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The Roots and Fruits of Brazilian Pentecostalism

John P. Medcraft

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SETTING THE SCENE

Brazil was discovered in 1500 by the Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral.¹ It is the fifth largest country in the world covering 3,286,000 square miles.² Its present population is approximately 125 million and is growing fast to an estimated 200 million plus by the end of the century. Brazilians today are a mixture of European, Asian and African stock, thus forming one of the outstanding ethnic melting pots in the world. In the 1960 census Brazilians classified themselves as 70% white, 11% negroes and 19% mulatto or mixed.³ It is also estimated that about 85% of Brazilians now classify themselves as Roman Catholics, 11% as Protestants and the remainder as Spiritists. However, the number of practising Catholics is apparently much lower⁴ and the number of practising Spiritists much higher, though most of these still classify themselves as Roman Catholics.⁵

Catholicism was introduced to Brazil by the Portuguese and during colonial times they did everything possible to protect the monolithic religious system of the country. The thoroughness with which Brazil was shielded against Protestantism is comparable only with the methods of modern health authorities aiming at the prevention of epidemic diseases being introduced into a country.⁶ The first attempts at implanting Protestantism in Brazil were made by French Huguenots on an island in Guanabara Bay opposite the city of Rio de Janeiro between 1555-1567, but they were expelled. Dutch Huguenots gained a foothold in the north-east around Recife between 1624-30 but they were also expelled by fierce hostility and fighting.⁷

In 1822 Brazil gained independence and, with foreign immigration now permitted, many Protestants came into the country. Lutherans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans and Seventh-Day Adventists all established churches.⁸ However by this time Brazilian culture had come to be identified with Catholicism, and the Roman Catholic church was seen as the symbol of nationalism. So for many people a Brazilian Protestant was not really a Brazilian and conversion to a Protestant church was equivalent to a betrayal of the cultural heritage of the country. Obviously, therefore, there was much opposition to Protestantism. 'To defend the church is to defend Brazil', declared Jose Felicio dos Santos in 1921.⁹

In the first decade of this century a revival of Pentecostalism began in

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¹ C. W. Gates, *Industrialization: Brazil's Catalyst for Church Growth* (California, 1972) 5.

² W. R. Read and F. A. Ineson, *Brazil 1980: The Protestant Handbook* (California, 1973) 1.

³ *Ibid*, 6.

⁴ H. W. Coxill and K. Grubb, *World Christian Handbook* (London, 1962) 47.

⁵ K. S. Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age* 5 (London, 1963) 226; Read and Ineson, *Brazil 1980*, 15.

⁶ E. Willems, 'Religious Pluralism and Class Structure: Brazil and Chile' in *Sociology of Religion* ed. R. Robertson (Middlesex, 1969) 195.

⁷ C. P. F. de Camargo, *Catolicos, Protestantes, Espiritas* (Petropolis, 1973) 126.

⁸ Willems, *Followers of the New Faith* (Nashville, 1967) 57-58.

⁹ Willems, *Sociology of Religion*, 196-197.

the U.S.A.¹⁰ Both original branches of Brazilian Pentecostalism can be traced to this source, though none of the missionaries who took it to Brazil were actually American.¹¹ There is not space here to give an extended definition of Pentecostalism, though many of its features will become apparent in this essay. However, as a starting point we recall the words of one of the early Pentecostal leaders of this century, T. B. Barrett, who said, 'With respect to salvation through justification by faith, we are Lutherans. In the form of baptism in water, we are Baptists. With respect to sanctification, we are Methodists. In attacking and aggressive evangelism, we are with the Salvation Army. However with respect to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, we are Pentecostals.'¹² Indeed it is this latter doctrine which is the supreme distinguishing feature of Pentecostalism. Pentecostals believe that the baptism with the Spirit is a post-conversion experience through which they come to know the fullness of the Spirit which other Christians do not have.¹³ Certainly Brazilian Pentecostals believe the baptism in the Holy Spirit to be the main reason for their success.¹⁴

