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▶ **To cite this version:**

Jérémy Ianni. The emergence of evangelical power in the Philippines: analysis based on the particular case of a Born Again reformed group. 2023. hal-03940854

HAL Id: hal-03940854
https://univ-paris8.hal.science/hal-03940854

Submitted on 16 Jan 2023

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French Original article reference :

Jérémy IANNI. 2022. « L'émergence du pouvoir évangélique aux Philippines : analyse à partir du cas particulier d'un groupe réformé *Born Again* ». in *Nouvelles Perspectives en Sciences Sociales*. vol 18 no 1. Prise de parole. p.167-202.

The emergence of evangelical power in the Philippines: analysis based on the particular case of a *Born Again* reformed group

In the Philippines, evangelical Protestant groups are on the rise and their influence is increasingly visible, both in low-income neighborhoods and within the political discourse. The presence of evangelical Christian activism[1] has been manifesting since the inauguration of Rodrigo Duterte in 2016 and will undoubtedly be extended during the term of office of Ferdinand Marcos Jr, son of the late dictator, who has recently been elected following the support of the religious leaders of these groups. Thus, today the proportion of the population who practice a reformed religion, whether Pentecostal, Baptist or evangelical, is 9 to 10%, a proportion that has doubled in the last 15 years[2].

Richard Rorty, a pragmatic philosopher, states that liberal democracy can no longer function if authoritarian language carrying a redemptive dimension interferes in political expression[3]. However, we must admit that in the Philippines, as the Filipino researcher Tracy Llanera points out, these two aspects coexist alongside each other and even feed each other[4]. In the liberal Philippine society, the authoritarian religious discursive configuration[5] is intruding. Thus, theological-political discourses in state institutions are increasingly common and constitute a central ideological device in the discourses

[1] Jayeel Cornelio, « How the Philippines Became Catholic: The Complex History Behind Asia's most Christian country », *Christian Society*, février 2018.
[2] Philippine Statistics Authority, *Philippines in Figures*, Quezon City, June 2018. ISSN 1655- 2539, https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/PIF%202018.pdf, consulté le 5 avril 2022.
[3] Rorty, Richard, « Religion as Conversation-stopper » dans *Philosophy and Social Hope*, n° 3, 1999, p.168-174.
[4] Llanera, Tracy, « Seeking Shelter in a Terrifying Father Figure », dans *The Indypendent*, New York, n° 218, 2016.
[5] Foucault, Michel, *La volonté de savoir*, Gallimard, 1976, p. 109.

accompanying government measures and the need to establish increasingly coercive forms of social control, as we shall see from the example of the fight against drug trafficking and consumption during the mandate of Rodrigo Duterte.

The context of the Philippines is an ideal one in which to study the rise of evangelical power, as most of the population is monotheistic, with 79.5 percent Catholic, 10-11 percent Muslim and 9 percent of the population classified as "diverse Christian groups[6]", making it a prime evangelizing ground. The 9-10% of the population who worship in a Reformed tradition are categorized, according to national statistics, in local megachurches such as *Iglesia ni Kristo* or *Dating Daan*, international neo-Pentecostal churches, or independent groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses or the Church of Latter-day Saints, or finally, groups with a more evangelical bent such as *Kaharian ni Hesus* or *Born Again.* Some of these groups are organized and institutionalized, others resist affiliation and assignment to a group. To complete the Philippine religious landscape, it is necessary to add that 4% of the population practice a spirituality or a cult called animist[7], and that atheism is almost inexistent in the archipelago.

The elaboration of this polymorphous religious landscape is naturally linked to the history of colonial and post-colonial domination that the Filipino people have lived and still live. The socio-historian Renato Constantino points out that the policies of *reducción* carried out in the 18th century, which consisted of the massive relocation of rural communities into organized villages, were the result of cross dynamics, carried out by both the colonial government and the religious authority[8]. The newly formed towns or población were thus organized around work in the rice fields and the place of worship, with the aim of "creating a new civilization in the Philippines, common towns, where there is a square,

[6] *Ibid*.
[7] *Ibid*.
[8] Constantino, Renato, « The Filipino Elite », Erehwon, Ermita, Manila, 1968, p.113-124

the church, the town hall, the school[9]". Between evangelization and exploitation through forced labor, the relocation and gathering of rural communities in the 18th century founded the basis of the capitalist economy in the archipelago, through the exploitation of man by man, management and speculation on possible food surplus productions, while keeping the vestiges still visible of a feudal organization through the possession of lands by the missionaries, in particular the Augustinians and the Dominicans. Constantino argues that originally owned by the Catholic Church, then by large families during the modern era, these lands have never been relinquished and are the reflection of a feudal organization still marked in the country, which finds its source in a form of politico-religious colonization in what the Roman Catholic Church has played a major role[10].

The coming of the Americans in the early 20th century wrought radical changes in the educational system of the Philippines. While under Spanish colonial rule, the teaching of faith and religion was required or compulsory, it was prohibited during the American public school system. A Department of Education was created by the Organic Act of 1900 proposed by Governor General William Howard Taft, creating an authority to control all schools in the country and prohibit religious instruction[11]. Another obstacle to the spread of the Catholic faith appeared at this time: the arrival of approximately 600 Protestant preachers from the United States working as teachers, assigned to all parts of the country to teach according to the American model. The prohibition of the teaching of religion in the public school system led to a major conflict between the Catholic Church and the American civil government. The superintendent of Manila at that time even came to order the banning of devotions and the removal of crucifixes, religious emblems, sacred images, etc. from the school,

[9] Gutierrez, Lucio, *The Archdiocese of Manila: A Pilgrimage in Time (1565-1999)*, Vol.1. Manila: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila, 2000, p. 23.
[10] Constantino, Renato, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited - From the Spanish Colonization to the Second World War*, Socialist Stories,1974.
[11] Franklin Pilario, Daniel et Gerardo Vibar, , *Philippine Local Churches after the Spanish Regime: Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond*. Quezon City, Philippines: Adamson University, 2015, p.146.

clearly against the Christian faith, in the interest of Protestantism. This was the beginning of a conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed groups, marking the beginning of a new era of evangelization in the archipelago, with the creation of private religious schools, local churches, the arrival of Pentecostal groups from the United States, yielding the current polymorphous religious landscape of the archipelago[12].

Conflicts and misunderstandings between the Catholic Church, civil authority and reformed groups are not a recent phenomenon in the Philippines. However, particularly during the tenure of Rodrigo Duterte, a reconfiguration of these conflicts, always to the detriment of the Catholic Church and in favor of the reformed groups, has gradually taken hold, substantially modifying the ways in which power is exercised.

