opposites or contradictions (thesis–antithesis–synthesis) (Johnson, 2017, p. 157). Unconventionally applying Hegelian logic to understand the emergence of an “elite-initiated” movement like liberation theology might work as follows:

- (1) Thesis. *Status quo*. The corporatist, conservative hierarchies of the Roman Church-State join forces with right-wing governments to keep society oppressed (e.g. *Opus Dei*).
- (2) Antithesis. Liberation theologians use dependency theories to explain Latin America’s problems in terms of external causes (e.g. by blaming industrialised, Protestant countries). The “Option for the poor” is associated with left-wing stakeholders (e.g. some Jesuit priests—consistently loyal to the pope—or Dominicans involved in the insurgency).

- (3) Synthesis. The polarisation of society and escalating cycles of armed conflict (wars) are followed by peace negotiations in which the Roman Catholic Church-State serves as a mediator. *Final outcome: Maintenance of the status quo in any case (Roman Church-State hegemony).*

This example applies quite well to countries (e.g. Colombia) whose institutions are characterised by strong corporatist ideologies. In Colombia, the government has traditionally been associated with right-wing conservative forces and intransigent Roman Catholic ideologies (i.e. Vice-President Marta Ramírez and former President Álvaro Uribe among other high-ranking government officers have ties with *Opus Dei*). On the other hand, some Catholic priests were involved in the insurgency, for example, Camilo Torres and Manuel Pérez Martínez (in liberation theology-guerrilla groups like ELN). However, the Roman Catholic Church has also been directly involved as a mediator or conciliator in the Colombian armed conflict (i.e. priests like Dario Echeverri and Gabriel Izquierdo and bishops like Augusto Castro and Nel Beltrán). In the end, the Roman Catholic Church has been directly and indirectly involved on both sides of the conflict. As a result, the *status quo* has been maintained.

This example helps to understand that liberation theology is one strand of Roman Catholicism albeit not the principal one. In Latin America, mostly orthodox old pre-Vatican II views still prevail (Martin, 1999; Figueroa, 2016). Moreover, both wings of Roman Catholicism (right-wing corporatist and left-wing liberation theologians) conform to the Roman Church-State hierarchy (i.e. the papacy). For example, Gutiérrez was invited to the Vatican in 2015, despite Ratzinger's threat to excommunicate him in 1984 (Lamola, 2018).

The dialectic illustrated above suggests that it is doubtful whether liberation theology could lastingly affect Roman Catholic Canon law, for instance. At a practical level, the analyses proposed by liberation theologians (e.g. Gutiérrez, 1973; Boff, 1989) do not apply to everyday Catholic practice. Instead, the primary triggers of Catholic practice are mostly personal and local concerns (Martin, 1999, p. 41).

10.4.1.4.2 Liberation Theology and Protestantism

Religions evolve and, typically, the creation of different denominations is considered to be the product of doctrinal differences (Webster, 2019, p. 1125). Contrasting Scriptural interpretations, diverse paradigms, meanings, and other discrepancies have been the common denominator (Engelhardt, 2007) of Protestant schismogenesis as an ethnographic fact (Webster, 2019, p. 1125). Furthermore, Christian traditions have changed over time and vary among denominations, while the Scriptural texts have remained largely unaffected by time for centuries (i.e. King James or Martin Luther versions). Engelhardt (2007) observed a decisive influence of philosophy and secularism in this respect:

The mainline Christian churches of the West through importing philosophical rationality into their doing of theology over time transformed their theologies in terms of the demands of the secular culture. After all, if one borrows the logic or rationality of one's theology from philosophy, one will incrementally transform theology into the image and likeness of the surrounding secular culture, since philosophy always carries the mark of a particular age and culture (Engelhardt, 2007, p. 29).

Consequently, liberation theology has influenced Protestant theologians (e.g. Bonino, 1976) and especially some Pentecostal movements (Sepúlveda, 2009). Moreover, the religious experiences of Pentecostals and Catholic Charismatics are very similar (Self, 2009). Figure 10.3 presents the similarities and differences between some features of reading the Bible in historical and present-day currents of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

Current features of reading the Bible	1. Traditional Roman Catholicism (i.e. pre-Vatican II views valid until today)	2. Roman Catholic Liberation Theologians (i.e. CEC [Catholic ecclesial communities]). (1960s – today)	3. 16 th -19 th century mainline Protestantism (i.e. Lutheranism, Calvinism), and some current dissenting Protestant “sects”.	4. Current strand of most contemporary Protestants (e.g. Pentecostals, Neo-Pentecostals) ⁵
Theological understanding	Excessive sacralisation of some selected parts of the Gospel and complete disregard of others.	No exegesis but “eisegesis” (seeking a theological justification for social struggle).	Theological-scientific rationalist reading of the Scriptures.	Literal, uncritical, and commonly superficial exegesis.
Human capital building	Ordinary people receive no education to study the Scriptures.	Ordinary people receive little or no education to study the Scriptures.	Ordinary people receive proper education to study the Scriptures (i.e. commonly required for in-depth intertextual exegesis).	Ordinary people receive little or no education to study the Scriptures.
Bearer of the message	- Only enlightened clergy are able to read the Scriptures. - Common people are prevented direct access to the Scriptures.	Mainly priests and deacons.	“Priesthood of all believers.”	Mainly preachers, pastors, apostles.
Social emancipation objective	Maintenance of the political-religious <i>status quo</i> (e.g. Middle Ages)	Social revolution against oppressive political structures (e.g. government, capital) generally maintaining deference for the Roman Catholic hierarchy.	Liberation from the Roman Catholic Church-State and popish tyranny (regarded as “diabolical”). Generally, deference to government institutions.	Mostly apolitical or indifferent
Sources of understanding the Scriptures	Origenes, Aristotle, Aquinas	Origenes, Aristotle, Aquinas, Marx	<i>Sola Scriptura</i> intertextuality (i.e. Luther, Calvin)	Depends on denomination (i.e. some can adopt Origenes’ allegorical interpretations in combination with Lutheran principles)
Direction and impact of reading the Bible in the “earthly kingdom.”	No reading. Biblical message exclusively supports established dogmas.	Politicisation of the biblical message (from life to the Bible).	Transformational, cyclical (personal and social). Bidirectional (from the Bible to life and from life to the Bible).	Spiritualisation of the biblical message (from the Bible to life).

Fig. 10.3 Ways of reading the Bible in traditional Roman Catholicism, Liberation Theology (post-Vatican II), historical Protestantism, and Pentecostalism (adapted from Sepúlveda, 2009; Becker & Woessmann, 2009; Becker et al., 2016; McCleary, 2013; Witte, 2002; Woodberry, 2012)

The religious currents shown in Fig. 10.3 coexist today. However, each has prevailed more than others in different historical periods. For example, currents 1 and 3 (traditional Roman Catholicism and historical Protestantism) have been antagonists and dominant since the sixteenth century (even earlier in the case of Roman Catholicism). Currents 2 and 4 (Catholic Liberation theologians and Pentecostals) appeared in the second half of the twentieth century and share various features of understanding the Bible.

For many Catholic ecclesial and Pentecostal communities in Latin America, the Bible has long been the first contact with the printed word. Many people have even learned to read with the Bible, which has a deep meaning for those trapped in social and cultural exclusion (Sepúlveda, 2009).

