

Article

New Politico-Religious Actors: Social Theologies and a Typology of Evangelical University Youth Networks

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Abstract

This article analyses the social theologies of evangelical university youth networks as new political actors in contemporary Brazil. It draws on Weberian theory of “social types” to describe the different forms of organisation and political engagement among evangelical youth based on their theological composition. The article also provides a brief overview of generational theory regarding the recognition of youth. In addition, it highlights, alongside social theologies, a typological approach (Weber) to new forms of political organisation within three evangelical youth networks (ABU, Rede Fale, and REJU), all of which seek to articulate youth within the evangelical environment through social theologies.

Keywords: evangelical youth; social theology; evangelical university networks; evangelicalism; Weberian typology

1. Introduction: Youth and Religious Thought from a New Politics

This article explores the relationship between youth, their theological expressions, and the challenges religions face in contemporary society. It focuses on youth organisations connected to the Brazilian evangelical movement, particularly through the lens of what are called “social theologies”. Gustavo Gutiérrez defines social theology as a form of political theology that encourages critical reflection on historical practice in the light of the Word of God (Gutiérrez 1987, p. 52). This theology is rooted in the lived reality of the poor and actively engages with social practice, linking faith to social action (Gutiérrez 1987, p. 53). Furthermore, Gutiérrez characterises social theology as a discourse on how Christian communities integrate themselves into the social reality agenda (Gutiérrez 1987, p. 55).

The article situates itself intuitively within political debates emerging from liberation theology and broadly engages with themes of youth, evangelicalism, university life, and the organisational forms of social and political action among these groups. This focus is particularly significant given that traditional Marxist theories often overlook youth as a social sector, since they do not constitute “the mass of traditional workers” (Marx 1987, p. 143). Within this framework, the political notion derived from liberation theology is expanded by incorporating Jacques Rancière’s conception of politics, which is grounded in the “principle of equality”. Rancière describes politics as the creation of a common space for new subjects and unprecedented objects, making visible what was previously unseen and enabling those once dismissed as “noisy animals” to be recognised as speaking beings (Rancière 1996, p. 41).

In contrast to the overused idea that “everything is political”, Rancière associates politics with the rare transformation of “noisy animals” into beings endowed with logos and speech within a shared space. Semantically, politics is established through “the distribution



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of the sensible" (Rancière 1996, p. 42), which mobilises previously marginalised social actors into the arena of social struggle, making this concept particularly relevant for understanding youth in Brazil.

From another angle, Rancière argues that political action, through dissensus, disrupts the accepted and often naturalised state of affairs in which relations of domination are entrenched. This disruption alters the destinies and positions defined within that order, constituting what he calls a "battle over the sensible, over the perceptible". Dissensual activity produces shifts that can be symbolically seen in actions such as nineteenth-century workers collectively framing labour relations that otherwise depend on countless private individual relations, or demonstrators occupying streets and barricades to literalise urban communication routes as "public space" (Rancière 1996, pp. 42–43).

In Rancière's view, politics does not have a fixed place or predetermined subjects. Instead, it is an "act of subjectivation carried out in the name of equality, which challenges the prevailing order of action, perception and thought" (Rancière 1996, p. 45). This insight is crucial for analysing religious youth who fight for "justice", which, according to Rancière, exists only in "intermittent acts of implementation, without obeying any general law, but having dissensus as its common operator" (Rancière 1996, p. 45). He further argues that the status quo, distribution and domination function as mechanisms of control and oppression, collectively constituting what he terms "the police" (Rancière 1996, p. 61).

Building on this expanded understanding of politics, the article examines the dissensual actions of evangelical university youth. These young people, organised in networks of social action, contest the dominant adult-centred structures within Christian institutions. Through their socio-political practices, these dissident youth engage in intense theological negotiation and enact what Rancière calls "interruption" (Rancière 2004). In doing so, they challenge the organisational status quo of their faith communities in their pursuit of youth protagonism.

To support this analysis, the article draws on Weber's (1999) concept of typology to describe three distinct networks of social action among university youth in Brazil. Weber's typology relates to "ideal types", which are conceptual models derived from observing social phenomena and attributing specific characteristics and relationships to classify them effectively.

The classification of the "ideal type" creates points of contact for interpreting observed reality in exploratory work based on what is empirically observable. For Monteiro and Cardoso (2002), two points are crucial for understanding Weber's ideal types from a social perspective: (1) they "provide a limiting case with which concrete phenomena may be contrasted; an unambiguous concept that facilitates classification and comparison"; and (2) they "serve as a scheme for generalisations of type (...) which, in turn, serve the ultimate aim of ideal type analysis: the causal explanation of historical events" (Monteiro and Cardoso 2002, p. 14). This is "Adjusted in accordance with RESP03."

This article reflects on youth, their theological expressions, and the challenges faced by religions in contemporary society. It focuses on youth organisations linked to the Brazilian evangelical movement, particularly through what are termed "social theologies", which Gustavo Gutiérrez defines as a form of political theology that promotes a "critical reflection on historical praxis in the light of the Word of God" (Gutiérrez 1987, p. 52), grounded in the "reality of the poor (...) and engaged with social practice, articulating faith and social action" (Gutiérrez 1987, p. 53). In this context, Gutiérrez also describes "social theology" as a debate on how "Christian communities (...) are inserted into the agenda of social reality" (Gutiérrez 1987, p. 55).

The article is intuitively situated within the political debates emerging from liberation theology and, more broadly, within the axes of youth, evangelicalism, university life, and

the forms of organisation of social and political action among these social groups. This is particularly relevant because conventional theories linked to orthodox Marxism tend to disregard the youth sector for not constituting “the mass of traditional workers” (Marx 1987, p. 143). In this context, the notion of politics derived from liberation theology is expanded through the incorporation of another conception of politics, that of Jacques Rancière, which is grounded in the “principle of equality”, whereby he outlines “the common, new subjects and unprecedented objects, so as to render visible that which had not previously been visible, and to enable those who were regarded as ‘noisy animals’ to be perceived as speaking beings” (Rancière 1996, p. 41).

With this additional conception, politics is not approached through the overused formula that “everything is political”; rather, it is associated with “the transformation of noisy animals into speaking beings”. Endowed with logos and speech within the common space, politics, he insists, “is rare”. In semantic terms, it “establishes itself in the notion of the distribution of the sensible” (Rancière 1996, p. 42), mobilising social actors previously lacking visibility into the arena of social struggle, which makes it particularly relevant for interpreters of youth in Brazil.

From another perspective, Rancière argues that “political action, through dissensus, disrupts the given configuration of the state of affairs, often naturalised, in which relations of domination are established or crystallised, thereby altering the destinies and positions defined therein”. He terms this a “battle over the sensible, over the perceptible”. In this process, dissensual activity produces displacements that may be identified in the following symbolic actions: those of nineteenth-century workers who frame, in collective terms, labour relations that in fact depend upon an infinity of private individual relations; or those of demonstrators in streets or on barricades who literalise urban communication routes as “public space” (Rancière 1996, pp. 42–43).