For example, the *Born Again* evangelical group, is increasingly visible in the Philippine Senate, since 4 out of 24 senators have converted to it. For example, Manny Pacquiao, a boxing champion who became a senator in 2016 and a *Born Again* loyalist, is defending SB 189[13], a bill to reinstate the death penalty for hate crimes or drug trafficking. He constantly quotes the Bible and the Gospel to defend its legality, both civil and religious, as in June 2020 in the Senate:

> Pero gusto ko lang po i-explain sa lahat na ang pag-reinstate death penalty sa bansa natin [ay] hindi po illegal, hindi po labag sa mata ng gobyerno, sa mata ng Panginoon dahil biblically, allowed po ang gobyerno, the authority which is established by God, to impose [death penalty], especially [on heinous crimes][14]

The senator's expression reveals how a theological-political power is gradually taking over the Philippine archipelago, especially since the election of Rodrigo Duterte. Manny Pacquiao develops his position based on his different affiliations: his status as a senator, but also his membership in the *Born*

[12] *Ibid*., p.18
[13] SBN 189: *Death Penalty for Drug Trafficking & Manufacturing*

[14] Ariate, Joel, « How We Kill: Notes on the Death Penalty in the Philippines », en ligne, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337019158_How_We_Kill_Notes_on_the_Death_Penalty_in_the_Philippines, 2019.

Again evangelical group.

This article aims to study the way in which the Philippine civil authority, which has long been influenced by the Catholic institution, is becoming more and more permeable to evangelical groups, using the example of the *Born Again* group and the war on drugs led by the government of Rodrigo Duterte. In order to understand the local context, I first detail how the Roman Catholic Church, whose faithful are increasingly converting to a reformed cult, finds the war on drugs, which discredits it, in an impossible posture, thus creating a breeding ground for evangelization. The paper will then show how the war on drugs is the expression of a theological-political power centered on the concept of *kaligtasan* or salvation, based on the analysis of the discourse produced by the Philippine government and congress. Finally, I present the results of a field survey conducted from 2019 to 2021 in *a Born Again* neighborhood church, analyzing both an individual journey of conversion to the eponymous group and the discourse developed by the pastors during preaching. I conclude by analyzing the educational dimensions of conversion leading us to glimpse the exercise of theological-political power in the Philippines through the prism of the forming of the self and the impossibility of access to the self.

1. The Roman Catholic Church in crisis: a lack of credibility due to an ambivalent position

When President Rodrigo Duterte was inaugurated in 2016, the government launched a major national campaign called *Laban sa droga* [War on Drugs], which provoked strong reactions from Catholic religious representatives. The latter protested human rights violations, police violence and the government's witch hunt against drug users and sellers, which has resulted in more than 7,000 people being killed in police operations[15].

[15] Amnesty International UK, *More than 7,000 killed in the Philippines in Six months, as President Encourages Murder*, en ligne, https://www.amnesty.org.uk/philippines-president-duterte-war-on-drugs-thousands-killed , 2020.

Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Church, which has not ceased to criticize the Philippine government and the war on drugs since 2016 is in an ambivalent position towards this campaign: it has indeed contributed to the development of the negative perception of drugs, through the moral position it has held for decades, but also through its way of dealing with this problem. Very early on, Roman Catholic Church referred to rehabilitation and care[16]. Religious people have indeed developed techniques to fight against drugs: a treatment and a moral conduct to follow. Others have worked with the police to denounce people who are using drugs. The government has opted for a total criminalization of drug use.

Sociologist Jayeel Cornelio argues that the criminalization of the war on drugs can therefore also be seen as an outgrowth of the Church's moral expression of drugs as a sin, which has become political. The Church, even though it is against the policy of the present government, may have contributed to the view of the drug problem in terms of morality and not in terms of social problems. When the Church takes a position against the war on drugs, it has little credibility[17]. Since 1970, the Philippine Bishops' Conference has addressed the drug problem in some 20 pastoral letters, in an expression that could be divided into three successive phases: the destruction of youth, health and the disintegration of social morality.

The sociologist stresses that in the 1970s, the Church focused its expression on the destruction of the youth, and the pastoral letter of 1971[18] states that the Church is not only concerned about the destruction of the youth, but also about the health of the population. The 1971 pastoral letter states the two scourges that are destroying youth are drugs and pornography, with drugs being the devil that destroys the nation. The letter emphasizes saving the souls of drug addicts, speaking of spiritual

[16] Gina Hechanova, *Development of Community-Based Interventions: The Philippine Experience*. Psychological Research on Urban Society, 2019.
[17] Jayeel Cornelio et Erron C. Medina, « Christianity and Duterte's War on Drugs in the Philippines » Politics, Religion & Ideology, nº 20, 2019, p. 151-169.
[18] Full text : http://cbcponline.net/list-of-pastoral-statements

corruption. The 1972 letter stresses the guilt of the seller and producer who destroy the lives of the youth. The Church accuses drug-addicted youth of being corrupted by Western values and considers them unpatriotic, or enemies of the nation. The expression of the Church then changed in the 1990s: while during the dictatorship and the decade that followed, drugs were not mentioned in the 74 pastoral letters issued[19], it was not until 1997 that a letter on the drug crisis was issued, with a completely different expression. This letter puts drug use in perspective with the development of HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus) and the health problems related to its use. The transmission of this virus is done through contaminated needles, among other things, and the Church has indeed insisted on this to build its moralizing discourse against drugs. The letter calls on the government to use the legal arsenal to eradicate this scourge.

Lastly, the appearance of a new form of expression of the Church on drugs under the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte, is noteworthy. Pastoral letters express the disintegration of social morality. The war on drugs is a sign, according to the Church, that social morality is disappearing, and moral values are disintegrating. This is a new expression against the war on drugs. Still, a few months before the 2016 elections allowing Rodrigo Duterte to assume the presidential office, the Church had stated in a pastoral letter to support any initiative to enable the police to prevent drug trafficking, arrests of drug dealers, dismantling of drug syndicates and cartels, ensuring that the seized drugs are not recycled, calling for the relentless arrest of those involved. The Church has relentlessly promoted a religious discourse leading to moral disgust, which has been translated into a policy of total criminalization of drug use[20].

The moral policy against drugs is based on the discernment between what is good or not for a

[19] *Ibid*. p. 155.
[20] *Ibid*.

society and what constitutes a transgression or a sin[21]. However, the Church is now asking for compassion for an enemy that it has helped to shape through its public expression. This response seems to be too weak and is not credible[22]. The change in discourse on political events is not well grounded, because it is contrary to its previous expression.