However, vast differences exist when comparing Catholic ecclesial and Pentecostal communities with historical Protestantism (Köhrsen, 2017). First, what Catholic authors call “critical” Bible reading (Gutiérrez, 1973, p. 13) follows the same interpretative principles of traditional Roman Catholicism (i.e. the allegorical interpretation passed on by Origenes, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas). Thus, the Old Catholic dogmas are maintained based on superficial reading without either exegesis or proper consideration of intertextual factors.

The so-called critical reading of the Bible, advocated by liberation theologians, favours direct social and political revolution (including insurgence) (Gutiérrez, 1973, p. 69; Levine, 1981, p. 35). Saying that, revolution or insurgence illustrates the rejection of Christian Scriptural principles, such as the “love of one’s enemies” proclaimed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (King James Bible, 1769, Matthew 5: 38–48). In turn, the Scriptural principles rejected by liberation theologians formed the basis of Protestant legal revolutions in the past (e.g. German, Scandinavian, American; see Sect. 8.3.4 and Fig. 8.4). Therefore, the principles that Liberation theology seeks to implement in society concur more with the communist law tradition (in societies like Cuba) than with the Protestant revolutions (i.e. common law, German law, Scandinavian law) (see Sect. 8.3.2 and Fig. 8.3 and Table 8.2).

Another critical issue of comparison is the “liberation of what” proposed by the different currents. Liberation theologians advocate freeing societies from “sinful” “oppressive social, economic, and political structures” (Levine, 1981, p. 39). In light of dependency theory, this would mean, among others, liberation from colonial exploitation in Latin America (formerly from the Spanish crown and later from the foreign capital of Protestant countries (e.g. England, USA; see Gutiérrez, 1973; Galeano, 1971). However, dependency analysis disregards the hegemonic relations between the Roman Catholic Church-State and the states, or upholds these, or even praises them as positive (Galeano, 1971, p. 247) (see Sect. 5.4).

On balance, liberation theology is ahistorical (Lamola, 2018). It began as a top-down approach within the Roman Catholic hierarchy rather than a bottom-up initiative from the communities. It applies dependency theory to direct attention away from two millennia of Roman (and Catholic) hegemony towards Iberian

imperialism, and especially of Protestant countries (e.g. USA, UK). Moreover, it inspires the use of violence or rebellion as a means of resolving social inequality based on dubious and relativistic moral principles consistent with Number 2321 of the Roman Catholic Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican, 2018; see also Sect. 10.4.1).

In contrast, the ideology of historical Protestantism allowed the Reformers to identify the papacy as “the Man of Sin” (see Sect. 10.4.2.1 and 2 Thessalonians, King James Bible, 1769). Such identification was based on in-depth exegesis by historic Protestants, who applied the *Sola Scriptura* principle. Thus, only Jesus sets humankind free from bondage (King James Bible, 1769, John 8: 31–38). Rebellious means against governments should be avoided (King James Bible, 1769, 1 Timothy 2:1–2; 1 Peter 2:17; Romans 13:1). Therefore, the successive Protestant revolutions sought to eliminate the pervasive influence of the Roman Church-State in favour of power independent from Rome (at first by empowering the monarchies and then gradually also citizens; Sect. 8.3.4).

10.4.2 Protestant Theology

When acknowledging the robust systematic evidence on the underlying effect of religion on corruption, authors refer to this as “unfortunate” from a policy perspective (Woodruff, 2006, p. 121) or that it provides “little inspiration to reform” (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 17). However, when Martin Luther formulated his 95 theses, he was protesting against the rampant corruption and tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church five centuries ago. The resultant movement resumed and advanced the discontent for which the Waldensians, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Hus, and many others had previously been condemned, often sacrificing their lives. The Protestant Reformation sought to return and democratise the original teachings of the Bible, which rested on the *Sola Scriptura* principle, throughout Europe and beyond (Witte, 2002; Doe & Sandberg, 2010; Becker et al., 2016). As shown (Sects. 8.2.2 and 8.3.4), the Protestant reformations had various spillover effects, including the spread of democracy, liberalism, secularisation, and the formation of the modern sovereign state (Woodberry, 2012; Snyder, 2011; Agnew, 2010; Shah & Philpott, 2011; Philpott, 2001; Hurd, 2011; Berger, 1990; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Treisman, 2000).

Sola Scriptura implies that the Bible alone is a sufficient and infallible rule of life. Consequently, Protestants generally place a greater emphasis on one’s own relationship with God, while the Roman Catholic Church places a greater emphasis on priestly mediation (Gill, 1998, p. 90). *Sola Scriptura* means that the Holy Scriptures are the only and absolute standardising moral source of Christian principles (historical Protestantism), in contrast to Roman Catholic relativism (see Sect. 10.4.1). Therefore, Arruñada (2010) found that Protestants statistically exhibit a greater social ethos, which leads them to closely scrutinise one another’s actions, support

legal and political systems, and hold more consistent values (p. 890). Specifically, the *Sola Scriptura* principle enabled historical Protestants to hold more homogenous values, including a universal charity descending from the Gospel (instead of a selective one) (Arruñada, 2010). As Elisha Williams, the eighteenth-century American theologian and founder of Yale University, observed:

That the sacred scriptures are the alone rule of faith and practice to a Christian, all Protestants are agreed in, and must therefore inviolably maintain, that every Christian has a right of judging for himself what he is to believe and practice in religion according to that rule (Williams, 1998, p. 55).

The very Protestant characteristic of the freedom of conscience initiated several reformations in different countries (Berman, 2003), thus creating a broad range of successive diverse denominations (Sects. 8.3.4, 10.4.1.4.2, 10.4.2, and 10.4.3).

10.4.2.1 Theological Reasons for Traditional Protestant Anti-Clericalism

My dear brothers never forget, when you hear the progress of the Enlightenment praised, that *the Devil's cleverest ploy is to persuade you that he does not exist*.
(Charles Baudelaire, 1862, *Le Spleen de Paris*)

Historical Protestants sincerely believed that the Roman Church-State is the “synagogue of Satan”⁴ based on an intertextual historicist interpretation of the Bible (see Table 10.3). Some Protestant denominations still adhere to intertextual historicist biblical interpretation and hold the belief that the papacy continues to be “Satan’s synagogue” today (see Sect. 10.4.2.2).

Their historicist study of the Book of Revelation provided the Reformers with an influential picture of the history of the Church. This interpretation had consistently allowed Reformers from different epochs and countries to discern “the hidden diabolism of the Roman faith” (Johnstone, 2006, p. 50).

Protestants have long interpreted the Book of Revelation (especially Chap. 13) along with the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament (especially Chaps. 7–8, King James Bible, 1769) (Boxall & Tresley, 2016, p. 4). Such a historicist study has allowed Protestant eschatologists to identify the pope as the Antichrist. This view arises from symbolically associating a persecutory political-religious power (the Roman Church-State) with the beast whom the dragon (Satan) gives his power, seat, and great authority in Revelation 13 (Boxall & Tresley, 2016, p. 4; Johnstone, 2006, p. 55).

⁴Derived from the Book of Revelation (King James Bible, 1769). “It expressed the insidious subversion Protestants believed to lie behind Catholic false doctrine and empty piety—a church that appeared Christian was in fact its opposite” (Johnstone, 2006, p. 4).