THE BEGINNINGS OF BRAZILIAN PENTECOSTALISM

The Assembleias de Deus, the largest Pentecostal movement in Brazil today, was founded in 1910 by two simple Swedish workers, Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren, who had become Pentecostals in the U.S.A. after having emigrated there.¹⁵ They were not employed by any Pentecostal organisation and only came to Brazil as missionaries because of a prophecy, by their friend, Olaf Uldin, during a prayer meeting in his home, that said that Berg and Vingren were to go to a place called Para, which they discovered by courtesy of the city library was a state in northern Brazil.¹⁶ This they took to be God's will and went. They took a third-class passage on a freighter and arrived penniless in Belem in the state of Para on 19 November 1910.¹⁷ Interest in their ministry grew as they taught and practised divine healing during a yellow fever epidemic. Berg says, 'The fact that we continued in good health was interpreted as a sign that God had sent us to them.'¹⁸ They also preached that the baptism in the Spirit accompanied by supernatural signs was the church's heritage for the present day,¹⁹ and as a consequence 'the fire of Pentecost came upon many Baptists' in Belem.²⁰ The Baptist leadership reacted sharply, saying such things were only for the apostolic age and excommunicating those who adhered to Pentecostalism.²¹ As a result they moved to the house of one of the group, where the first official service of the Assembleias de Deus was held on 13 June 1911.²²

¹⁰ W. J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London, 1972) 21-26.

¹¹ Willems, *Followers*, 118; E. Conde, *Historia das Assembleias de Deus no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1960) 11-13.

¹² B. M. de Souza, *A Experiencia da Salvacao* (Sao Paulo, 1969) 54.

¹³ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 9.

¹⁴ Conde, *Historia*, 26, 205, 208; 1. Vingren, Gunnar Vingren. *O Diario do Pioneiro* (Rio de Janeiro, 1973) 60.

¹⁵ F. C. Rolim, 'Pentecostisne et Society au Bresil' in *Social Compass* 26 (Louvain, Belgium, 1979) 349; Latourette, *Christianity*, 5, 233.

¹⁶ Conde, *Historia*, 14; Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 20-21; D. Berg, *Enviado por Deus. Memorias de Daniel Berg* (Sao Paulo, 1959) 29.

¹⁷ W. R. Read, *New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil* (Grand Rapids, 1965) 121.

¹⁸ Berg, *Enviado por Deus*, 45-46.

¹⁹ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 32, 34, 40.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 32.

²¹ A. N. de Mesquita, *A Historia dos Baptistas no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1940) 136, 137.

²² Conde, *Historia*, 26.

The founder of the Congregacao Crista, Luigi Francescon, also arrived in Brazil in 1910 from the U.S.A.²³ Francescon, of Italian descent, had been a Roman Catholic until he was converted to

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Protestantism in 1907 and joined the First Presbyterian Church in Chicago.²⁴ Later he came to know the Pentecostal experience and 'felt led by God' to go to South America with a friend to share the Pentecostal message with the many Italians scattered there.²⁵ Francescon settled in Sao Paulo, Southern Brazil, where there was a large contingent of Italians. In fact 48% of all the foreigners in the state of Sao Paulo were Italians.²⁶ One day he was given an opportunity to speak in the Presbyterian church of the district of the Bras. His message was disliked by the pastor who expelled him from the church, but 20 members of the church left with Francescon, and together they established the Congregacao Crista do Brasil in Visconde de Parnaiba Street, Bras, Sao Paulo.²⁷ Today it is the second largest Pentecostal church in Brazil. By 1965, Presbyterians in the city of Sao Paulo had a membership of a little over 8,000 while the Congregacao Crista had more than 110,000!²⁸

So by 1910-1911 the Pentecostal pincer movement in Brazil was ready to begin. The Assembleias de Deus were installed in the far north in Belem in the state of Para, whilst the Congregacao Crista were consolidating their position some 2,000 miles or so south in Sao Paulo. Of course neither knew of the presence of the other. It is almost as if some mastermind had planned the whole operation! Until the fifties these two denominations were virtually the only Pentecostal groups in the country.²⁹

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS (1911-1930)

The beginnings of the Brazilian Pentecostal movement were slow. Braga and Grubb tell us that after 22 years in the country the Pentecostals had only 122 local churches with a total membership of only 13,511.³⁰ They amounted in 1930 to only 9.5% of Brazilian Protestants, excluding the Lutherans who were essentially an ethnic group and not really converts.³¹ (See diagram on page 88.)