Moreover, it is important to consider two other features, highlighted by Filipino philosopher Tracy Llanera, that show a weakening of the power of the Catholic Church in the last decade in the Philippines: in a modernization perspective, this institution tends to seek a clear separation from the state, within the framework of respect for the Philippine Constitution. Long criticized for meddling too much in political life, it is now facing reproaches and insults from the Philippine government and former President Rodrigo Duterte, who for example did not hesitate to call the Pope a son of a bitch in 2015. Relations between the civil authority and the Catholic institution are therefore in a bad way, and this crisis is compounded by the recent scandals of corruption and pedophilia to which the Catholic Church is subjected[23].

The ambivalent position towards drugs, the desire for a clear separation from the State and the scandals weaken the Roman Catholic Church as a possible counter-power. This institution, which contributed to the fall of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1987, is now considered a second-rate counter-power in just over thirty years. Nonetheless it is important to nuance this statement by recalling that it also remains very much rooted in the local neighborhoods and is the bearer of an important popular infatuation: the next pope could be the Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle[24].

The weakening of the weight of the Catholic Church as a counter-power is a sign of a new

[21] Kenneth Meier, *The Politics of Sin: Drugs, Alcohol and Public Policy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.
[22] Jayeel Cornelio, op. cit., p. 335.
[23] Tracy Llanera, « The Law of the Land has God's Anointing'Rorty on Religion, Language, and Politics », Special issue on Rorty and American Politics, Pragmatism Today 10.1, 2019, p. 46-61.
[24] Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, The Papal Election in the Philippines: Negotiating Religious Authority in Newspapers. Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture, 2018.

discursive configuration and a redistribution of religious and political power in the Philippines - it would be appropriate to speak of theological-political power[25] - which benefits new groups. These groups are becoming part of the political discourse, but also of the legislative work, giving rise to a new legal-discursive form that is increasingly visible in the archipelago, especially in the context of the war on drugs, as I argue.

2. War on Drugs and Salvation [*kaligtasan*]

One of the main manifestations of the expression of this theological-political power is the war on drugs led by the Duterte government. The project to reinstate capital punishment, carried as we have seen by a *Born Again* senator, falls within this framework, as it provides for the elimination of drug sellers and repeat users[26]. To understand the specificity of this context, it is important to know that when Rodrigo Duterte took office in June 2016, he ordered the police force to kill anyone suspected of using or selling drugs, and that to avoid being killed, people who use or sell drugs were urged to turn themselves in [*sumuko*] to the authorities to be taken care of. Those who did turn themselves in largely avoided being shot by law enforcement or in extra-judicial killings[27].

Senator Ronald Bato dela Rosa, close to the *Born Again* group and often named as one of the leading architects of this war[28] due to his former position as National Police Chief, describes the first months of the anti-drug campaign as follows:

> *Nung ako'y nag* chief PNP, *nung ako'y nag* lead *sa* war on drugs, record *po 'yan* we were able to have 1.3 million drug users and drug pushers surrendered (sic) to the folds of the law *at*

[25] Michel Foucault, op.cit.
[26] Samuel Cabbuag, Duterte's War Against Drugs as Spectacle or Discipline: Media Reviews. Asian Politics & Policy, 2017, p. 513-518.
[27] Danilo Reyes, « The Spectacle of Violence in Duterte's "War on Drugs" », Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 2017, p. 111-137.
[28] Matthias Kennert et Jason Eligh, *A militarized political weapon: The Philippines' war on drugs*. 2019, en ligne, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333633986_A_militarized_political_weapon_The_Philippines%27_war_on_drugs

> *karamihan sa kanila nag-bagong buhay*[29].

When the Roman Catholic Church criticizes the war on drugs, the latter replied:

> *Ginawa na nga namin ito lahat para ipakita sa inyo na totoo ang aming ginagawa...kami ay maka-Diyos tapos sabihin niyo theatrics*. Wow. Kayo lang ang banal, porke't kayo ang mga pari, kami mga makasalanan na, hindi kami karapat dapat maghawak ng Bibliya at magsuot ng rosaryo?[30]

Senator dela Rosa is critical of the Roman Catholic Church and uses the word *Maka-Dyos* to describe his action, which means to act according to God's desire. Rodrigo Duterte also uses this word in his public communications when talking about his faith, such as in 2019 when he gave an interview with his spiritual advisor, Pastor Apollo Quiboloy, founder of an evangelical church, Kingdom of Jesus, and self-proclaimed son of God[31]:

> You might think that just because I quarrel with the cardinals and bishops, that I am irreverent, that I could be a sacrilegious guy. Pastor knows me, I am a deeply religious person, that's the truth. And my guiding light, Pastor knows that, is the Bible[32].

During the war on drugs, the government has placed particular emphasis on the possibility of salvation for drug addicts. Drug addicts can save their lives by surrendering to the authorities in door-to-door operations, or *Tokhang* operations conducted by the national police. The word used by the government is *kaligtasan*, which means salvation in a religious context. These *Tokhang* operations are defined by Ronald Bato dela Rosa as follows:

> What's the essence of Tokhang? Knock and plead, katukin ang bahay ng drug personality at pakiusapan na, 'Please, huminto ka na. Mag bagong buhay ka.' Hindi namin binabaril agad ang mga drug personalities (Knock on their door and plead with the drug personality saying 'Please stop with the drugs and change your life for the better.' We don't shoot the drug personalities immediately[33].

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[29] CNN Philippines Senatorial Forum, Dec. 2, 2018, 24:12-24:4. URL : https://www.facebook.com/CNNPhilippines/videos/310055523169445/

[30] CNN Philippines Staff (2018), « PNP Chief : Use of religion items in anti-drug campaign not theatrics », 2018.

[31] Alex Brillantes et Maria Pilar Lorenzo, *An Alternate State of Faith : the Rise of Militant Christians in the Philippines*, *Religion and Identity Politics*, p.37-74, en ligne, https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/9789811235504_0003, 2021.