Table 10.3 Typical association of the papacy with the “Man of Sin”, the Antichrist, beast and harlot according to biblical interpretations of notable Protestant intellectuals (1500–1800)

Biblical text (King James Bible, 1769)		
“Man of Sin” or “Antichrist” (2 Thessalonians 2); or	“Let no man deceive you by any means: for <i>that day shall not come</i> , except there come a falling away first, and that <i>man of sin</i> be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2: 3-4).	
“the beast” (Revelation 13)	“And <i>the beast</i> which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: <i>and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority</i> . And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast” (Revelation 13: 2-3).	
or “The great harlot” (Revelation 17)	“[. . .] and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17: 3-5).	
	“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17: 18).	
Eschatological Interpretation	Papacy/Roman Catholic Church	
Interpreted by	Martin Luther (1517 onwards)	German Reformer and theologian
	Huldrych Zwingli (1519 onwards)	Swiss Reformer and theologian
	John Calvin (1536 onwards)	French Reformer and founder of the University of Geneva
	Roger Williams (1644 onwards)	American promoter of the separation of church and state
	John Wesley (1728 onwards)	English theologian and co-founder of Methodism
	Isaac Newton (1733 onwards)	English Mathematician, physical scientist, philosopher
	Elisha Williams (1744 onwards)	American theologian and founder of Yale University

Note: Author’s italics

(Adapted from Boxall & Tresley, 2016; Hoffmann, 2015; Hartman et al., 2002; Stefanovic, 2009; Taggart, 1998; Williams, 1998; Newton, 1733; Luther, 1532)

Table 10.3 shows the examples of prominent Protestant thinkers who shared similar theological conclusions. The interpretation of the popery (Roman Church-State) as the deceiving power from Satan on earth (Babylon-Beast-Harlot) was

practically universal among Protestants. This interpretation was prevalent regardless of the historical and political contexts in which Protestants lived until the nineteenth century (Gregg, 1997).

The identification of the Roman Church-State as the Antichrist (or the papacy, in the interpretation of the two beasts in Revelation 13) was widespread among Protestants of different denominations (Table 10.3). The Geneva Bible attests to the interpretation of the Revelation in the early Calvinist tradition and offers a typical example of historicist interpretation. Furthermore, the extensive use of this particular interpretation of the books of Revelation and Daniel (King James Bible, 1769) is evident in Protestant writings, especially until the nineteenth century (Boxall & Tresley, 2016, p. 9).

The first generation of Reformers (and other Protestants) were disillusioned Roman Catholics who converted and admitted “that Catholicism was a very convincing fake” (Johnstone, 2006, p. 41). The Protestant understanding of the diabolical character of Roman Catholicism thus also resulted from the notion that the popery embodies a direct (but hidden) inversion of Christianity (p.41). For example, Roman Catholic worship involves disguising pagan rituals and hence, covering “them with the ‘manners’ of Christianity” (Calfhill as cited in Johnstone, 2006, p. 48). The veneration of icons explicitly forbidden in the Decalogue (Figs. 8.4 and 10.1) illustrates this point, as it ultimately constitutes idolatry. However, Roman Catholicism still promotes this practice, thus suppressing this Commandment in the Catechism (Fig. 10.1). Johnstone described “Protestant attempts to comprehend the corruption of traditional Catholicism” (p. 27) during the English Reformation in these terms:

[Protestants] adopted a long-established heretical association of the Pope with Antichrist, and behind Antichrist lay the Devil, the guiding hand of apocalyptic subversion. [...] In effect Catholicism might be a parody, a contradiction of everything sacred to the true faith. But this was hidden behind a pious gloss which had hoodwinked millions into their own eternal destruction. Nor were its victims naive or ignorant; many learned and zealous Christians continued to believe in the veracity of the Roman church (Johnstone, 2006, p. 27).

Furthermore, dissenting and nonconformist Protestants “took reformist arguments a stage further by claiming that de facto Satanism was inherent in *any* national church” and “at the heart of government” (Johnstone, 2006, pp. 254, 188). As an eighteenth-century Protestant wrote:

There is no reason to consider the antichristian spirit and practices to be confined to that which is now called the Church of Rome. The Protestant churches have much of antichrist in them, and are far from being wholly reformed from [...] corruptions and wickedness (Hopkins, 1972 [1794], p. 328).

The Reformers’ belief that Roman Catholicism was the Church of Satan also relied on recognising “the Devil’s power to disguise himself within Christian piety” (Johnstone, 2006, p. 41). This is evident in the following Bible verses:

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (King James Bible, 1769, Revelation 12: 9);

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (King James Bible, 1769, 2 Corinthians 11: 14).

The Old Testament Book of Isaiah contains a complementary reference to the intertextual references to the successive kingdoms (beasts) and Satan (Lucifer) in the books of Revelation (NT) and Daniel (OT):

that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! (King James Bible, 1769, Isaiah 14: 4);

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! (King James Bible, 1769, Isaiah 14: 12).

The Prophet Isaiah associates the king of Babylon with an oppressive power and a golden city. Later, Isaiah links this system to Lucifer, who *weakens the nations* (a statement that touches on the core of this study). The Book of Daniel (in parallel to the Book Revelation) (King James Bible, 1769) also interrelates (symbolically as beasts or as a statue) the successive, Satanic powers of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and finally Rome. Rome inherited parts of the preceding civilisations (e.g. Greek philosophy, Babylonian rituals) (Radmacher et al., 1999; Taggart, 1998). The power of Rome persists to this day through its influence on all legal systems worldwide (Sect. 8.3) and through the Roman Church-State (i.e. the weakening of nations).

For William Tyndale, the papacy had accepted Satan's temptation: "The kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, which Christ refused" in the desert (Tyndale, *The Practice of Prelates*, pp. 274–5 as cited in Johnstone, 2006, p. 54). As a result of this arrangement, the papacy shall worship the devil by adopting his role as "Satan's vicar", who corrupts religion. Therefore, the papacy "took up in the like manner all Christendom on high, and brought them from the meekness of the Christ unto the high hill of the pride of Lucifer" (p. 54).

10.4.2.2 Current Protestant Views on the Papacy

The Roman Catholic counter-reformation had attempted to shift attention away from intertextual historicist biblical prophecy since the sixteenth century. Spaniard Jesuits developed a Futurist School (e.g. Francisco de Ribera) and a Preterist School (e.g. Luis de Alcasar) as alternatives to historicist eschatology. Both schools removed any reference to Rome from prophecy and contradicted the Reformers' linking of the Antichrist with the papacy and with Babylon as the Roman Church-State. The Futurist view stands for a biblical prophecy to be fulfilled in the future, while the Preterists advocate a prophecy already fulfilled in the first century (Johnson, 1981).

Consequently, since the sixteenth century, neither a monolithic nor a unified explanation for biblical prophecy has existed in Roman Catholicism but contrasting opposites (Futurism versus Preterism). However, neither view makes any reference whatsoever to the papacy in biblical prophecy, as opposed to historical

Protestantism. This constitutes a Hegelian dialectical strategy common among Jesuits (similar to the one described in Sect. 10.4.1.4).

Preterist views have gained much scholarly attention even among modern Protestant writers. The suppression of the Papal states in the nineteenth century and Roman Catholicism's loss of power (Sect. 8.3.4.5) have ushered in Preterist views even more vehemently (Johnson, 1981; Taggart, 1998). Thus, the Reformers' *intertextual historicist interpretation* has only few followers today. However, for some remaining Protestant intertextual historicist interpreters, the apparent weakening of Roman Catholicism after the French Revolution (i.e. as a deadly wound) has partially fulfilled the Revelation (Cook, 2012); (Taggart, 1998):

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast (King James Bible, 1769, Revelation 13: 3).