In Rancière’s conception, politics has no fixed location or predetermined subjects; instead, it is an “act of subjectivation carried out in the name of equality, which challenges the prevailing order of action, perception, and thought” (Rancière 1996, p. 45). This idea is particularly significant for analysing religious youth who strive for “justice,” which exists only through “intermittent acts of implementation, without following any general law, but with dissensus as its common mechanism” (Rancière 1996, p. 45). According to Rancière, the status quo, distribution, and domination function as elements of control and oppression, collectively forming what he terms “the police” (Rancière 1996, p. 61).

Building on this expanded notion of politics, the article examines how evangelical university youth engage in acts of dissensus. These young people, organised within networks of social action, challenge the dominant adult-centred structures prevalent in Christian institutions. Through their sociopolitical practices, these dissident youths foster new forms of intense theological negotiation and enact what Rancière calls “interruption” (Rancière 2004). In this way, evangelical youth confront the organisational status quo within their faith communities as they pursue greater youth protagonism.

To support this analysis, the article employs Weber’s (1999) concept of typology to describe three networks of social action among university youth in Brazil. Weber’s typology is linked to the idea of “ideal types”, conceptual models derived from observing social phenomena and attributing specific characteristics and relationships in order to classify them.

The classification of an “ideal type” creates points of reference for interpreting observed realities in exploratory research based on empirical observation. Monteiro and Cardoso (2002) highlight two key aspects for understanding Weber’s ideal types from a social perspective: (1) they “provide a limiting case against which concrete phenomena can be contrasted; an unambiguous concept that facilitates classification and comparison”; and

(2) they “serve as a framework for generalizations of type (...) which ultimately aim at the causal explanation of historical events” (Monteiro and Cardoso 2002, p. 14).

“Ideal types” will be employed following Weber (1999) as they provide a stimulating means of ordering phenomena; through this structuring, it becomes possible to situate them within an epistemological framework in scientific research. Thus, Weber (1999) writes:

An ideal type is obtained through the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view, and through the synthesis of a great number of discrete, diffuse, and individually given phenomena, which may occur in greater or lesser number or may even be entirely absent, and which are arranged according to these one-sidedly emphasised viewpoints so as to form a coherent analytical construct (Weber 1999, p. 106).

Meanwhile, the article will present three “social types” of evangelical university youth networks, each with its own religious approach and political worldview. It is important to note that, as these concern university youth with religious affiliation, one must recall the work of Novaes (2004), who points to the “existence of tensions between religious affiliation and existential crises within the context of academic formation” (Novaes 2004, p. 176). At the same time, Novaes’ (2004) research highlights the importance of studies on university youth that emphasise the religious arrangements which provide meaning amidst the conflicts and tensions characteristic of the university environment.

Anchored in Novaes’ research, after outlining the incorporation of Rancière’s notion of politics (through social theologies) and the article’s methodological approach based on Weber’s notion of “social types”, it is argued that the first section of the article will describe the recognition of youth based on a “state of the art” of the “generational debate” in the social sciences, followed by its consolidation in Latin America and Brazil. Subsequently, based on the recognition of data concerning the “generational debate”, the article will describe three “social types” (Weber 1999) of university youth networks related to evangelical memory in the 2010s in the country.

2. State of the Art of Generational Theories in the Social Sciences

Before addressing “generational theories” and youth within the human sciences, it is important to note that the Brazilian state has already defined youth and adolescence in terms of age range. According to public policy established by the Brazilian state through the Brazil (2013), youth encompasses individuals aged 15 to 29. More specifically, the subgroup of youth, adolescents, is defined within a four-year range, between 15 and 18 years of age, according to the Statute of the Child and Adolescent. This distinction is important because, in addressing a new perspective on youth, it is necessary to establish its temporal framework, namely from 15 to 29 years of age.

The “generational debate” will be addressed because it constitutes a broader theoretical framework than youth theory alone. It is also acknowledged that the process of writing this article forms part of a “generational exercise” (Castro 2001), given the author’s long-standing engagement with youth. One of the earliest works on the “theory of generations” within the human and social sciences was written by Comte (1998), who approaches the issue from biological premises. In his work *Course of Positive Philosophy* (Comte 1998), he presents a mechanistic view of societies and individuals, structured according to generational time. Thus, the positivist adopts an internally grounded yet externalised theory of generational life cycles, in which little is truly fluid. In this framework, “time is quantitative, measurable, and stabilised upon linear progress” (Comte 1998, p. 112). In Comte’s positivism, human progress is a consequence of the succession of years, generations, and the mediation of an average temporal rhythm.

In this sense, Comte’s work considers biologised time as analogous to the human organism, subject to wear and decay. The locus of generational conflict, understood as a

driving force of youth, arises “by virtue of the duration of human life” (Comte 1998, p. 114), rather than through processes of confrontation conditioned by youth themselves. Another important author in the generational debate is W. Dilthey, with his historicist conception of generation and his significant discussion concerning the “sciences of the spirit” (human sciences) and the natural sciences. In this respect, he rejects Comte’s mathematical view of generation. His approach, termed “historical-romantic”, seeks to connect qualitative dimensions between different rhythms of history and generational rhythms. Here, Dilthey initiates the debate on generations by emphasising that it should be framed in qualitative terms, arguing that the “principle of generations” must be discussed “among people who share the same core of experiences within the same qualitative time” (Dilthey 1998, p. 211).

For Dilthey, temporality must be constituted through shared events and experiences; thus, historical experiences effectively delimit belonging to a particular generation. However, it is with Karl Mannheim that sociology becomes systematically integrated with the generational perspective, forming a “sociology of generations”. In 1952, he wrote the influential article *The Problem of Generations*, in which he develops the concept of “generations” as fundamental for understanding socio-cultural transformations. Mannheim argues that youth are “specific products—capable of producing social change—of the collision between biographical time and historical time” (Mannheim 1993, p. 97).

Mannheim further contends that belonging to a generation is not determined by a shared date of birth, but rather by a “generational location”, which is “merely potential” (Mannheim 1993, p. 99): a becoming that forms part of the historical process shared by young people of the same age cohort (the contemporary generation). He also notes that “a generation is composed of individuals who establish connections in different ways within the concrete groups to which they belong” (Mannheim 1993, p. 100), while recognising that historical experiences underpin human relations and connections. He criticises the French Comtean current, observing that “it appears that here the explanation of the time of progress and the presence of forces, both conservative and reformist, is immediately deduced from the biological factor” (Mannheim 1961, p. 67). At the same time, he distances himself from Dilthey’s historical-romantic approach, emphasising the importance of youth for transformations and for new understandings within the field.

Another important author who develops the concept of “generation” is the English sociologist Abrams (1982), who expands Mannheim’s perspective under different circumstances. Fifty years after Mannheim’s generational theory, Abrams deepened the historical-social notion of generation by relating it to identity. Abrams directly associates “elements of individuality with society within a given framework (...) thus according to historical reasons” (Abrams 1982, p. 54). For this reason, his work highlights notions of “interconnections” and “changes in meanings” over time (Abrams 1982). He argues that a generation is the period during which identity is “constructed from the resources and meanings that are socially and historically available” (Abrams 1982, p. 19). He further states that, as time passes, “new generations create new identities and possibilities for social action” (Abrams 1982, p. 19).