[32] See the full interview : https://ops.gov.ph/presidential-speech/interview-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-with-pastor-apollo-c-quiboloy-3/

[33] « Dela Rosa: We're Waging War on Drugs because We value life », Inquirer, en ligne,

Jayeel Cornelio works on religious institutions in times of crisis and evangelical power in the Philippines. His claim is that the war on drugs is an expression of the religious in the political, which he calls public theologization. He analyses the response of different religious groups to this war, and emphasizes that this response is not uniform, and that the view and analysis given by religious representatives of different faiths is polymorphous[34]. According to the sociologist, this response given to the war on drugs, whether it is of the order of support to the operations carried out or of denunciation, depends strongly on the way in which the drug user is perceived: is he a sinner? Is drug use linked to more general social problems? Where does the responsibility of the user lie? This raises the question of how this war is perceived in the minds of believers and religious representatives, especially when one notes that anti-drug operations are supported by 88% of the inhabitants of the archipelago[35]. There is thus a certain discrepancy between the discourse produced by the catholic representatives and the real experience of the faithful, who seem to remain quite free and do not see any incompatibility between supporting this war against drugs and living an authentic faith[36]. This shows a failure of religious representatives: the usual response to evil has become judgment, there is no compassion. It is a failure of faith.

According to the sociologist, the idea of justice is present in the mind of the believer who supports the war on drugs. It is associated with protecting by punishing those who break the ideal of life in society. There may therefore be coherence in the mind of the believer who votes for Rodrigo Duterte, but this implies that the morality and the message of togetherness are modified. Faced with this failure of faith, the Church has reacted by taking a stand against the war on drugs, and representatives of reformed religious groups have given their support, even to the Senate, as we have seen with faithful members of the *Born Again* group.

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https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/938247/bato-dela-rosa-pnp-drug-war-killings-human-rights-life-drug-lords , 2017.

[34] Jayeel Cornelio, « Rappler Talk: Will Religious Endorsements Work in 2019 Polls », Rappler, 2019.

[35] Nicole Curato (dir.), A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Duterte's Early Presidency, Quezon City and New York: Ateneo de Manila University Press and Cornell University Press, 2017, p. 231–250.

[36] Jayeel Cornelio et Erron C. Medina, *op. cit.*

There appears to be a problem with the transmission and religious education in the parishes: the values distilled by the Church are not put into practice, and the Church is content to give voting instructions without really proposing that these values be put into practice in daily life. In other words, there is no space for thought offered to the believers to be able to understand the social issues of which the war on drugs is a symptom. On the one hand, the Catholic Church is weakened and fails to promote the implementation of its values, while on the other, other groups clearly support the government's campaign.

This analysis provides keys to understanding and is based on the analysis of different groups, in a rather global sociological perspective. Thus, in this polymorphous landscape, I have conducted a survey on a local scope, whose methodology and results will be presented here.

3. Survey conducted from 2019 to 2021, in a local Church

During a survey conducted from 2019 to 2021, I decided to focus on the *Born Again* evangelical group, because of the presence of some of its representatives in the Senate, as I discussed with Manny Pacquiao. The objective of this research was to capture the educational dimensions of *Born Again* evangelicalism, based on a local church, our discipline of reference being Educational Sciences.

The *Born Again* group in the Philippines is elusive in its form, as the term is used interchangeably to describe both a group of evangelical churches founded by Pastor Horace Hockett in the United States, and a non-homogeneous group of small local churches. In common use to say that one is a *Born Again* Christian in the Philippines means that one has accepted Christ by surrendering one's life to His plans.

This evangelical movement emerged in the late 1930s in the Philippines and gained popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, considered its golden age. From the 2000s onwards, *Born Again* churches have

tended to grow by targeting young people in schools[37], especially students. These churches can be found in many places, especially in rural or poor urban areas, or in areas not reached by the Catholic Church. These churches, which often look more like chapels, do not shine so much because of their physical structures, but rather because of the personal contact of pastors and workers. Whether they are small house churches, or garage churches in some cases, or small congregations, these groups offer personalized attention to the spiritual and earthly needs of the people who attend. Very little research has been done on this intangible group, so it is difficult to define it properly.

A non-scholarly article published by the Department of Anthropology at Ateneo de Manila University states that the foundation of the faith of *Born Again* Christians is John 3:3: "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God'." In terms of this religious conversion, *Born Again* or the new birth does not refer to the physical resurrection experienced by Jesus Christ, but rather to a new birth in a spiritual realm, experienced by those who receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The faith of *Born Again* Christians is based on a personal relationship with Christ[38].

To investigate the educational dimensions underpinning the *Born Again* evangelical faith, I conducted ethnographic research in a local church in Manila whose leaders wanted to evangelize the residents of a very poor neighborhood. I had worked in the said district as an international volunteer from 2015 to 2017. I chose two ways to collect data: by conducting research interviews with some of its members, and by listening to sermons aimed at members of this group.

I first conducted non-structured interviews with seven members of this group. I then conducted semi-structured interviews. These were carried out in the native language, Tagalog, or in English, from

[37] Michael Tan, « Born Again », en ligne, https://opinion.inquirer.net/86708/born-again, *Inquirer*, 15 juillet 2015.
[38] Careme Garcia & al, *Praying at PCF: What It Means to be Born Again for The Filipino*, Ateneo Ethnographies, under the direction of Pr. Labastilla Skilty.

August 2020 to February 2021, where possible face-to-face, or by video conference, depending on existing Covid-19 restrictions in Metro Manila. To analyze the interviews, I relied on a qualitative and structural content analysis method[39] used in the field of education, allowing for the inclusion of a biographical dimension as well as the contribution of the life stories of the interviewees. This method is based, among other things, on the search for disjunctions, the identification of transformative moments and the study of temporalities in the life stories collected. The moments of conversion to evangelical Protestantism and departure from the Catholic Church emerged as turning points and pivotal moments in the non-directive interviews, thereby corresponding to intense moments of formal, informal, and non-formal education.

I also collected data by listening to, transcribing and analyzing about 20 pastors' sermons. These sermons were transcribed in the source language, Tagalog or English, from December 2020 to March 2021. The aim of this data collection was not to reconstruct the theology of the *Born Again* group. I looked for central and redundant ideas that appeared in them. They are indeed an intermingling of political discourse - they give information about a way of life and about the Kingdom of God on Earth - and religious discourse - they give information about the relationship to God and the spiritual life of the Christian.

The research is anchored in the Sciences of Education, and therefore calls upon several disciplines: sociology, philosophy, history, and anthropology, but always keeping at its very core the dialectical link between education and evangelicalism, and evangelicalism and education, whatever the disciplines of reference. The data I collected was analyzed both in terms of sensible experience, through the interviews conducted, and discourse, through the attention paid to the preaching. I will now

[39] Étienne Bourgeois, et Anne Piret, « L'analyse structurale de contenu, une démarche pour l'analyse des représentations », dans Léopold Paque *et al* (dir.), *L'analyse qualitative en éducation*, 2007, p. 179-191.

detail the results of this survey, in particular the moment of conversion as well as the analysis of the preaching.