Therefore, even after the successful introduction of the counter-reformation dialectic (Futurism and Preterism), some Protestant denominations still adhere to intertextual historicist interpretation today. Examples of this small group include conservative Lutherans (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2018), historical and Restorationist denominations, and the Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) (Taggart, 1998; Bacchiocchi, 2002).

10.4.3 *Pentecostalism*

The broad diversity of Protestant denominations and sects today makes it difficult to generalise their separate contributions, let alone capture these in a single study. However, distinct Protestant theologies and organisational forms have led to distinct outcomes (Manow, 2004; Woodberry, 2012). For example, while Lutherans pioneered the development of the welfare state, some other currents of Protestantism (e.g. Calvinists, Baptists) slowed this down (Manow, 2004). Another clear example is the asymmetrical emphases on higher education: Calvinists typically make greater educational efforts than other Protestant missionaries, and Pentecostals even less than other Protestant missionaries. Therefore, new forms of Protestantism (i.e. Pentecostalism) placing less emphasis on education are less likely to have a positive social impact than previous Protestant versions (Woodberry, 2012, pp. 251–269).

Pentecostalism has been a singular African variation of Christianity, transmitted via African American culture (MacRobert, cited in Sharpe, 2014, p. 173). Likewise, Pentecostalism partly originated “as one of the ways that Africans responded to the missionary structures and appropriated the message” (Kalu, 2008, p. viii).

Pentecostalism has been the fast-growing and most influential “movement” in recent decades and now includes the majority of Protestants. Figure 10.4 shows the growth trends of Protestantism worldwide.

Africa, Asia, and Latin America have the largest Protestant populations today. However, Protestantism is a relatively young phenomenon in those continents,

Fig. 10.4 Protestants by continent and the share of the largest Protestant movements in the world today (Todd & Zurlo, 2016). Used with permission of the authors

where the influence of Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal denominations dominates. The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 marked a milestone in the spreading of Protestantism through missionary work on those continents (Fig. 10.4) (Todd & Zurlo, 2016).

Today, Pentecostal movements focus their efforts on the eschatological urgency of conversion and invest little in developing human capital (McCleary, 2013; Becker et al., 2016, p. 11). Moreover, Pentecostal theologies are often removed from the historical tradition of the Bible, unlike historical Protestantism. However, Pentecostal movements are extremely varied, making generalisation difficult (Spittler, 2009, p. 66). Nonetheless, the positive social impact of Pentecostalism compared to historical Protestantism is small. For example, Pentecostalism invests little in human development and thus achieves merely low institutional impact (e.g. low development of educational and medical facilities) (McCleary, 2013; Woodberry, 2012; Becker et al., 2016).

10.4.3.1 The Influence of Pentecostalism in Latin America

The increasing number of Protestant denominations from a wide range of currents affects every country differently. Schäfer (2006) devised a comprehensive model and various typologies to classify large Christian groups and their ideologies in Latin America (pp. 58–60). Until 1970, more than 90% of the total population in Latin America were still Roman Catholics. By 2014, this share had decreased to nearly 70% (Protestants: 19%; unaffiliated: 8% in 2014) (Pew Research Center, 2014). Currently, almost one out of five Latin Americans is Protestant (Pew Research Center, 2014, p. 62). As stated, the presence of Protestantism has been crucial in creating competition with the Roman Catholic Church-State and has thus initiated democratic and human capital processes (see Sects. 7.b, 8.2.1.2, and Chap. 9) (Gill, 1998, 2013; Woodberry, 2012; Becker et al., 2016). In his mixed-methods empirical analysis, Gill (1998) observed that the market competition from Protestantism induced Catholic bishops to reconsider their conventional disregard of the needy. The influence of Protestantism has, in many ways, contributed to shaping the Catholic Church's "preferential option for the poor". Considering the Roman Church's strong involvement in the Latin American political sphere, this change in Catholicism's pastoral approach has had significant political repercussions, in particular an increasing aversion to regimes and policies that harm the rights of the poor (p. 80).

However, nearly two-thirds of Protestants in Latin America are now Pentecostal (Pew Research Center, 2014, p. 62). The Pentecostal and Evangelical experience has not been as favourable in Latin America compared to the influence of historical Protestantism after the Reformation (e.g. in Germany, England, and the rest of Northern Europe and North America) (Witte, 2002; Woodberry, 2012; Becker et al., 2016; Berman, 2003; Snyder, 2011; Martin, 1999).

In Latin America, no body of legal norms exists "to promote as the basis for an Evangelical society" (Martin, 1999, p. 41). In contrast with Roman Catholicism, Evangelicals are not very influential politically and "are highly unlikely to acquire serious influence in Latin America" (Martin, 1999, p. 40). Most Evangelical parties could not achieve visible political relevance, although more recently, the civic engagement of Evangelicals has increased in Latin America (Zilla, 2020). Recent examples of heads of state who have either been Evangelicals or supported by Evangelical movements include Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Jimmy Morales in Guatemala, and Manuel López Obrador in Mexico (Zilla, 2020).

Yet, Latin American Protestants have no recourse to historical norms that have been worked out over centuries of experience in politics and law and that may thus serve them as guides (unless they consider German, English, Scandinavian, or North American Protestant experiences). Instead, what Protestants have followed in Latin America "are the established practices of corporatism and clientage" (p. 40). As a result, they have often fallen into the same corrupt behaviour as traditional politicians (Helmsdorff, 1996; Schäfer, 2006). Moreover, in Latin America "...the contrast between Evangelicals and Catholics is really not so great" (Martin, 1999,

p. 41). Due to the absence of high-status ecclesiastics and religious intellectuals, who might, moreover, deploy sophisticated norms, Latin American Protestants are “equipped with little more than native good sense and the limited inferences they can draw from the Bible” (Martin, 1999, p. 40).

10.4.3.2 The Prosperity Gospel (PG) as a Mainly Pentecostal Contemporary Phenomenon

While previous sections have analysed the influence of historical Christian denominations on prosperity, this subsection considers a more contemporary phenomenon that is widespread: the Prosperity Gospel (PG).

The Theology of Prosperity or Prosperity Gospel (PG) is a trans-denominational, transnational doctrine, which is closely linked to the Charismatic Movement and Pentecostal Christianity. PG teachings spread the idea that “wealth is a sign of God’s blessing and is compensation for prayer and for giving beyond the minimum tithe to one’s church, televangelists, or other religious causes” (Koch, 2009, p. 1).

Likewise, Harrison (2005) defines PG as “a relational community of believers, voluntary organisations, fellowships, conferences, and ministries loosely defined by a shared doctrine, a network without definite leader or governing body” (p. 14).⁵ Key features of PG are its alignment with growing numbers of churches and megachurches in urban centres and the embracement of mass media and postmodern, consumerist capitalist values. The founding moment of the PG movement has been identified in the “healing revivals” of the post-World War II period in the USA. Subsequently, PG expanded as a doctrine to multiple denominations in different countries, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Sharpe, 2014; Bowler, 2010, 2013).

10.4.3.2.1 PG Origins: Syncretism with African Rituals and New Thought Movement

Syncretic Origins of PG in the USA

PG is a mainly Protestant movement comprising three distinct though intersecting streams: Pentecostalism, New Thought, and African American religion (Bowler, 2010). The following paragraphs describe each of these three streams of the PG amalgamation.

Strand 1: Pentecostalism and preceding forms of Protestantism.