His starting point is that “individuality and society are historical constructions”; therefore, it is important to recognise their “interconnections” as well as “their changes over time” (Abrams 1982, p. 20). He understands that generations do not arise from the temporal succession of biological generations and that “there is no standardisation of time to measure or predict their rhythm” (Abrams 1982, p. 21). From a sociological perspective, he argues that a “generation may last ten years or, as occurred in pre-modern societies, several centuries” (Abrams 1982, p. 21). Abrams also suggests that youth should be understood as a “site of creation, of (generational) conflict, and of the development of new forms of action” (Abrams 1982, p. 25).

In Abrams's sociology, the beginning of a generation is marked by significant discontinuities within what had previously been dominant in a given historical and institutional context. However, the "process of change that produces the before and the after means that generations are the locus in which two different temporalities—the life course and historical experience—are synchronised" (Abrams 1982, p. 25). For him, "biographical time and historical time merge and transform, thereby creating a social generation" (Abrams 1982, p. 21).

Following the work of Abrams and Mannheim, adaptations to generational theory debates emerged within Italian geography, particularly through the concept of "generational consciousness", as developed by Bell (1999). Focusing on feminist movements and youth, she advanced key elements of generational theory: (1) the idea of historicity, when there is an awareness of a historical framework that includes a past; (2) the idea of experience, when there is a deep engagement with lived time (Bell 1999). From this perspective, studies were developed on intersections involving youth, women, and Roma populations, contributing to critiques of authoritarian states.

The generational debate in Spain, however, takes on different meanings. This line of thought is initiated by the philosopher Ortega y Gasset, who wrote *La idea de las generaciones* in 1923 (Ortega y Gasset 1966). He argues that a "generation" is composed of people born in the same period who share the same "vital sensibility" (Ortega y Gasset 1966, p. 148). In this case, this shared experience places individuals in opposition to those of earlier generations, and it is precisely "the conflicts between these sectors" that define their historical mission (Ortega y Gasset 1966, p. 149). The philosopher thus establishes a distinction between "youth" and "those more advanced in life".

In a bold move, Ortega y Gasset's work (Ortega y Gasset 1966, 1970) replaces the proletariat—central to Marxist theory—with the category of the "young person as an emerging subject", and "generational succession as an element that replaces class struggle as the motor of change" (Ortega y Gasset 1966, p. 76). To this end, he constructs a syntagm between "old age" and "youth". He defines the "time of old age" as a "time of accumulated experience and rational reasoning" (Ortega y Gasset 1970, p. 177). Conversely, he characterises the "time of youth" as "eliminative, shaped amidst polemics, debates, and confrontations" (Ortega y Gasset 1970, p. 180). On the basis of this division, Ortega y Gasset introduces the religious dimension, identifying differences in religious adherence: older individuals tend to be more conservative, linked to Iberian aristocratic Catholicism, whereas youth tend to form more creative and experimental religious expressions, grounded in contestation, even while occupying spaces within Catholicism.

Thus, Ortega y Gasset's generational theory is among the first to emphasise the positioning of youth in relation to religion in a distinct manner, inspired by student movements in Spanish universities (Ortega y Gasset 1970, p. 192). His disciple Marías (1968), in his contribution to the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, argued that the notion of "generation" is one of Spain's fundamental contributions to sociological thought, based on the idea of generational conflicts, which define the production of youth in temporal terms (variables: periods, geographies, conflicts) (Marías 1968, p. 154). In 1989, Marías published an expanded edition of *Generaciones y constelaciones*, presenting an analytical method of generations and referring to the post-1968 period as a "generation of conflict". In this work, he also advances the notion of "decisive generations"—those that represent turning points.

Another disciple of Ortega y Gasset, José L. López Aranguren, published *La juventud europea y otros ensayos* (Aranguren 1998), presenting early empirical data from initial studies on youth based on opinion research. In doing so, he outlined the concept of a "conflict between minority and mass" (Aranguren 1998, p. 65), as well as a critique

of the “fifteen-year-old individual”. However, after the works of Ortega y Gasset, the concept of “generations” was largely abandoned in Spain during the 1960s and 1970s due to accusations of authoritarian associations. Nevertheless, it was later rediscovered by new generations of researchers (Marías 1968; Aranguren 1998; Novaes 2004; Castro 2001).

3. Generational Theory in the Human Sciences in Brazil

From the perspective of the social sciences and political psychology in Brazil, this approach was developed by Castro (2001), who refers to it as “generational theory” or “theory of generational domination”. Castro conducts her research within the Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Pesquisa na Infância e Adolescência Contemporâneas (NIPIAC/UFRJ), and highlights that generational domination forms part of the extreme process of cultural domination of adults over young people and children (Machado and Costa 2021, p. 88). Consequently, what directly affects the political dimension is the broadening of the meaning of politics in relation to the social participation of youth (Machado and Costa 2021, p. 90).

Drawing on Rancière, Castro argues for the expansion of the political under a different understanding, conceiving it as an act of declassification of the social order, giving rise to a movement of dispute over what is seen, said, and heard (Machado and Costa 2021, p. 90). Through reflections on youth, the researcher asserts that such disputes must be considered beyond what is given and established, introducing dissensus and disorder into what constitutes reality (Machado and Costa 2021, p. 91).

She proposes political theory as action and a process of subjectivation, which may include children and young people as those whose identificatory possibilities in present life set in motion reconfigurations in the order of things (Machado and Costa 2021, p. 92). At this point, these subjects, generally considered individuals not yet fit for political life, become visible and enter the sphere of enunciation (Machado and Costa 2021, p. 94).

For Castro, the social and political participation of young people is not confined to the more conventional expressions of political life; young people themselves have questioned what it means to act politically, or to be political, and in what ways they would like to participate in political life (Machado and Costa 2021, p. 94). Castro reaffirms what was indicated at the beginning of the article, namely that new forms of politics must approach youth in order to be adequately codified within academia, since academic authors themselves no longer occupy the position of youth. In this generational operation, they open themselves to dialogue with youth and recognise that politics is not strictly the conquest of power, but primarily the mobilisation of oneself and others around causes of personal and social transformation (Machado and Costa 2021, p. 95).

Furthermore, the author argues that the generational exercise is characterised “by the idea of generation, that is, by a specific chronological delimitation after childhood and at the beginning of incursions into the world of work”, as a “practice of immersion in the (...) youth universe, which allows reflection alongside age-based movements (...) Thus, almost the entirety of academic reflections on youth constitutes a broad generational exercise” (Castro 2001, p. 62). Therefore, the practice of an intergenerational perspective “reveals dilemmas and underpins the construction of a culture in process, new actions, new subjects, and novelties in terms of cultural hegemony” (Castro 2001, p. 66). In this sense, Castro’s work points to the need for a different conceptual framework to articulate the fields of youth and politics. For her, the prevailing view frames young people as pre-political subjects, or limits politics to action within formal political institutions, in which youth are not formally participating.