3.1. The moment of conversion to the *Born Again* group

Megachurches may sometimes use charity to develop, by giving help or offering services to people they wish to convert[40]. I thought it would be interesting to place the moment of conversion in the context of life trajectories, in order to highlight other elements than the mere fact of benefiting from charity. I will present here one example, among others, to show the plurality of reasons that can explain the conversion to the *Born Again* group.

One participant who gave permission for interview data to be used in public writings explained that she was introduced to the *Born Again* group by her neighbor, who was picking up free school supplies given by the said group. This participant, Gloria [not her real name], lives in a public cemetery in Manila and is very poor. She is 61 years old, and her main source of income is cleaning and preparing the graves when families visit their deceased. Gloria looks after about 20 graves and is paid Php500 [7 USD] per year per grave. Her annual income is about 200 USD, which she supplements with donations from various assistance organizations working in Manila's public cemetery. Gloria is food insecure on a daily basis and has made scavenging [*sikap*] her lifeblood.

She explains that after collecting the school supplies, it was her neighbor who suggested that she convert, but that at the time she did not understand the way this *Born Again* group staged prayers with weeping and wailing. She also says that she was challenged by the form of the prayers, songs, and weeping, and that she mocked the group by parodying their name [*Buang Again*]. One may therefore wonder why she made the decision to convert, beyond material considerations. She talks about it in

[40] Jayeel Cornelio, « Religion and Civic Engagement: the Case of Iglesia ni Cristo in the Philippines », *Religion, State & Society*, n^{0} 45:1, 2017, p. 23-38.

these words:

> Pero ngayon na naranasan ko yun na, isa na rin ako sa kanila, naintindihan ko na kung bakit bakit sila umiiyak, bakit sila na kumakanta. Naranasan ko na habang kumakanta kami. Nagwo-worship kami, yung kanta, paran parang umano sa puso ko na. Basta nagwo-worship kami no'n Sunday service no'n, bigla na lang may kanta, biglang tumulo yung luha ko, tapos yung pastor naming, nakatalikod siya kasi eto 'ko, nando'n yung pastor ko, do'n siya nakaharap. Pero bigla siyang, nung umiiyak ako, siyang nagsalita na: 'Ate Gloria pinatawad ka na ni Lord'. Iniyakan ko yung kanta, kasi nagwoworship kami no'n. Parang, nadala ko do'n sa kanta.[41]

The way the pastor addresses the participant using the word *Ate* [elder sister] is interesting to note. It is a word that is used in the street to address an older woman, or in the family to refer to older women. It is not used in a formal situation, however, as it may be disrespectful. This is what Gloria says about it:

> Kasi, sa katoliko, maski sabihin mo pang member ka ng isang grupo do'n, hindi ko Nakita, hindi ko naranasan yung ginagawa ng born again. Pamilya ka talaga nila, pamilya ang turing sa'yo. Lahat, halos tuwing magsisimba ka, lahat sila "nanay" "ate" ang tawag sa'yo. Pare-pareho kaming nanay pero talagang nando'n yung love, nando'n yung family na, kahit na yung iba nga pangmayaman yung katolikong church.[42]

The respondent finds a familiarity in this group, a closeness that she did not find in the Catholic Church, which she says is for the rich. She explained that at first, she did not understand the format of worship using crying, singing, dancing and that she has changed her perspective. She experienced feeling God's presence during the contemplative moments. She began to build a relationship with God, which helps her in her daily life to overcome her difficulties:

> Tapos, aaminin ko sa'yo na, nag-try akong gumamit ng drugs, oo natandaan ko, oo di ba sinabi ko sa'yo. Pero nagawa ko 'yon nang sabay iniwasan ko ang sigarilyo, iniwasan ko ang drugs. Sabi nila, once na tumikim ka ng drugs, hindi ka makakaalis na. No it's a lie, pagpray mo siya, Yung mga problema natin sa buhay, kung nahihirapan ka, ipag-pray mo lang, Lord, o kaya kung may sakit ka, 'Lord ayoko nitong nararamdaman ko. Alam ko ikaw lang ang makakatulong sa akin, ikaw lang ang makakaalis sa akin nitong ganitong karamdaman ko'. Or 'ikaw lang ang makakaalis sa akin ng bisyo ko na 'to, alisin mo sa'kin 'to, ayoko na nito'. Then one day magigising ka, ayaw mo na lahat ng bisyo, which is naranasan ko. Puwede ko siyang, isigaw, i-testimony ko, right, i-testimony na 'pagka ginusto mo na nandyan ang Diyos, kasama mo si Kristo, kasama mo ang Diyos sa buhay mo, magagawa mo lahatnang hindi ka

[41] Excerpt from a non-directive interview conducted on 16 February 2021, with Gloria [not her real name] by us, in Manila. The purpose of this interview was to collect data on the moment of the respondent's conversion to the Born Again group. The interview was conducted in Tagalog.

[42] *Ibid*.

> nahihirapan. Look sa pandemic, hindi namin naranasan kahit papa'no na, wala kaming kakainin or ano, kahit papa'no, nandiyan ka[43].

She also echoes this idea of the strength of the relationship she was able to build with God to cope with her problems, recalling a police raid in 2016. By then, Gloria had been a convert for almost three years:

> Talagang kailangan pala na i-surrender mo talaga lahat yung sarili mo kay Lord. Sumuko ah… tanggapin mo si Jesus bilang iyong Lord and personal savior of your life. Gano'n ok, kasi nung, di ba nakalabas yung anak ko sa presinto, dun nga naka naano yung kaso niya. Tapos nung merong raid do'n, raid do'n saa lugar naming, sa mga drug addict, sa mga drug lord, di ba nasama yung anak kong bunso muntik nang mabaril. Pero siguro, dininig din yung dasal ko ang ingay-ingay ko do'n ang lakas ng dasal ko na. Baguhin yung isip ng mga pulis, na nando'n sa loob [ng komunidad namin], dahil hawak nga yung apo ko yung anak ko. Nakausap akong pulis na "Sir bakit gano'n yung…". Sabi ko natutulog lang sila di naman nila ano pati nga yung apo ko binitbit na parang aso e binalik do'n sa nanay. Dahil karga ng anak ko, anya tinanong sa'kin anong pangalan ng anak mo. Sabi ko, Eric [not his real name], hindi yun ang sagot sa'kin so siguro alam nila kung sinong yung kukunin nila, may pangalan sila, hindi yun nga nakawal. Pinakawalan lang nila yung dalawang magkumpare, yung dalawang magkapitbahay, and then din, so dahil sa mga pangyayari na ganyan parang nahahat nangako. Nangako kasi ako na Lord, makalabas lang yung anak ko, makaano lang, babaguhin ko yung buhay ko, sabi ko sa kanya, so sabi mo na, nagsimula kang magbasa ng Bible.[44]

Gloria credits her prayers and surrendering her life to God as the cause of positive events in her life, namely her son's release from prison and stopping using drugs. She was baptized a year after she started attending the Bible study group. Therefore, there are several elements that came into play in her conversion: the fact that she was no longer really linked to a religious group or practice, the conjunction of events that occurred at the time she met the *Born Again* group, her desire to access a new life, or the presence of the *Born Again* group in her district, its charity and evangelism activities. Another element was the closeness and love she found there, which she did not find among Catholics. What determined her conversion is therefore a plurality of elements that can only be expressed through the singularity of her life trajectory.