Growth in these early years seems to have been mostly hampered by two factors: the *patrao* system and the Roman Catholic church.

A basic social structure in Brazil was, and still is in the north-eastern interior where church growth remains slow, the *patrao* system gravitating around the large agricultural estate.³² This paternalistic system had the estate's owner (the *patrao*) as the dominant authoritarian figure

²³ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 85.

²⁴ L. Francescon, *Resumo de uma ramificacao da Obra de Deus, pelo Espirito Santo no seculo atual* (Sao Paulo, 1958) 2.

²⁵ Read, *New Patterns*, 22.

²⁶ Rolim, *Pentecotisme*, 348.

²⁷ Souza, *Experiencia*, 29.

²⁸ Read, *New Patterns*, 23.

²⁹ Rolim, *Pentecotisme*, 351.

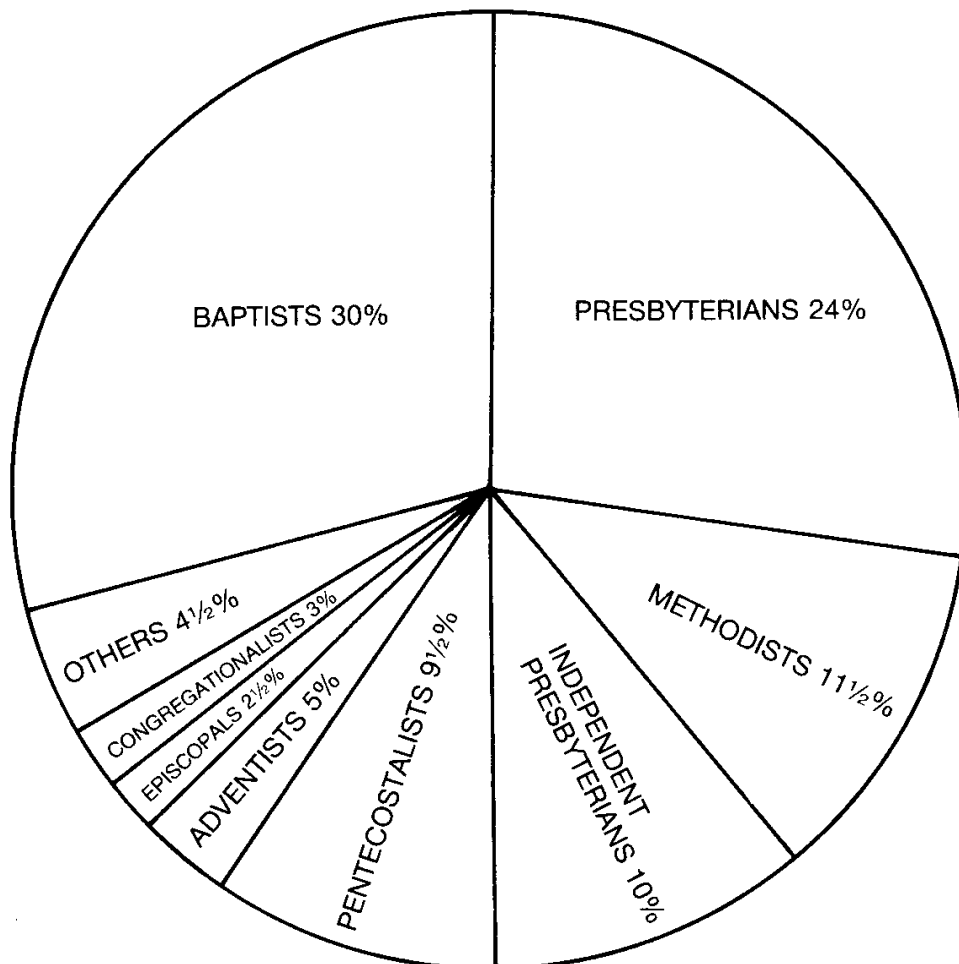
³⁰ E. Braga and K. G. Grubb, *The Republic of Brazil* (London, 1932) 149.