At this point, another “watershed” work on generational theories in Brazil, comparable to that of Castro, is that of Novaes (2004). She dedicated her research to youth and religion in peripheral contexts, as well as to religious youth within universities. In both dimensions,

there is a clear similarity with Castro's line of thought, particularly in the understanding of political engagement among youth. At the same time, Novaes' work is grounded in Mannheim, especially in reflecting on religious affiliations among young people.

Thus, based on this survey of the "state of the art" of generational theory and youth, the analysis turns to three national evangelical networks as "social types" (Weber) that embody "forms of political organisation" (Castro 2001, p. 51): ABU, Rede Fale, and REJU. The description begins with ABU, the oldest and most closely aligned with the "parochial community" (Hervieu-Léger 2001), and thus characterised by a social theology rooted in American imperial fundamentalism.

From the debates presented in the previous topics, it is clear that the discussion about youth, religion and politics in Brazil can no longer be understood only in terms of classical forms of institutional participation or traditional interpretations of religious belonging. The contributions of Mannheim (1993), Abrams (1982) and Ortega y Gasset (1966) allow us to understand youth as historical subjects formed amid tensions between biographical time and historical time, while in Brazil, authors such as Castro (2001) and Novaes (2004) broaden this discussion by showing that youth participation also takes place through symbolic disputes, religious experiences and new forms of collective mobilisation. In this sense, religious youth have come to operate as spaces for the production of political subjectivation, bringing together faith practices, demands for recognition and disputes around democracy, social justice and plurality. It is within this horizon that contemporary evangelical youth networks emerge, constituting themselves as distinct "social types" (Weber) of political and religious organisation, capable of translating different "social theologies" into specific forms of public action, affective mobilisation and intervention in the Brazilian democratic sphere.

4. The First Type of Social Action Network: Apologetic Evangelical Youth—ABU

The first network, within this typological proposal of three evangelical social action networks in contemporary Brazil, is the Aliança Bíblica Universitária (ABU), founded in 1957 by Ruth Siemens and Robert Young, English missionaries, and linked to evangelical churches within the student movement sector of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES—Groppo and Borges 2018). Its social theology is centred on the idea of "conversion"; thus, it is designated as "apologetic evangelical youth", as it is connected to a narrative of defending the faith of the evangelical "parochial community" (Hervieu-Léger 2001) through a vision of integrating humanity on a global scale. This sector mobilises itself through the legacy of Siemens and Young, with ABU organised through regional centres across Brazil.

From Rancière's (1996, p. 44) perspective, this network can be understood not merely as a space of religious formation, but also as a producer of a specific form of political imagination. Through a "politics of affects", ABU mobilises emotional bonds and dispositions of belonging that anchor subjects within already established faith communities, producing a type of young person whose political agency tends to be oriented towards the preservation, defence and expansion of a religious order perceived as legitimate. In this sense, it constitutes a form of political subjectivation which, although participating in the public sphere, does so through a more stable theological grammar, frequently associated with traditional Protestant traditions and with more fundamentalist connections such as Alpha & Omega, the Dumanis Movement, Tearfund Brasil and A Rocha Brasil. In theological terms, it is linked to the Lausanne Covenant, established between 16 and 25 July 1974, as a major evangelical manifesto resulting from a World Congress of Evangelicals held in Lausanne, Switzerland (Groppo and Borges 2018).

The Lausanne event brought together participants from over 150 nations, with 2500 attendees representing 135 evangelical denominations, culminating in the establishment of a World Committee of Evangelical Churches (Groppo and Borges 2018, p. 154). Key figures at the congress included Billy Graham, John Stott and Francis Schaeffer. The event aimed to reflect on the theological role of the *missio Dei* at that historical moment and, through the Lausanne Covenant, contributed to the emergence of what became known as “integral mission theology” (Zwetsch 2015, pp. 243–47). This form of social theology is connected to the defence of the “religious centre” (Hervieu-Léger 2001, p. 51) and seeks to conceptualise mission from a holistic perspective that integrates human beings with society and nature.

The Lausanne Covenant and Congress played a pivotal role in renewing the evangelical movement worldwide, fostering both this theology and the growth of ABU. It functioned as a tool for continuously shaping evangelical identity, particularly among fundamentalist missionary agencies that resist the relativisation and dilution of their core ideas and defining characteristics (Zwetsch 2015, p. 248). In this regard, it has been argued that “being evangelical (...) is not about rigidly adhering to specific doctrinal sets, but about committing oneself to God’s purpose: to be a servant and witness of God” (ABU 2019).

Like conjoined twins, ABU and Integral Mission Theology (IMT) are intrinsically connected to missionary agencies, aiming to live in a “communion of persons who collectively pursue the goal of living in accordance with the Kingdom and Glory of God, building themselves up as the Body of Christ that proclaims the Kingdom and Glory to the whole world” (ABU 2019). Thus, even when renewed through a holistic lens, IMT maintains the Christian monotheistic emphasis on evangelisation, alongside a certain silencing of other religions and an implicit understanding among its adherents of Christian superiority over other religious traditions. Even so, it symbolically seeks to recognise the “human being as whole, complete, connected to human, social, psychological, and faith-based dimensions” (Zwetsch 2015, p. 249).

The ideas of IMT and ABU are linked to major twentieth-century evangelists such as Billy Graham, who emphasised a form of Christianity with limited relativisation, questioning, or deeper theological debate regarding its own contradictions and errors. At the national level, the leadership of ABU’s apologetic youth promotes training initiatives such as conversion courses, maintains a national Institute for Leadership Preparation (IPL), and organises Holiday Courses (CF). During the early Workers’ Party (PT) governments (Lula and Dilma), ABU participated in the National Youth Council (CONJUVE), notably through the involvement of Paul Freston (Groppo and Borges 2018), where public policies for youth in Brazil were debated. ABU has organised two Missionary Congresses in Brazil, in 1976 and 2006, and has counted among its members (past or present) figures such as Alexandre Brasil, Antonia Leonora van der Meer, Daniela S. Frozi, Ziel Machado, Braulio Craveiro, José Miranda, Paul Freston, and Raquel Bergária. It also maintains its own publishing house, ABU Editora, which has published works by C. S. Lewis and its emblematic figure, the English Anglican theologian John Stott (Groppo and Borges 2018).

To illustrate how this “social type” of evangelical youth network is conceptualised, a video activity was selected in which the network’s Secretary for Mission Engagement, psychologist Morgana Boostel, a resident of Serra in the state of Espírito Santo, delivers a speech. Earlier, in the booklet *Entre Nós: números e histórias da Aliança Bíblica Universitária no Brasil* (ABU 2019), Boostel, reflecting this social theology, describes the function of the network as follows: “We are here to speak about Jesus, to understand how faith supports university students in their dilemmas and obstacles in modern life. Without relinquishing faith, understanding Christianity as a force of civilisation and humanisation” (ABU 2019, p. 57).