PG has been the fastest-growing strand of Pentecostalism since the 1980s. However, it also has deeper roots in the longer history of Protestant promotion of capitalistic ideas stemming from the nineteenth century (e.g. Wesleyan Methodism)

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(Towns, 2008; Sharpe, 2014; Bowler, 2010, 2013). Yet, unlike previous Protestant forms that elevated capitalist accumulation and asceticism (e.g. Calvinism), PG more strongly emphasises the consumption and immodest achievement of economic goods (Lingenthal, 2012, p. 55; Sharpe, 2014, p. 166; Miller, 2007).

Strand 2: New Thought and white Protestantism.

PG has also been significantly influenced by a blend of magical-religious rituals of white Protestants (Bowler, 2010, p. 46), which include a miasma of mental magic, bursting with Transcendentalism, Spiritualism, Free Masonry, and New Thought (Bowler, 2010, p. 28). Concurrently, Butler (2009) asserts that PG is a “hybrid” of religious capitalism “that has its roots in 19th century thinkers like E.W. Kenyon and 20th century purveyors like Norman Vincent Peale, and Oral Roberts” (p. 2).

McConnell (1988) also claims that Kenneth Hagin (one of the recognised founding fathers of the PG in the USA) is directly indebted to the ideas of Essek William Kenyon. Likewise, other leading PG preachers and televangelists, such as Kenneth Copeland, Frederick Price, Don Gassett, and others have been linked with Kenyon’s teachings. Kenyon is, in turn, closely associated with the nineteenth-century American New Thought movement, which leans heavily on parapsychology (Sharpe, 2014, p. 169). Therefore, McConnell presents PG as a cult-like sect, with deeply non-Christian roots (Sharpe, 2014, pp. 168–169). Equally, Koch (2009) argues that PG proponents “universally admit that the principles they set forth work for Christians and non-Christians alike” (p. 8). For Koch, PG teachings are more closely connected with the secular self-help movement than with those of traditional orthodox Christianity.

The metaphysical New Thought movement emphasises the power of the individual’s mind to transform thought and speech into tangible blessings (i.e. wealth, health, happiness). This positive thinking stream found a welcoming environment within mainline Protestantism, thus engendering the recognisable Gospels of wealth (PG) and health (Bowler, 2010, pp. 27, 52).

Strand 3: African American Protestantism.

PG also found a comfortable home within black Protestantism (especially in congregations of Methodists and Baptists) in the first half of the twentieth century in the USA. This amalgamation can also be seen as a historical recapitulation of pervasive and persistent Pentecostal and New Thought combinations in African American Protestantism (Bowler, 2010, p. 46).

This time, however, early PG combined with African-derived traditions (e.g. hoodoo, voodoo) that resulted in cross-pollination and black adoption and adaptation of mainly white metaphysical rituals. Black theologies, thus, further spread Spiritualism, focusing on the importance of material blessings (Bowler, 2010, p. 50).

The previous paragraphs have shown the syncretic origins of PG, especially with African American roots and New Thought in the USA. Yet, when PG globalised, the movement continued its syncretism with indigenous traditions of other regions, such as Latin America (Miller, 2007, pp. 24–5). However, it is also important to highlight that Pentecostalism tends to preserve but also demonise the beliefs in indigenous

traditions and “spirits” as “the devil’s representatives” (Robbins, 2004, pp. 128–9; Sharpe, 2014, p. 173).

10.4.3.2.2 General Criticisms of PG

Nearly all aspects of PG’s teachings and practices have been intensely criticised. The most obvious concern that critical social scientists express is that PG preys on the world’s most needy people, collecting tithes from the poorest and promising only false hope and exaggerated promises of miraculous healings and unimaginable economic wealth in return (Sharpe, 2014, p. 174). Other criticisms depict PG as an “evangelical-neoliberal machine” (Connolly, 2009), where PG is the spiritual articulation that promotes and reinforces neoliberalism (Wrenn, 2019). This neoliberal portrayal of PG describes the invisible forces of the market as “evidence” of God’s hand (Wrenn, 2019, p. 430). Others describe PG as a US American-led conspiracy to propagate capitalism and consumerism and ruin traditional forms of life in the global South (Robbins, 2004; Coleman, 2002; Kyle, 2006; Sharpe, 2014). However, all these criticisms need to be balanced against the empirical evidence.

The following sections will analyse some of the most contentious issues that increase criticism of PG.

Corruption

Leading figures of the PG movement have been repeatedly questioned or charged with financial misconduct and mismanagement. Thus, PG is also known through a series of scandals in different countries, including the USA, Brazil, and other Latin American and African nations (Zilla, 2020, p. 19–20; Lingenthal, 2012, p. 22; Sharpe, 2014, p. 168; Jenkins, 2006, p. 106).

Political Engagement

PG, and Pentecostal churches in particular, have been notably linked with having supported right-wing political forces (e.g. Bolsonaro in Brazil, Uribe in Colombia, Trump in the USA) or even oppressive political regimes, such as Pinochet in Chile (Zilla, 2020; Sharpe, 2014; Bastian, 1993; Martin, 1990). However, several empirical studies do not show a necessary association between far-right conservative parties and Pentecostals in different contexts. Instead, the empirical findings point to church adherents tending to vote in parallel with other members of their social classes (Koch, 2009; Sharpe, 2014; Martin, 1990; Robbins, 2004).

10.4.3.2.3 Theological Criticisms of PG

No theological consensus exists regarding the genealogy of PG. However, theologians and other critics, often from within Pentecostalism and other Christian groups, describe PG as an idolatry of money with heretical teachings that deviate from the central sense of the Gospel (i.e. salvation and love) (Harrison, 2005; Sharpe, 2014).

Yet, PG preachers often contend that “Jesus’ death and resurrection abolished not only sin and disease but also poverty” (Bowler, 2013, p. 95).

Indeed, several reasons permit critics to consider PG as “a betrayal of the cross”. The most obvious question is how Christians can openly pursue economic wealth if the Bible depicts Christ as a “. . . despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . .” (King James Bible, 1769, Isaiah 53:3), who announced that “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (King James Bible, 1769, Matthew 19:24).

Yet, PG preachers provide several arguments in defence of wealth, often relying on “proof-texting” biblical passages removed from their textual and historical context (i.e. superficial exegesis) (Barron, 1987; Koch, 2009; Sharpe, 2014). For instance, PG believers often portray Jesus as a rich—rather than an ascetic—figure by using as arguments passages such as the following:

- The visit of the wise men would imply that Jesus attracted prosperity from the day he was born (Dollar, cited in Bowler, 2010, p. 105): “. . . they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (King James Bible, 1769, Matthew 2:11).
- The dividing of Jesus’ garments among the soldiers at his crucifixion could suggest that they were valuable (Dollar, cited in Bowler, 2010, p. 105): “Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout” (King James Bible, 1769, John 19:23).
- The ability to travel and feed the multitudes on several occasions (e.g. King James Bible, 1769, John 6), and even having Judas as treasurer (e.g. King James Bible, 1769, John 13:29), would attest to Jesus’ wealth (Blake, cited in Sharpe, 2014, p. 165; Koch, 2009 p. 1).

PG believers often claim that the traditional austere portrayals of the suffering Christ are incorrect or outdated. However, Christian theologians of differing denominations have criticised PG literalist interpretations as over-simplistic and inadequate readings of the Holy Scriptures (Sharpe, 2014, p. 168), or as “twisting Bible verses out of context to suit their own self-help philosophy” (Horton, 2009, p. 4). A lack of a deep exegesis often excludes or minimises the importance of other conflicting passages for the PG beliefs that clearly indicate Christ’s ascetic life, *inter alia*:

And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head (King James Bible, 1769, Luke 9:58; original emphases);

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary. . . ? (King James Bible, 1769, Mark 6:3);

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. . . (King James Bible, 1769, John 18:36).