3.2. Sermons focused on the shift from darkness to light

[43] *Ibid*.
[44] *Ibid*.

In addition to the research interviews conducted, I had the possibility to attend several *Born Again* church services. These services were held online, both because of the Covid-19 restrictions, and because the preaching was relayed on the church's Facebook page. Four people took turns preaching from week to week, calling themselves either *kapatid*, brother or pastor. I will refer to them here as 'pastor' to simplify the terminology.

I was soon saturated with data, with pastors repeating the same ideas and techniques consistently. I noted the personal way in which the pastors presented themselves to the audience, addressing the [tele]viewers directly, such as Pastor Norman: “Good morning ! My name is Pastor Norman and welcome to our daily word. First, let me greet all of you a blessed new year of 2021. How are you this morning? How was your first week of 2021?”[45].

The pastors use their first names to introduce themselves and challenge the audience directly with questions or interjections. This is rhetorical, as the preaching is online, so it is impossible for the audience to answer these questions. They all systematically use phrases that imply emotional or family ties, such as "my friends", "my loved ones", or "hello family", as also indicated by the survey respondents. A message of hope is developed in a triptych: a new beginning is possible, we must submit to God's plans, we become God's envoys on Earth.

3.2.1. A new beginning is possible

The pastors address the suffering, and this is a recurring theme in all the preaching. Pastors address "those who feel hopeless"[46], "the anxious and worried"[47], insist that "it is never too late to start again"[48], name the "uncertainties and challenges that hinder our ability to be happy"[49]. The pandemic

[45] Excerpt from a preaching on 9 January 2021, *In the midst of all these Uncertainties, we can put our Hope in God,* preached by Pastor Norman, in the English language, in the studied Born Again parish.
[46] Excerpt from a preaching of January 6, 2021, *Our hope is alive*. preaching given by pastor Pareja, in English, in the studied Born Again parish.
[47] Extract from a preaching of January 4, 2021, *How to have peace as we move forward this 2021*, preaching given by pastor Jovin, in English, in the studied Born Again parish.
[48] Extract from a preaching of 9 January 2021, op.cit.

and the social problems linked to this crisis are recurrent in all the preaching. Pastors associate feelings of suffering and anxiety with the current situation. However, they do not limit the cause of suffering to the present circumstances. They repeatedly mention the cumulative suffering, or what we experienced in our lives before the pandemic. The way the human condition is described is that of a man who experiences tragedy, a fall, distress, suffering and makes mistakes. Everyone can relate to this, as we have all experienced difficult events. In the Philippines, living conditions are difficult for a large part of the population and the use of this language can help to create this closeness between pastors and listeners. The pastors recognize that human existence is punctuated by suffering, difficulties, but also mistakes. However, they do not develop a corrective discourse that would aim to condemn sinners: the dimension of hope is strongly marked. The word *hope* appears 50 times in the 10 sermons. The word *saved* appears nine times and the word *savior* six times. The word *light* appears 43 times. The word *forgiveness* appears more than 15 times. There is a kind of opposition between a vision of the fallen man and the saved man that we find in the preaching. What makes it possible to go from the fall to salvation is God. All our problems can be solved by God, because we are the fruit of His creation.

3.2.2. We must submit to God's plans

> Can you imagine? If you failed yesterday and you ask for forgiveness, God does not carry it over today? Why? Because his mercies begin anew every morning. If there are times in your life that you don't feel forgiven when you ask for forgiveness, there are only 2 possibilities: 1. it's enemy, the devil accusing you of being unworthy. 2. It's maybe because you have been doing the same sin over and over again. But this is not about God's mercies, nor about his forgiveness, this is something for us to take note: “Because while we are free to make our own choices, we are not free from the consequences thereof”[50].

These are the words of a pastor who bases his preaching on Lamentations 3:19-23, which speaks of how misery, distress, wormwood, or poison bring down our souls, make us lose ourselves. It

[49] Extract from a preaching of 5 January 2021, *Who is in total control and gives assurance of peace on today's*. preaching given by Pastor Lito, in English, in the studied Born Again parish.
[50] *Ibid*.

is God's infinite love that gives hope in trouble. His love, but also His mercy, which is constantly renewed. The imagery is powerful; the pastor refers to the abandonment of Jerusalem, the consequences of the famine, the corpses that litter the streets, the children eaten by their parents. He challenges the listeners by telling them again that if we are alive and willing to change, God's grace will always be available to us. This change is therefore linked to personal will. If we want to change, we can, because God's grace is always available. To change, we must accept God and especially the plans God has made for our lives.

I noted a saturation on two points, namely the fact that only Jesus can save us from evil, but also on the level of rhetoric, i.e. the pastors unfold examples from everyday life, quote passages from the Bible and give messages of hope. They describe the darkness, then the light, then the way to move from one to the other. It is a language of redemptive truth, focused on submission to God's plan for salvation.

3.2.3. By submitting to God , we become God's envoys on Earth

Pastors repeatedly point out that the fact that we must know God's plan and act according to it gives each human being a kind of mission: each one can become an envoy of God on Earth. Human beings have a mission, they are the work of God, who has created good works for them to do. He wants us to make the world a better place, and every Christian is an envoy of God. Not all Christians are pastors, but all Christians must be messengers of God[51].

To conclude the presentation of the preaching, I would like to stress that the idea of being sent by God introduces the possibility of having a mission. This insight is important because it sets *Born Again* members in action, but it also reverses the evidence that people who are poor or in sin have nothing to contribute to society. By joining the *Born Again* group, people who are not recognized nor

[51] Excerpt from a preaching on September 4, 2020, *God has Asked you to Serve Others*. preached by Pastor Norman, in English, in the studied Born Again parish.

expected to contribute can find a space in which a possible unfolds. Something is expected of them, they are seen as people who can act, serve God and contribute to society. Once again, we find the image of the passage from the shadows to the light.