From what has been written, it can be observed that ABU's activities are not limited to the transmission of doctrinal content, but also involve the production of "affective dispositions" (Rancière 1996, p. 45) that shape how university students perceive themselves and their place in the world. In this regard, Rancière (1996) understands this dynamic as a specific modality of a "politics of affects", insofar as it mobilises sensibilities, forms of belonging and modes of identification anchored in a fundamentalist Christian theology. By affirming Christianity as a "force of civilisation and humanisation", Morgana Boostel's discourse does not merely describe a belief, but also delineates a regime of visibility and intelligibility in which certain ways of life and forms of action are invested with moral and symbolic legitimacy.

In this sense, adherence to this network occurs not merely through intellectual agreement, but through affective attachment that reinforces continuity with established evangelical traditions, mediated by a more literal reading of the Scriptures. Such an operation contributes to the formation of a political subject whose imagination is structured by a conservative theological (social) grammar, in which action in the world appears as an extension of an already given mission, the *missio Dei*, rather than as a rupture with the existing order. Thus, although it participates in the public sphere, this form of engagement tends to operate less through the logic of dissensus and more through the reaffirmation of an order regarded as legitimate, thereby demonstrating how different affective regimes produce distinct forms of political subjectivation within evangelical youth networks.

In a video produced for ABU São Paulo, Boostel reflects on the theme: "ABP-SP: Believing is also thinking! And engaging in the mission!" (Mendonça 2021), stating that:

The ministry of reconciliation is deeply connected to God's mission for this moment in our history. God invites us to carry out this work of reconciliation, which, as written in 2 Corinthians, calls us to continue what He was already doing. It is not about inventing something new, or each person having their own individual mission. He invites us to do what He was already doing. Our mission proceeds from God's mission. It is for the good of everyone, for all creation. When we study the ministry of reconciliation, we realise that God seeks to reconcile all things, not only human relationships. He speaks of reconciling all creation. All creation includes everything. Everything that exists. (Mendonça 2021)

In Boostel's account (Mendonça 2021), key themes of Integral Mission Theology (IMT) are evident, such as reconciliation with the divine, the centrality of mission theology, and the *missio Dei* among university youth in the country, understood as ongoing engagement and persistence in faith. In this context, she states that "God (...) invites us to do what He is doing", to "continue our mission (...) which proceeds from God". For IMT, the objective is not merely to continue evangelising, but also to "reconcile all creation (...) to include everything" (Mendonça 2021). Boostel's approach demonstrates an intensive use of biblical verses, consistent with evangelical communities, aimed at the "promotion of evangelisation" (Mendonça 2021).

Here, the political dimension of this youth network's engagement is recognised through its emphasis on social responsibility linked to evangelisation. It may therefore be characterised as apologetic-integral evangelical youth, as it mobilises IMT, which conceives the individual in an integrated way, encompassing spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions. Within this broader framework, Boostel revisits, through biblical narratives, the notion of "reconciliation" (Mendonça 2021). She continues by narrating God's story to university youth:

God's invitation is for us to take part in God's story. God has a mission, and we are the ones who join it. The great story that God is writing, constructing, which began in the Bible but is not exhausted by it, goes beyond the text and the time of

the biblical narrative—it is God’s story (...) our prayer should be: I want to be part of God’s story. God invites us to take part in a great story, to connect with this story (...) God’s will is known through the revelation of Christ and His word, through our experience and our relationship with God. And also through our study, when we sit down and study the Bible, seeking to understand how one thing connects with another. (Mendonça 2021)

In these two excerpts from Boostel (Mendonça 2021), it is possible to identify elements typically associated with the “parochial community” (Hervieu-Léger 2001), such as the emphasis on the “mission of God”, a key concept for movements initiated in Lausanne, including ABU.

His narrative aligns with the parish community’s “affective disposition” (Rancière 1996, p. 44) when it is observed.

Her narrative closely aligns with the discourse of evangelical communities. In her speech, she employs hermeneutical operations similar to those found in fundamentalist evangelical contexts, articulating in the video a “story of God” in which “each believer participates, as part of God’s will in the world” (Mendonça 2021). This narrative represents one of the typical operations developed by sectors linked to ABU and IMT, involving forms of biblical hermeneutics characteristic of evangelical fundamentalism, emphasising the authority of the Bible, the importance of a devout prayer life within the university context, and the affirmation of evangelical doctrines (Zwetsch 2015).

Therefore, ABU youth operate theologically through elements typical of the fundamentalism of American missionary organisations, such as the centrality of Christ in history (Christocentrism), emphasis on the Holy Spirit, biblical inerrancy, and belief in biblical miracles. Their political activity is mediated through expressions of a “Christ-centred” faith, particularly, as seen in Boostel’s narrative, through the social debate surrounding God’s mission, that is, via Christian doctrines. Thus, ABU, as an apologetic evangelical youth network with an emphasis on integral theology, shapes the engagement of university youth through Christocentric language and operates within the ethical boundaries of evangelical traditions.

Its political action—a key element in the symbolic constitution of youth organisation in Rancière’s terms—is established through themes, vocabulary, and biblical interpretations grounded in a “hard hermeneutics” (Croatto 1984) of scriptural passages. For this reason, this network finds greater adherence among youth who attend evangelical churches of various denominations and who are experiencing the turbulent phase of university life. We now turn to the second “social type”, another evangelical youth network, Rede Fale, which is also linked to the Lausanne Covenant and is therefore described as “evangelical youth”.

5. The Second Type of Social Action Network: Evangelical Youth—Rede Fale

The second network within this typology of three evangelical networks is known as Rede Fale, whose slogan is “Raise your voice against injustice!” This network was established in April 1999 by a group of Christian university students who planned to participate in a meeting of the National Union of Students (UNE), motivated by the desire to engage, from a Christian perspective, in the struggle against injustice (Bezerra and Moura 2021). Its emergence may be interpreted in light of Rancière’s (1996) conception of politics, not as mere institutional management but as the “irruption of subjects who reconfigure the sensible” (p. 46), thereby rendering neglected voices visible. Its proposal to “raise one’s voice” against injustice expresses precisely this political gesture of dissensus, in which young Christians constitute themselves as political subjects through intervention in the established order, displacing the boundaries between religion and the public sphere.

This evangelical youth network is distinguished by its emblematic commitment to the pursuit of justice. Although it is also associated with Integral Mission Theology (IMT), it practises a distinct form of “social theology” compared with ABU, Alpha & Omega, and the Dumanis Movement. However, it bears closer affinities with the Micah Network and Tearfund Brasil, that is, organisations less concerned with theological dispositions. Both retain certain traits of fundamentalism within the broader “evangelical movement”, including the authority of the Bible and an emphasis on “conversion”, evangelisation, and social action (Longuini Neto 2002). Nevertheless, it displaces the centrality of theology towards other dimensions of life, which allows it to be understood through an expanded notion of social theology, conceived more as a “set of everyday practices and situated decisions through which faith is translated into concrete forms of action in the world” (Gutiérrez 1987, p. 127).

From this perspective, rather than constituting a systematic doctrinal body, its “social theology” manifests as a lived ethic, articulating spirituality and engagement through ordinary practices that shape modes of political action. The network affirms the centrality of Jesus, as expressed in its official statement: “We believe that everything we are, do, and say should be centred on Jesus. We want our action for truth and justice to glorify God” (Blog da Rede Fale 2007).