As critic theologians have observed,

“There is much in the Bible that connects the right relation with God to prosperity” (Cobb, 2009). “Yet there is little equivocation in its [the Bible’s] core message that the good life is not one denied by material acquisition and ostentatious consumption but by purposeful acts motivated by generosity and concern for others” (Dillon, 2009).

In this sense, one of the most contentious theological issues that raise controversy is related to the tithes and offerings that the faithful contribute to their congregations:

Tithes

Tithing is a practice that involves giving at least 10% of one's gross income to the believer's Church, or related charities. The promise is that believers will get a hundredfold return from unexpected sources (Butler, 2009; Sharpe, 2014). Thus, the faithful see a cost-effective investment in tithing (Zilla, 2020, p. 18).

PG believers base tithing in a myriad of biblical passages that certainly support giving in diverse contexts. However, the practice has been associated with PG preachers' misuse and corruption scandals (Sharpe, 2014). In the USA, PG churches, such as Creflo Dollar's World Changers, for instance, even verify that members have paid their full tithes by asking them to submit tax records and keep detailed financial reports (Bowler, 2010, p. 115). In Brazil, surveys show that 52% of PG adherents (Evangelicals) tithe to their congregations vis-à-vis 34% of Catholics that contribute in some way to their Church (Corrêa, 2013). However, the Roman Catholic Church still receives subsidies or financial benefits from the Brazilian state ("institutional tithes") although the Brazilian Constitution explicitly forbids public institutions to subsidise any church or religion (Art. 19) and enshrines religious freedom and equality principles (Zilla, 2020, p. 21).

Nevertheless, tithing is not new or exclusive of the PG movement, but this principle has been applied in diverse ways, in virtually all Judeo-Christian traditions, since ancient times (e.g. Plumptre, 1818). Surprisingly, the systematic study of tithing has received little scholarly attention. According to Murray (2011), a detailed historical review of the tithing system is entirely absent, as well as analysis of the recurrent criticisms about exploiting tithing practices, and a critical engagement to understand the biblical and theological principles that comprise tithing (p. 5).

The role of giving and tithing in the Scriptures is too voluminous to be considered in its full extent in this study. However, Budiselić (2015) has advanced in the systematic understanding of biblical and theological foundations of the tithing system. PG and other Christians claim a biblical obligation to tithe to their churches/pastors. Budiselić's contribution is crucial in order to understand and criticise such an assertion and practice. He examines Old Testament examples and all the references to tithing in the New Testament to present arguments for and against claims that Christians should tithe.

Budiselić concludes that Christians have a responsibility to give (e.g. to support those in need and to proclaim the Gospel). However, church tithing can in no way be considered a literal commandment for Christians today. Yet, it was a commandment with specific content and form for the Jews. For instance, the Israelites contributed up to 20% of their goods or more in support of the Levites and the temple, for helping the poor and foreigners, and for the festivals. Nonetheless, the New Testament raises the standard of voluntary giving with abundant principles that include offering to up to 100% of one's capital, with rewarding promises (Budiselić, 2015, p. 44). The following biblical passages illustrate this principle:

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life (King James Bible, 1769, Mark 10:28–30).

give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again (King James Bible, 1769, Luke 6:38).

Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth (King James Bible, 1769, Luke 12:33).

I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (King James Bible, 1769, Acts 20:35).

Consequently, Christians are encouraged in the Scriptures to give to the weak, to all in need, *and* to support the proclamation of the Gospel. However, following Budiselić's reasoning, PG believers would tithe to their churches/pastors based on two faulty assumptions: 1) Christians *must not* give at least 10% of the income to their church/pastor (but they should instead give as much as they can to voluntarily support those in need and to proclaim the Gospel); 2) not all Jews were giving 10% (and their contributions were not only addressed to the priesthood) (Budiselić, p. 44). Certainly, the New Testament does encourage giving to support the preachers, but it does not require a defined percentage:

Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel (King James Bible, 1769, 1 Corinthians 9:14).

...for the laborer is worthy of his hire (King James Bible, 1769, Luke 10:7).

Accordingly, tithing/offering to one's church/pastor is just one of the ways of practising giving. However, the Scriptures do not exhort giving in order to make a single church/pastor millionaire. Furthermore, church tithing cannot be considered as an imperative way of giving because, among others, the conditions defined in the Old Testament are not entirely applicable today (e.g. the Levites and the temple are physically absent⁶) (Budiselić, 2015). Therefore, the imperative urge of PG and other preachers' requesting tithes seems biblically inconsistent in light of these considerations, and has led in many cases to its misuse and corruption. Equally inconsistent would be the subsidies or "institutional tithes" some governments pay to the official established churches as they are not "voluntary" contributions anymore; rather, they act like taxes (sometimes paid by believers and non-believers alike).

⁶Yet, the New Testament refers to the temple as a type of the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ): "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said" (King James Bible, 1769, John 2:19–22).

10.4.3.2.4 Is PG a Poor people's Movement? Empirical Results from Studies

There is anything but consensus regarding PG and class. Scholars of religion often consider PG a typical "poor people's movement" that offers the needy the "opiate" of upward mobility (Bowler, 2010, 2013; Koch, 2009; Cox, 2001; Gifford, 1990; Hollinger, 1991). However, studies show that the PG movement attracts converts from all social classes, including well-educated, middle-class Latin Americans and Africans (Miller, 2007, p. 21; Sharpe, 2014, p. 173).

Others contend that the PG justifies the affluence of those who have been upwardly mobile by arguing that this is spiritually deserved and derived (Koch, 2009; Gifford, 1990; Bruce, 1990). However, a theological test of PG's supernatural claims does not exist nor does it appear feasible. Furthermore, measuring the income levels of PG believers has proven challenging, and few studies are available (mostly performed in the USA). Among other challenges, PG constituents often resist to disclose members' income, church budgets, and pastors' salaries (Bowler, 2010, 2013).

Nonetheless, Koch studied PG in the USA by analysing more than a thousand telephone surveys. He determined that income does not affect adherence to PG. However, "blacks, the 'born-again' or 'evangelical', and those who are less educated are more likely to seek out Prosperity messages" (Koch, 2009, p. v). Surprisingly, PG adherence does not affect the believers' generosity to religious and non-religious causes. The author concludes that members of PG are not over-represented among those with higher or lower incomes. Instead, PG adherents are "between blessings", which neither allows for the inference of the evident success nor the sheer failure of the overt PG claims (Koch, 2009, p.81). Comparably, Bowler's (2010) study indicates that American PG adherents enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle (p. 229).

Finally, PG critics document several cases of economic exploitation and disappointed hopes. However, studies also confirm that large numbers of PG converts have decisively improved their lives by joining the movement (e.g. by learning financial management and entrepreneurship) (Robbins, 2004, p. 136; Sharpe, 2014, p. 176; Miller, 2007, p. 176). Therefore, empirical studies on PG and class render mixed evidence.