This expression and conviction of becoming God's messenger on earth is also repeatedly found in Senator Manny Pacquiao's speech:

> God has a purpose. He brings me back into his kingdom to use me to glorify his name, to let the people know that there is God who can raise the people from nothing into something. […] I want to have friends around me and drinking and have girls beside me, and of course, gambling. […] I hate to do that anymore, and my heart wants to read the Bible, wants to obey God and that's my heart. That's how God changed my life. […] If I start to go into politics, I think I believe that I can serve more, I can help more people. […] When you have Jesus in your life, when you have God in your life, like the thing in this world is not important to your heart. The more important is God in your hear[52].

From these data, I have analyzed several educational dimensions that re-articulate them with the overall context of the Philippines. Two of these dimensions are presented here: the modification of the relationship to knowledge and the status of the Truth *of* the Self [Vérité *du* sujet].

4. Modification of the relationship to knowledge and status of the Truth *of* the Self

Becoming an envoy of God on Earth is a concern for Bishop Pabillo who belongs to the Philippine Roman Catholic Church. He wonders why believers can see President Duterte as an envoy of God[53]. He shows that in the Bible there are two views of the Christian in relation to authority. The first is the one that says that every man must submit to higher authorities, that authority comes from God and that to oppose authority means somehow fighting against a provision established by God. Those who are engaged in such a struggle will receive the punishment they have brought upon themselves[54]. God must

[52] Melanie Arter, « Boxer Manny Pacquiao: God Uses Me to Glorify His Name », *CBSNews*, online, https://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/melanie-hunter/boxer-manny-pacquiao-god-uses-me-glorify-his-name, 9 février 2015.

[53] Bishop Pabillo, « Why did God gave us Duterte? », *Rappler*, en ligne, , https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/206219-why-god-give-duterte-bishop-pabillo/, 1er juillet 2018.

[54] Romans 13 : 1-2.

be obeyed rather than men[55]. The other view is that subordination to legal authority is not possible if the latter does not support Peace, Justice, and Truth[56].

So as to have a better understanding of the establishment of a new type of politico-religious power carried by evangelical groups, starting from the particular case of the *Born Again,* I will focus on the modification of the relationship to knowledge induced by the evangelical doctrine. In addition, I will examine the status of Truth in the shaping of the Self, in order to elucidate the destiny of the educational processes linked to conversion: does it give access to the Self? What is the educational project underpinning this doctrine?

The *Born Again* evangelical group inherits certain elements of the Protestant doctrine. For example, I noted that the correction of sin does not involve penance or the practice of confession in this group. The abandonment of confession has a very profound educational implication: the relationship between knowledge and power is greatly modified.

In *L'histoire de la sexualité* [*The History of Sexuality*], in *La volonté de savoir* [*The Will of Knowing*], Michel Foucault demonstrates the investment of the body by the relations of power-knowledge, using the example of confession. The priest is an intercessor, between knowledge and the person who confesses, and confession focuses on concupiscence and the flesh. Foucault identifies in Saint Augustine's thought, through concupiscence, the dimension of the libido: this is this involuntary part of our sexuality, whether it be at the level of excitation or orgasm. In our sexuality there comes an involuntary element which is the reproduction of our disobedience to God: this is original sin. The correction of sin is therefore performed by the body. Power is exercised as close as possible to the singular dimension of our existence, and invests the body by producing a knowledge about it[57]. That is

[55] Acts 5 : 29.
[56] Matthew 22 : 36-38.
[57] Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir,* Paris, Gallimard, coll. « Tel », 1975, p.34-35.

to say, the power of the intercessor is exercised through the knowledge extracted from the subject who confesses.

In the *Born Again* group, the intercessor between the believer and the knowledge is in the back seat, we can indeed point out his effacement. The absolution of sins is not achieved by acts nor confessions, but by faith and by putting God at the center of one's life, and this also modifies the relationship to power. The believer regains a kind of power in this configuration because he/she is less dependent on the pastor than the Catholic is on the priest on the question of salvation. The believer becomes capable of reading and interpreting the Bible for him/herself. There is a liberation of potential, knowledge is directly available, but this does not mean that the Self is formed without revealed Truth: contact with the divinity is always from the point of view of evil, and healing remains necessary.

These two points, the abandonment of confession and direct access to scripture, refocus the practice of faith on the individual. The individual is much more central to the *Born Again* than to Catholics. The individual makes a choice to put God at the center of his or her life, but this choice is always subject to the status of Human beings as God's creation.

This deeply individual characteristic of the practice of faith in this evangelical group finds its historical roots in Arminianism and the Great Awakenings of the 19th century. Arminianism, as a contestation of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, asserts that every believer can be saved by God in a gratuitous way, and not because of good deeds or any other merit, provided that he or she is willing to adhere to this salvation. Salvation is thus affirmed as a sincere desire of God, unconditional and incompressible to acts[58]. The Great Awakening, a reaffirmation of the main doctrines of the Reformers, marked the practice of faith with a strong individualistic tendency, affirming that Christianity is not a

[58] Bernard Cotret, « Puritains, papistes et arminiens » dans *La Révolution anglaise* Perrin, Paris, 2015, p. 29-39.

doctrine but a life. Religion is an individual regeneration, which can become the essence and foundation of social reforms[59].

There is thus an isometry between the status of the subject responsible for his salvation [*kaligtasan*] by surrendering to God [*sumuko*], and the status of the addict, who must surrender to civil authority [*sumuko*] to obtain salvation [*kaligtasan*] and will be punished if he does not acknowledge his faults. By distilling in their sermons the idea of regeneration of the subject, based on personal choice, it can therefore be said that certain evangelist groups such as the *Born Again* normalize the idea of the personal responsibility of the Self to take charge of themselves, thus clearing the civil authority of any responsible intervention.

This individual configuration also raises the question of the destiny of the educational process: can evangelical conversion lead to a form of liberation, or to a form of subjection? Or in other words: can the Self access him/herself, and his/her own Truth? During the survey, I could observe how the conversion to the *Born Again* group had changed the lives of the respondents, as they found a new role, new responsibilities, or entered local solidarity networks. They described with enthusiasm and conviction how they were able to achieve liberation and a new life, in a form of self-narration that was sometimes, and often, romanticized.