They also affirm belief in the Bible, stating, “We believe that the Bible is inspired by God and it aims to guide us in all matters of faith and conduct” (Blog da Rede Fale 2007), as well as emphasising the Holy Spirit, the value of the community of believers, and discipleship oriented towards personal holiness and responsibility “to encourage one another towards radical holiness” (Blog da Rede Fale 2007).

However, in practical terms, although theological elements are present in their discourse, the network is more strongly oriented towards mobilisation around social causes. This is similar to initiatives such as the British ABU-related network “Speak” (deeply influenced by the work of John Stott), which “mobilises around issues of injustice in various sectors of society, encouraging prayer, the submission of public petitions, and peaceful demonstrations” (Colet 2016, p. 49).

In this sense, the mobilising focus of *Rede Fale* is more directly connected to intense political debates within Brazilian society. These include campaigns for the cancellation of external debt, support for the independence of Burma and East Timor, denunciations of corporate practices, and advocacy for global disarmament agreements (Colet 2016). In Brazil, particular attention should be given to the campaign promoted by Rede Fale against the so-called “Voto de Cajado” (Shepherd’s Staff Vote). This was a broad mobilisation by evangelical youth against what they termed the injustice of the “coronelismo of faith”, referring to situations in which pastors use pulpits and their symbolic authority to direct congregants’ votes towards specific candidates (Blog da Rede Fale 2007).

The political objective of this network is to bring together young people to encourage reflection on “integral mission within student militancy; other students took a further step in that journey initiated at the UNE 1999 meeting, promoting a more structured participation in the UNE Congress of 2001, in Goiânia” (Zwetsch 2015, p. 135). The theological perspective of this type of Christian youth network, engaged in the struggle for justice, is to develop forms of “continuous, coordinated, programmatic action, filling the vacuum of social pressure and strategic activity within the Christian sphere” (Colet 2016, p. 51). The Rede Fale group seeks to “raise awareness among a greater number of people about issues of injustice in Brazil and to gather individuals in a periodic outcry for the implementation of ethics in specific contexts” (Zwetsch 2015, p. 135). Its aim is to “enable churches to incorporate into their agendas a more practical response to the stark inequality and injustice evident in the country” (Zwetsch 2015, p. 135).

This type of evangelical youth, engaged in the struggle against injustice, seeks to unite “Christians who are aware of the need to reflect and pray regarding national circumstances” (Zwetsch 2015, p. 136). The central themes they have addressed in favour of justice include: Water and Environmental Sanitation, Children and Adolescents in Situations of Risk, Justice in International Trade, Poverty and Social Inequality, and Peacebuilding. Beyond their formal documents, the positions of their leadership are also noteworthy. For example, their national coordinator, Caio Marçal, produced a video entitled *Praying for Justice* (2011). The video opens with the verse “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come”, after which Marçal states:

In a world where life is increasingly fragmented, the Church of Jesus is challenged to be a prophetic voice. But how can this be achieved without prayer? How can it be done without marching on our knees? Rede Fale invites you, your organisation, and your church to join us in ‘Praying for Justice’. Join us in being a militant church, a church that makes a difference, a church sensitive to the pains of this world. Come, pray, speak, and raise your voice against injustice. (Rede Fale 2011, ‘Orando por Justiça’)

In the video, marked by strong elements of evangelical social theology, the coordinator of Rede Fale employs key aspects of evangelical language, such as opening with references to “the Church of Jesus”, “marching on our knees”, “church”, and a “prophetic voice in the world” (Rede Fale 2011). At the same time, he foregrounds the agenda of “prayer for justice”, aiming to engage both individuals and their faith communities, as indicated by the reference to “your church”. In this sense, the network’s political concern involves dialogue with churches through the adoption of their theological language.

Returning to its most prominent campaign, that against the “Voto de Cajado”, targeting the so-called “coronels of faith”, the following excerpt is taken from the video *What is the Shepherd’s Staff Vote?* (Rede Fale-Rio 2011), written and narrated by its former coordinator and philosopher Pedro Grabois:

According to the dictionary, a halter is a ‘strap’ with a fitted end used to secure an animal’s head and guide it. In politics, there have been various ways of binding votes. In the past, when voting was open, coronels would buy votes and send enforcers to coerce voters into supporting their candidates. Today, voting is secret, but things have not changed much. In some cities in Rio de Janeiro, for example, instead of moustached coronels, there are militia groups who, in exchange for dubious favours, threaten and attempt to force voters to support their candidates. In this way, they maintain power through force and deprivation. And it does not stop there. Politicians have discovered an excellent electorate: us, the evangelicals. The latest IBGE census shows that the number of evangelicals has grown by more than 60% in the last ten years. Some have used their positions in churches to direct evangelical votes, taking advantage of people’s sincere faith to create an electoral corral. But no form of controlled voting contributes to changing reality. That is why it is important to encourage conscious voting. Each evangelical should investigate the background and ideals of candidates in order to make their own choice, without relying solely on the opinions of pastors. And you? Will you stand for awareness and justice? Or will you continue voting for someone just because your pastor told you to? (Rede Fale-Rio 2011)

The video ends with a red and white graphic stating: “Against the Shepherd’s Staff Vote” (Rede Fale-Rio 2011). Notably, Grabois deconstructs the meaning of “voto de cabresto”, linking it to animal harnessing and, politically, to “ways of binding votes”. He also expresses concern for church audiences, particularly when asking: “Or will you

continue voting for someone just because your pastor told you to?” (Rede Fale-Rio 2011). Through this campaign, Graboio highlights the dynamics of oppression historically associated with coronelismo in the Northeast, as well as similar coercive practices in Rio de Janeiro, particularly through militia influence.

The theological production denounces the coronelismo practised within evangelical churches, where leaders “bind the vote” from the pulpit by indicating which candidates should be supported. This is the meaning of the “shepherd’s staff vote”, and, in opposition, evangelicals are called to “contribute to changing reality; therefore, it is important to encourage conscious voting”. Thus, Rede Fale’s campaign advocates “conscious voting” against controlled voting practices by encouraging investigation of each candidate. At the same time, the closing question—“Or will you continue voting for someone just because your pastor told you to?”—expresses dissatisfaction with evangelical “adult” leadership (Castro 2001, p. 65).

The second network in this typology, Rede Fale, circulated among faith communities with the “Voto de Cabresto” campaign as a form of engagement with the evangelical sector. The network also “constituted a new fraction of political action” (Rancière 1996, p. 47), employing a differentiated vocabulary such as “marching on our knees” and “controlled vote” to construct “new strategies of political tone” (Rancière 1996, p. 48). Although linked to a simplified form of social theology, the network demonstrates youth dissatisfaction with religious hierarchy, as evidenced in the video against the “shepherd’s staff vote” and in the questioning of voting behaviour based solely on pastoral instruction.

In this sense, this evangelical network, as a form of “political mobilisation” (Rancière 1996) among evangelical youth, seeks to articulate the social and political demands affecting the evangelical sector in Brazil from the 2000s onwards. At the same time, as a “social type” of evangelical youth, the network developed in alignment with the political orientations associated with Workers’ Party (PT) governance, which opposed coronelismo and supported social peace, basic sanitation, and the fight against poverty—all framed within a Christian ethos and expressed through the grammar of the evangelical universe.