10.4.3.2.5 Summarising the Core Messages of Sect. 10.4.3.2 The Prosperity Gospel (PG)

The world-expanding PG contemporary movement that claims believers will prosper by tithing and declaring affirmations has syncretic roots in Pentecostalism, New Thought, and African American religion. Critics have disproven virtually all PG's teachings and practices, and raised criticisms on the corruption of ministers, exploitation of the poor, support of far-right parties, and controversial theological claims. This section balances and analyses such criticisms, finding mixed evidence for those claims:

- Corruption scandals related to PG mismanagement have occurred in virtually all countries where the movement has reached (Sharpe, 2014).
- No necessary association exists between PG and far-right political parties, although notable examples exist.
- Although PG approaches the Scriptures literalistically, it does not apply an interlinear exegesis. A lack of interlinear exegesis renders out-of-context interpretations of the Bible.
- Tithing is an ancient biblical practice that the PG movement has misconstrued to make it imperative. According to the Bible, Christians should give as much as they can to support the needy and to proclaim the Gospel, but not to maintain the wealth of a preacher or a church.
- Critics often depict PG as a movement of unscrupulous preachers who economically exploit the poor. The empirical evidence shows that PG is composed mainly of middle classes and blacks, but faithful from all social classes belong to PG. Likewise, although PG cases of exploitation exist, studies also document positive experiences of PG conversions.

Empirical Expectations

- 9). *I expect prosperity/transparency levels to be directly (positively) related to the proportion of Protestants and inversely (negatively) related to the proportion of Roman Catholics. This expectation is valid for the cross-country sample of Europe and the Americas, as confirmed by empirical studies (e.g. La Porta et al., 1997; Chase, 2010).*
- 10). *However, I do not expect a significant positive influence of the Protestant population on prosperity/transparency in Latin America. Firstly, Protestantism in Latin America has been relatively recent compared to its five-hundred-year history of asserting the Reformation in Europe. In Latin America, Protestantism is a recent phenomenon. It dates back no more than fifty years, and its proportion has not surpassed 20 per cent (Todd & Zurlo, 2016). Secondly, most of the Protestant growth in Latin America comes from Pentecostal currents, whose positive impact has been far weaker than historical Protestant denominations (McCleary, 2013; Woodberry, 2012; Becker et al., 2016).*

10.5 Syncretism

The concept of syncretism is related to the concept of culture and thus, has no-agreed upon definition. The inconsistent etymology and complex history of the term make it problematic to define (Leopold & Jensen, 2004, p. 14). According to Droogers (2004), determining what syncretism is constitutes a difficult challenge as several definitional debates exist around the term. Controversies abound over the

phenomenon's commonality and intricacy, which stems from a refusal to consider the phenomenon's normalcy—i.e. that all religions are syncretic configurations (p. 376).

Pakkanen (1996) even claims that syncretism is an impractical “theoretical invention” as it refers to explaining “syncretism with syncretism” (Pakkanen, 1996, pp. 86–87). Yet, for Stewart and Shaw (1994), syncretism “refers to the synthesis of different religious forms. It is a contentious and contested term which has undergone many historical transformations in meaning. Some see it as a disparaging, ethnocentric label for religious traditions...” (p. i).⁷ Leopold and Jensen (2004) explain that the traditional definition of syncretism wrongly assumes that culture, religion, and ethnicity are, in essence, pure (p. 2). However, most syncretistic formations are “unconscious” as a natural result of social interactions, while others are consequences of cultural domination (Leopold & Jensen, 2004, p. 4).

Kraemer (1962) argued that non-Christian religions are intrinsically syncretistic and thus, syncretism is predominantly non-Christian. For the author, syncretism is also inevitable in Christianity, but it has occurred here as an illegitimate fusion rather than doing so innately. Therefore, the principal criticism against syncretism as a concept is that it implies pejorative references to non-Christian religions. Likewise, the term has historically been tied to Christian theological disagreements (Leopold & Jensen, 2004, p. 8).

10.5.1 *Syncretism and Christianity*

The Gospels and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles (King James Bible, 1769) relate that the first Christians were almost entirely converted Jews. Kippenberg (2004) observes that Jews refused pagan rituals, considering them idolatry (p. 35). Judaism has been naturally anti-syncretic as the Scriptures forbid mingling with foreign religious elements (Fig. 8.4). The New Testament relates, however, that the Gospel was also spread to the Gentiles soon afterwards. Examples of this are the conversion and baptism of Cornelius, the Italian centurion (Acts 10); the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8); and the mission of the Apostle Paul to the heathens in Greece and Asia. Consequently, Rudolph (2004) notes that the mission and propagation of a faith inevitably leads to syncretism (for the author, this is exemplified by Paul's preaching to the Greeks in Acts 17) (p. 71). Likewise, the Book of Acts of the Apostles records that tension occurred among “Christian Jews” and “Christian Gentiles” on issues such as circumcision (e.g. Acts 11). Therefore, for Kippenberg (2004), Christianity has been a syncretistic religion, especially in its early days (p. 29). However, the syncretic process of Christianity skyrocketed when it became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

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Benavides (2004) observes that under Constantine, the Christian divinity began functioning as a traditional Roman god of victory—i.e. a divinity whose adoration was ritualised before the war and praised after victory (Wardman as cited in Benavides, 2004, p. 202). Although there was a contradictory bond between the Christian divinity and the *Sol Invictus*, the new divinity already incorporated some of the revered attributes by Heliogabalus and the Emessan priests when the Roman state adopted Christianity as the official religion (Benavides, 2004, p. 202). Consequently, the Roman (Catholic) Christianity adopted pantheistic components coming, among others, from the Roman Empire and Greece. Leopold & Jensen contend that as a result of its long mission history, the Roman Church-State has established a more comprehensive frame for integrating new or external components into Catholic doctrine and policy (p. 18). Therefore, according to the authors, for Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans, among other Catholic orders, syncretism has been a way of broadening their mission in different parts of the world, including the east and Latin America (p. 16). Hence, among others, the effects of Catholic mission have produced amalgams between indigenous gods and Catholic saints, for instance (p.18).

However, the Protestant Reformation has been a typical anti-syncretistic movement (Spica, 2018; Leopold & Jensen, 2004). Spica observes: “The Reformers criticized the fact that the Christian message had been lost from its original purity, and this was the reason for reforming the church” (p. 241). The “original purity” refers to the *Sola Scriptura* principle defended by the Reformers (see Sect. 10.4.1.3). Therefore, the failed ecumenical attempts of Erasmus and Calixt in the sixteenth century are partly explained, in that they saw logical evidence of the truth within Christianity’s in pagan writings, particularly in Aristotelian philosophy (Engel, 1976 as cited in Leopold & Jensen, 2004, p. 15). However, the initial anti-syncretistic attitude of Protestantism partly succumbed with the advent of Pentecostalism (see following subsection and Sect. 10.4.3).

10.5.1.1 Syncretism and Christianity in Latin America

In Latin America, another “syncretism with syncretism” instance has occurred in Pakkanen (1996)’s terms. In this process, Catholics of the Roman rite blend popular Catholic religiosity (e.g. idols, images, incense, shamans, nomenclature) with pre-Columbian ethnoreligious traditions. Johnson and Zurlo (2016) have defined these typical Latin American believers as “*Christopagans*”. As Spica observes:

Even when we say that Latin America is mostly Christian or Catholic, the notions of this Christianity or Catholicity are very different from typical European Catholicity. Here, popular Catholicity assumes the diverse beliefs and practices of African and native peoples, modifying and adapting the original beliefs of European Catholicism to the ways of life, challenges and worldviews of the Latin American people. [...] This differentiated religiosity, though, still calls itself Catholic despite evidence of mergers with prehispanic religiosity. [...] In addition to Catholicity, we are now seeing many neo-Pentecostal religions emerging in Latin America. Although they often try to deny syncretism and defend a certain purity of faith, they are extremely syncretic, especially in ritual matters. This is clear, for example, in

their use of popular music in worship, in their dances of praise and in their way of understanding Christian belief (Spica, 2018, pp. 236–237).