In order to elucidate the destiny of the educational process of conversion, it is then necessary to consider two facets of Truth in the process of construction of the Self: the first is the Truth held by the power or the institution, to which the Self must submit, under the gaze of the benevolent master, the policeman or the pastor or the priest. It is a Truth *of* the subject, to which the latter must conform, with a model of educational conversion: interiority adapts to a well-defined exteriority, and the Self cannot

[59] Jean-Louis Marin-Lamellet, « Du grand réveil spirituel à une nouvelle réforme », *Revue française d'études américaines* 2014 n° 141, p. 107-119.

deploy itself[60]. In the case of religion, the Truth *of* the subject is that of possession by a divine transcendence and by the power that represents it: Human beings are the fruit of divine Creation, and this assigns them a special status in the World; they must conform to an external Truth in order to obtain salvation. The second facet is the Truth *about* the subject, which manifests itself "in that capacity of the subject to experience that he is changing by being educated"[61]. Here, experience allows for transformation and educational metamorphosis is possible, provided that it can be analyzed with a look at oneself.

In *Born Again* evangelicalism, the external Truth is given once and for all by the pastor and the religious discourse: one must submit to God's plans and work in His name for his glorification. Thus, we no longer speak of a Truth of which the subject in formation is the artisan, but of a Truth *of* the Self in which the converted person must merge. The emphasis is not placed on the educational dimension and the possible metamorphosis of the subject through education, but on the need to submit to the divine plan. History, whether individual or collective, loses its progressive dimension, and Time remains in some way suspended after the death of Christ, which constitutes the last historical moment conditioning existence. Individual experience is thus no longer valuable and is transcended by the external Truth. The Truth *about* the Self, accessible by the exercise of a subjectivity and the recognition of the value of the singular experience in the metamorphic education, becomes a Truth *of* the subject, recognizing neither the subjectivity, nor the value of the singular experience, and held by the religious authority: the Self can thus not act by him/herself anymore, but according to dogmas expressed by the religious discourse[62]. In other words, there is a break with any educational project, education no longer being thought of as a mean to access to the Self in the *Born Again* evangelism, because of this change in the regime of Truth. Education becomes a drama in which salvation is played out, and existence a

[60] Didier Moreau, « Confiance en soi et métamorphose éducative », *Recherches en éducation* n° 31, 2018, p. 11.
[61] *Ibid*.
[62] *Ibid*.

staging of God's will that binds us to act in His name. From the metamorphic educational model allowing the deployment of the Self conceived by theorists of the Reformation like Melanchthon, there is a shift to a model of conversion, in which interiority becomes Evil again and must be saved by an authority, and no longer by education.

Contact with the divinity is always from the point of view of Evil, which is an indispensable condition, even a prerequisite for establishing a relationship with Christ. Experience, History and Truth *about* the subject are no longer of value. The therapeutic space offered by the pastors of the *Born Again* group certainly aims at healing, but does not propose a real educational project allowing the liberation of the Self: this therapeutic space is a space of conversion and recognition of Evil, healing or aspiration to happiness, or escape from Evil being conditioned by the obligation of conversion. In other words, the education of the Self is abandoned.

This therapeutic platform, proposed by the *Born Again* evangelical group, is therefore not an educational space, but a space of attachment to a well-defined, non-progressive identity, known to all, namely the identity of a sinner who must be saved through conversion. Here lies the heart of the destiny of the educational process of conversion: the emergence of the Self in this type of evangelism consists therefore in a form of individualization according to the exigencies of power. We find here the two facets of the subjection as thought by Michel Foucault in his genealogy of the Self: the attachment to a non-progressive identity, and the absence of educational requirement which directs the transformations of the Self according to a necessity of the exercise of the power[63].

This change in the status of Truth allows the civil authority, which takes over the Truth *about* the subject, to pose as a remedy for social evil, in this case drugs in the Philippine archipelago. The government thus founds an objective of curing the Evil, formerly attached to the religious authority, which we see, struggles in this redefinition of the borders between the civil and the religious. Where

[63] *Ibid*.

the Catholic Church is clearly opposed to the government's taking in hand the salvation of the Nation by eradicating drug addicts, without being able to allow the implementation of the values it conveys, some evangelical churches find there interstices to develop and accompany, through discourses and educational practices, increasingly coercive social control measures by accompanying the dispossession of the subject of his singular history, thus renouncing the education of the self.

This is how President Rodrigo Duterte's mandate, marked by the deployment of ever more oppressive forms of control, can be described as governmentality by salvation, based on the exercise of theological-political power, whose main manifestation is the dispossession of the Self and the impossibility of accessing one's own Truth. The architecture of this form of governmentality is, as we have seen, enabled and accompanied by discourses and educational practices distilled by evangelical groups such as the *Born Again*.

Conclusion

We have seen that even though the Catholic Church in the Philippines takes a stand against the war on drugs waged by the civil authority, the majority of the population remains in favor of the measures taken that target drug addicts.

The example of Manny Pacquiao and the analysis of the evangelical doctrine allow us to understand that the frontier between civil and religious is redefined when people who join the *Born Again* evangelical group can become God's envoys on Earth. We can speak of a theological-political power, which has seized the Truth of the people, by dispossessing them again and again of their own appropriations. Manny Pacquiao is not alone, as nearly 30% of the Philippine senators belong to a Evangelical or Pentecostal group[64], as well as some members of the former government, such as the

[64] These senators were elected with the following voting percentages: Joel Villanueva (41.39%), Manny Pacquiao (35.6%), Win Gatchaliam (33.58%), Bong Revila (30.92%), Ronald dela Rosa (40.18%), Titto Sotto (38.51%), Cynthia Villar (53.4%)

Department of Education Secretary, Leonor Briones, or the former director of the Bureau of Immigration, Jaime Morente.

Demonstrations of this evangelical power can be seen in several places in the world, especially in Brazil with Jair Bolsonaro, who was baptized in the Jordan River by a neo-Pentecostal priest, and in the United States under the mandate of Donald Trump. Evangelical churches are also becoming increasingly popular in the Philippines, to the point that the Catholic Church is concerned, as it sees many of its followers going over to the Pentecostal and Evangelical side. Some evangelical communities welcome authoritarian regimes that can impose their individual conservative ethics on a Nation, with little regard for Human Rights. While the primitive Protestant Churches deliberate in Synod, some evangelical Churches like the *Born Again* are under a regime of leaders or providential men, whom they believe to be clothed with a special anointing of the Holy Spirit. This brings them closer to certain political leaders. These churches no longer distinguish between civil and religious and are approaching the notion of a theocratic state.

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