6. The Third Type of Social Action Network: Ecumenical Youth—REJU

The third evangelical youth network engaged in social action analysed here is REJU (Ecumenical Youth Network). Established in 2007 through the Promotion of Youth Rights in connection with the Ecumenical Forum Brazil (FE Brasil—Colet 2016), REJU is situated within the typology of social networks alongside other ecumenical initiatives, such as Evangelicxs, Christians Against Fascism, and Evangelicals for Gender Equality. Organised around a core group of evangelical youth, this network gradually incorporated members of other religious backgrounds around the “ecumenical” cause, redefining modes of participation, legitimacy, and presence within the Brazilian public sphere. Although linked to the evangelical tradition, its more dialogical composition incorporates stronger ecumenical elements characterised by openness and dialogue with different faiths. As such, it maintains a certain distance from the evangelical “parochial community” (Hervieu-Léger 2001) and its characteristic modes of expression.

As demonstrated throughout this article, by drawing on Rancière’s (1996) notion of the “distribution of the sensible,” we can understand REJU’s activism as part of a broader process of reconfiguring the forms of the “distribution of social visibility” (Rancière 1996, p. 77), thereby constituting an expression of political struggle. In this respect, its mode of operation differs from the two previous experiences by adopting a more open perspective guided by a “non-exclusivist theology” (Zwetsch 2015, p. 236), that is, an approach that embraces diverse traditions without being exclusively committed to any single religious identity. This positions REJU within a more radical social theology, fundamentally marked

by “interreligious dialogue aligned with the current of liberation theology” (Zwetsch 2015, p. 89).

It was established in 2007 through the Promotion of Youth Rights (REJU), in connection with the Ecumenical Forum Brazil (FE Brasil—Colet 2016). Although described in the article as linked to the evangelical tradition, this network incorporates stronger ecumenical elements, characterised by openness and dialogue with other religious traditions. As such, it maintains a certain distance from the evangelical “parochial community” (Hervieu-Léger 2001) and its characteristic modes of expression.

REJU has a core composed of Lutherans, Anglicans, and certain Pentecostal traditions, which gradually came to incorporate young people from other religious backgrounds through dialogue (Macedo 2015). Consequently, its social theology is more open and dialogical in relation to Brazilian society, and is less marked by fundamentalist orientations than the other two social types. Since REJU emerged within ecumenical forums and spaces of public debate, it exhibits a distinct organisational and political structure for mobilising young people to intervene in Public Youth Policies (PYP). In this sense, this undefined network offers a different platform for political debate, grounded in liberation theology as a practice of ecumenical openness and social transformation, with a more direct alignment in the struggle for youth representation within the Brazilian state, unlike ABU and Rede Fale. For this reason, it is characterised by greater diversity and plurality, and is less “church-centred” than the other two. It represents a different political configuration of pressure upon the state, understood as a “way of expressing intentions and directions in political organisation, even within the plurality of youth” (Rancière 1996, p. 76).

In this case, REJU seeks to organise itself through youth protagonism based on the demands of different expressions of faith (Colet 2016), functioning as an organisation characterised by the exclusive participation of young people, linking religious thought with political action. Its initial step took place during the First Ecumenical Expedition of the Southeast Region, held in 2007 in the city of Resende, in the state of Rio de Janeiro (Colet 2016, p. 12).

The event brought together approximately one hundred and fifty young people from various federal units across the five regions of the country. REJU is divided into thirteen regional groups (Colet 2016), and its key activities include: (1) the publication, in 2011, of a National Campaign against Religious Intolerance; (2) assuming, in 2012, the coordination of the Communication Plan of the National Youth Council (CONJUVE); (3) participation, in the same year, in the “Summit for Social and Environmental Justice”, held alongside the United Nations Conference (Rio+20); and (4) involvement, in 2013, in the National Campaign Against the Reduction of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Colet 2016). Regarding this network, a 2013 statement highlights:

REJU seeks to organise and articulate itself (...) to strengthen the political actions of youth; to support and promote exchanges aimed at guaranteeing youth rights; to encourage, train, and mobilise young people to occupy spaces of leadership within governmental and non-governmental institutions; and to organise reflection on the violation and overcoming of youth rights. (REJU 2019)

In its official description, REJU presents itself as occupying a distinct niche within national evangelical networks, grounded in a social theology oriented towards the organisation and empowerment of youth in response to the “violation of youth rights” (REJU 2019). This network incorporates other religious groups, fostering an experience of religious pluralism; thus, ongoing debates on secularism and the promotion of youth leadership in Brazil become central to its agenda.

Closely linked to the question of the secular state, one of its principal national campaigns was “Wear White for Freedom of Faith” (REJU 2019). Through this campaign,

reference was made to Afro-diasporic rituals, particularly through the symbolic use of white clothing, “as a form of struggle against religious racism in the country” (Macedo 2015, p. 65). Another initiative by REJU was the creation of the podcast “And What Does That Have to Do with Me?!—On Youth and Rights”, as well as the organisation of the 1st Congress on Churches and the LGBTI+ Community. At this event, it was stated: We lament and denounce that many faith communities, particularly Christian ones, have become spaces of silencing, oppression, humiliation, exclusion, and spiritual, psychological, economic, and sexual abuse (Macedo 2015, p. 67).

In addition to the struggle for plurality, another key agenda of REJU is to confront violent discourses and practices that have contributed to harmful family relations, psychological suffering and, in extreme cases, numerous instances of depression and suicide among lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, transvestite, transgender, non-binary, intersex and queer individuals, as well as people with other gender expressions, especially those who are Black, poor and from socially vulnerable territories (Colet 2016). In response, the network seeks to develop a theology of coexistence among young people from different religious groups, grounded in rethinking “how to create initiatives that promote respect for differences” (Colet 2016, p. 48).

As previously noted, in 2017 they developed a national campaign against religious intolerance which, in a transversal manner, “fought against homophobia, racism, sexism, and xenophobia, addressing these issues through parallel initiatives conducted by the group’s regional centres across the five regions of the country” (Colet 2016, p. 49). As part of the campaign for a secular state, in 2017 they released the video “A Secular State: It Is Up to Us” (REJU 2015), featuring multiple youth voices reflecting on what a secular state means. At the beginning of the video, Alexandre Pupo Quitino explains that a secular state “is not the denial or exclusion of religions, but the affirmation of diversity, ensuring that those with greater numbers do not oppress minorities” (REJU 2015). Similarly, Alexandre Magno da Glória, from REJU São Paulo, a practitioner of Candomblé and national facilitator of REJU, states: “it guarantees the religiosity of all individuals, everyone, plurality, and also includes those who have no religion, those who are atheists, agnostics, or who have a transcendental experience of faith” (REJU 2016).