Benavides (2004) documents the syncretic processes that occurred during the expansion of Roman Catholicism among Andean, Aztec, and Mayan populations. Herskovits (1966) also noted that native and African gods are identified with saints of the Catholic Church in the New World. However, according to the author, African cultural remembrances (such as shouting and mourning) are more moderate and religious relations are more discreet in Protestant regions than in Catholic areas (Herskovits as cited in Apter, 2004, p. 165). Nevertheless, most of the current Protestant denominations worldwide have a strong Pentecostal influence, which highly syncretises African and native rituals (see Sect. 10.4.3). Furthermore, the Pentecostal influence has also been pervasive in Roman Catholicism. As an interviewee noted in this research:

It's very difficult to distinguish among Catholic Charismatics, Renewed Pentecostals, and Neo-Pentecostals as their rituals are almost the same. You have to get deep background information to distinguish them. Hermeneutically, it's difficult to differentiate them; all of them clap hands and rite and preach the same, but they want to be differentiated: Catholics as Catholics and Pentecostals as Pentecostals, as such, as they don't congregate together (Ecumenical academic theologian).

However, the process of syncretism with indigenous or African rituals varies within different Latin American countries and subregions, depending on the historical presence of these ethnicities. The following cases, coupled with primary information from this study (interviews), show this pattern.

10.5.1.1.1 Colombia

Uribe (2003) refers to Colombia as a territory that has been full of magic and witchcraft for centuries. The arrival of the Spaniards, with the rigid bastion of Catholicism, not only provoked a displacement of the indigenous people but an uprooting of the black slaves from their places of origin. This uprooting was the first cause of the magical-religious conformation in Colombia. The colonial society gradually became a space in which African fetishisms, indigenous gods, and the exaggerated belief in saints and miraculous medals found their convergence point in relationships of domination. The social organisation was mediated by race, where the Catholic Spaniards occupied the hegemonic tip of the pyramid, and the Blacks and Indians were at the base. Thus, the beliefs and traditions of the Indians and Blacks were presented as barbaric and diabolic in the face of Catholic superiority. However, these traditions continued to be practised, mingled with Catholicism, and survived the Colony and the Enlightenment, remaining intact when Protestantism emerged in Colombia. The association of indigenous and black beliefs with the

demonic was prolonged and intensified with the advent of the Evangelicals and Pentecostals,⁸ thus creating a new syncretic platform (Lozano, 2009).

A Colombian Roman Catholic Theologian partly coincides with Lozano's account:

When the Spaniards arrived, they came to catechise instead to evangelise. They [natives] were taught to cross themselves, to recite the creed and some prayers by memory. And then it was assumed that "Christians", sons of God were made, and then they proceeded to baptise them. But there was never an Evangelisation process; the term Jesus or the Word never came; the Word was not taught directly, and this is another reason why the Bible is almost not read. . . (Roman Catholic Theologian).

A Colombian Protestant interviewee in this study also concurs with the assertion about syncretism in Protestantism:

The problem is that there is a syncretism between Protestant Christianity and necromancy. [...] Many of the rites of this African culture and ceremonies have been passed on to the Protestant Church. The clapping and the dancing in the churches have its roots in Africa where people worship in that manner. Claps, drums, and dance. You can see it in the Protestant world, and it is even being practised today in the United States. "I clap and dance because I feel good," they say. I call them Epicurean Christians (Independent, free Protestant believer-academic).

10.5.1.1.2 Cuba

In Cuba, the syncretic connection is even more evident (see Sect. 20.3). The massive influx of African slaves as cheap labour to cultivate sugar since colonial times contributed to the emergence of spiritism, voodooism, and syncretised forms with Roman Catholicism (e.g. Santería) (Contreras, 2013, p. 177; Ramírez, 2009, p. 167; Sánchez, 1992, pp. 90–91). In practice, an amalgamation of rituals is evident. A priest of the Afro-Cuban religion (a spiritistic religion) expressed the singular importance of Roman Catholicism in their rituals:

We have respect and veneration for the Catholic Church as a mother and centre. Our saints [icons] must receive light in Catholic rituals, for example with holy water. It is an essential requirement for our ordination as Babalawo or "Santo" [a spiritistic saint] to be baptised in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church knows and is aware of this requirement for sanctification, but never acknowledges this publicly. [...] Francis [pope Jorge Bergoglio] met with Yoruba and Protestants when he came to Cuba. He is simple, but he has a higher rank than any country or president, as Rome is the centre of the world (Cuban Babalawo priest).

⁸For Robbins (2004), the process of demonisation in Pentecostalism transforms ancestral spirits into agents of the Devil, prompting people to dedicate their energies to combatting it. This practice serves to further establish the Devil's presence and its significance in post-conversion life (pp. 128–9).

Complementing the words of the Babalawo priest, a Cuban Roman Catholic Theologian explains the relationship of Afro-Cuban rituals with Roman Catholicism:

The Afro-Cuban religion did not have its own rite, so they adopted the Roman Catholic rituals. The Roman Catholic Church did not commit to this, but as for the priests, it is a convenient way to fill the Church with adherents. The Priests are happy with that, although they know they are making a theological mistake. This means that the Roman Catholic Church has accepted syncretism for convenience (Cuban Roman Catholic Theologian).

A representative of the Cuban National Council of Churches partly confirmed the claim of the previous two interviewees: "...one can count more Roman Catholics as many Babalawos are baptised as Roman Catholics".

10.5.1.1.3 Uruguay

In Uruguay, at least two aspects mediate the relative low prominence of syncretism compared with the previous cases: the low Afro-descendant and indigenous populations, and the high secularisation of the society (see Chap. 19). Here, the interviewees have only referred to the introduced Brazilian influence of syncretic rituals:

In Uruguay, syncretic rituals come by transfer from Brazil, especially Umbanda and spiritist rites. But they come by contact with Brazil since the Afro-descendant presence in Uruguay is low (Uruguayan Roman Catholic Priest).

An ecumenical academic theologian shares a similar perception:

Here the cult of Yemanjá has increased a lot. That is santería, and it comes from people of African ancestry from Brazil. We have the Candomblé, music with which black slaves were pressured in Montevideo; that music has been declared cultural heritage of humanity and is what identifies Uruguay. However, as an Uruguayan, I do not feel identified with the Candomblé. It's because of the cultural difference we have. [...] And I do not know what the Catholic Church thinks. I haven't heard any comments in favour or against it.

10.5.2 Summarising the Core Messages of Sect. 10.5 Syncretism

Syncretism as a concept suffers from many problems with its definition, which is historically linked to theological disagreements in Christianity. While syncretism has been a natural process in all religions, Jews and historical Protestants have tended to be more anti-syncretic given their Scriptural base of beliefs. In turn, the importance of traditions, in Roman Catholicism for instance, has led to include more non-orthodox rituals in its practice. In Pentecostalism, the syncretic practices are apparent, partly due to its marked African influence. In Latin America, "syncretism with syncretism" has occurred with the expansion of Roman Catholicism and

contemporary Protestantism (mostly Pentecostalism) and blend with indigenous and African practices. Latin American syncretism with indigenous or African rituals varies depending on the presence of these ethnicities. Therefore, the empirical (quantitative and QCA) part of this study includes measurements of ethnicities as cultural proxies of syncretism.

Finally, the syncretic process in Latin America has blended religions, music, languages, and cuisine, among other cultural expressions (Wilson, 2004).

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