The narratives surrounding the secular state articulated by this ecumenical youth resonate with elements of what has been termed “Brazilian-style secularism” (Mariano 2011, p. 244), particularly in their emphasis on plurality and the “emancipation of the state and public education from ecclesiastical powers and all forms of religious reference and legitimation, the confessional neutrality of political and state institutions”. Likewise, Mariano refers to “the autonomy of political and religious powers, the neutrality of the state in religious matters (or the equal treatment of different religious groups), religious tolerance, and freedoms of conscience” (Mariano 2011, p. 244).

Distinctly, REJU strategically defends the secular state to prevent the privileging of hegemonic Christian traditions, advocating for the “defence of state secularism against religious interference in education, health, the body, scientific research, public policy, the juridical-political order, and state institutions” (Mariano 2011, p. 252). In this sense, ecumenical youth reaffirm the defence of plural lived experiences, guaranteeing the rights of minorities and those who do not profess any faith, as highlighted by Glória in the video (REJU 2016).

In this sense, ecumenical youth reaffirm the defence of plural lived experiences, guaranteeing the rights of minorities, as well as those who profess no faith, as highlighted by Glória in the video (REJU 2016), and likewise within the Evangelicx and Christians Against Fascism networks.

Another video produced by REJU, entitled “Wear White for Freedom of Faith Campaign” (REJU 2016), addresses the significance of 21 January as a symbolic date in the struggle against religious intolerance. The video reflects the development of a social theology grounded in interreligious dialogue, promoting openness among different expressions of faith, particularly in defence of religions targeted by “hegemonic Christianity” (Py 2020; Py and Gracino 2025, p. 21). It explains the significance of the date, the use of white clothing, and the campaign’s purpose:

21 January is celebrated as the Day Against Religious Intolerance, a national day to combat religious intolerance. This date was established due to the case of a mãe de santo, Mãe Gilda. A neo-Pentecostal religious group in Salvador published in its newspaper that Mãe Gilda was a manifestation of the devil. Upon reading this, she suffered a heart attack. The organisation was later condemned. REJU rises in response, and one of its central axes is precisely the issue of intolerance, particularly the overcoming of religious intolerance. For this reason, on 21 January, REJU promotes the ‘I Wear White’ campaign, encouraging people to mobilise by wearing white. We believe that religions must be integrated for the common good, that they must live in communion, sharing this world. (REJU 2016)

Thus, more directly, this type of ecumenical youth network organises politically around the defence of religious plurality, opposition to religious violence, and the protection of minorities affected by various forms of religious racism. As the REJU video (REJU 2016) states, “we believe that religions must be integrated for the common good; they must live in communion.” Although the network’s leadership frames its discourse on secularism in terms of justice, its political orientation is rooted in Brazilian ecumenical debates grounded in a “more recent liberation theology” (Zwetsch 2015, p. 91). This is because it connects to the struggle against religious racism, exemplified by the case of Mãe Gilda, within what has been described as an intense “monotheistic operation” (Py 2021; Py et al. 2025) of transforming people, entities, and practices into “demons”, thereby legitimising violence.

Therefore, REJU’s political engagement mobilises young people, including a segment of evangelicals, to debate issues such as respect, diversity, and the recognition of religious traditions that have been subjected to violence.

This network outlines a path towards a social theology of youth organisation, centred on themes directly linked to what has been termed “liberation theology” (Py 2016; Py and Pedlowski 2020). It presents a “politics (...) alongside the reconfiguration of affects” (Rancière 1996, p. 46), such as the struggle for a more just and plural society. This becomes evident, for example, in the campaign held on 21 January in honour of Mãe Gilda, which reactivates the memory of an Afro-Brazilian religious leader in a country that “operates through silence” (Pollak 1989, p. 18) regarding people and forms of knowledge displaced from or exiled in Africa.

In this context, this third network within the typology, REJU, mobilises a different segment of the evangelical field—one more attuned to the grammar of Brazilian diversity, and thus oriented towards the construction of a more just and plural society. This youth network does not rely on the traditional vocabulary of the evangelical universe; rather, it is more closely connected to a social theology focused on building shared agendas for the recognition of youth protagonism in the country. For this reason, unlike the other two networks, it draws politically on other dimensions of the evangelical field, such as interfaith dialogue within a context of violence affecting minority groups. This constitutes the central political thrust of its youth organisation, its “political traction” (Rancière 1996, p. 49), mobilising other actors through alternative religious and social agendas.

7. Conclusions

This article has sought to reflect on youth and the challenges faced by religions, particularly evangelical traditions, in contemporary society, focusing on social action networks and their respective social theologies. Reformulated in accordance with RESP03 and RESP01: in contemporary society, with a focus on social action networks and their respective social theologies as “traces of religious people in the world” (Gutiérrez 1987, p. 112), all of which maintain some connection with the evangelical sector. The objective was to identify at least one typology comprising three “social types” of political engagement in contemporary society. This typology considered at least two variables: theological adherence within the evangelical field and the forms of social action developed as expressions of political organisation.

Accordingly, different social types of political action among evangelical youth were identified: (1) apologetic evangelical youth, represented by ABU (reformulated in accordance with RESP03 and RESP01: as well as Alpha & Omega and the Dumanis Movement), composed of young individuals more closely connected to evangelical churches and concerned with engagement in the university context through prayer groups to navigate academic life; (2) evangelical youth, represented by Rede Fale (reformulated in accordance with RESP03 and RESP01: as well as the Micah Network and Tearfund Brasil), consisting of young people engaged in the struggle for justice, including opposition to the “shepherd’s staff vote”, while still operating within an evangelical grammatical framework; (3) ecumenical youth, represented by REJU (reformulated in accordance with RESP03 and RESP01: as well as Evangelicxs and Christians Against Fascism), comprising young evangelicals and members of other religious traditions who advocate for youth policies aimed at building a more plural and just society.

This typology of social theologies and evangelical university youth networks demonstrates that, in recent times, a new variety of political actions has emerged within this sector. The article has highlighted the organisation of evangelical youth in universities, their structures, and their agendas as political demands, particularly in relation to the governance context associated with the Workers’ Party (PT) during the 2000s. For the analysis of this sector of evangelical university youth, it was essential to adopt an alternative conception of politics, namely that of Rancière, grounded in the “principle of equality”, which enables “new forms of organisation, the gathering of people (...) that make possible other forms of claim-making, expanding the spaces for a fuller democracy” (Rancière 1996, p. 56).

At the same time, beyond the construction of this typology of evangelical youth in universities, other elements can be observed. For instance, when considering ABU, Rede Fale, and REJU, one can trace a trajectory from networks more closely linked to the “parochial community” in terms of social theology to those more aligned with a “pilgrimage of meaning” (Hervieu-Léger 2001). Although all recognise the importance of plurality, “ecumenical youth” more explicitly engage with other religious traditions in shaping the public sphere of the Brazilian state.

In any case, future research must continue mapping the theologies of evangelical youth networks to better understand the complexity of this sector. Such efforts will contribute to a more precise reading of the Brazilian religious landscape among youth, functioning as a kind of barometer of Brazilian society. This may also assist in identifying emerging religious self-designations among youth, such as the growing use of terms like “ex-evangelicals” or “post-evangelicals” (Barreto and Py 2022).

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