³¹ *Ibid.* 71.

³² J. F. Normano, *Fazendeiro, Brazil: A Study of Economic Types* (New York, 1968) 68-75; H. W. Hutchinson, *Village and Plantation Life in Northeastern Brazil* (Seattle, 1957) 69-71.

who took all the decisions and provided everything for his workers and their families.³³ In return it involved the workers in a sense of loyalty to the *patrao*, and if anyone was to accept a new religion it would threaten his job and home.³⁴ Whenever deviant religious and political movements did occur the *patrao* violently opposed them and even employed private armies to enforce his will.³⁵ Daniel Berg noted that the upper ruling classes had always been fiercely hostile to Pentecostal proselytizing and

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opposed it with obstructionism and physical violence.³⁶ When Pentecostals complained to the police they often discovered that persecution had official sources that 'were largely under the thumb of the landed aristocracy'.³⁷

The Roman Catholic church, in league with the landowners, strongly opposed the rise of the Pentecostal movement with public campaigns, polemic literature and physical violence, long

³³ Willems, *Followers*, 25.

³⁴ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 47.

³⁵ M. B. Lourenco, *Juazeiro do Padre Cicero* (Sao Paulo, 1959) 99-145.

³⁶ Berg, *Enviado por Deus*, 169-172.

³⁷ R. W. Shirley, *Authority and Power. The End of a Tradition* (New York, 1971) 83.

after the constitution of 1891 had granted religious freedom to all.³⁸ E. Conde's history of the Assembleias de Deus lists dozens of instances of violent opposition.³⁹

The blind traditional loyalty which Brazilians felt for the Roman Catholic church also made it difficult for the Pentecostal movement to progress in the early years.⁴⁰ 'To apostatize and become a Protestant was thought to be intolerable.'⁴¹ For as remarked earlier, the Roman Catholic church had become the supreme symbol of Brazilian nationalism, which meant that even those masses of Brazilians who at best could be called nominal Catholics, rose in a wave of anti-Pentecostalism and anti-Protestantism.⁴²

There were however more positive aspects to this early period.

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Nationalistic opposition was in fact a blessing in disguise to the Pentecostal movement, because it soon made it recognise the need for recruiting national ministers, the first of whom were ordained within three years of the movement's commencement.⁴³ Within the Assembleias de Deus, the missionaries hesitated in handing over the movement's overall leadership to the Brazilian pastors and this caused considerable tension as they naturally resented having to take second place in their own country. Eventually in 1930 a general meeting was called to resolve this problem which firmly placed the movement under national leadership.⁴⁴ The same meeting also upheld the autonomy of the local church.

Also Conde shows how Pentecostalism spread throughout all of Brazil's states to become a truly nationwide movement during this period.⁴⁵ Numerical growth did not run parallel to the geographical expansion, but the roots that were put down were to be important in producing much fruit in the following decades.

Therefore during this first period of development Pentecostalism became a national movement present in all states. A national leadership emerged,⁴⁶ guaranteeing, unlike other Protestant churches in Brazil, that the pattern which evolved in the Pentecostal churches would be characteristically Brazilian.⁴⁷ Furthermore, what numerical growth of Pentecostalism there was in this period is accounted for by its appeal to the lower classes of society from which it recruited its converts.⁴⁸

MUCH FRUIT (1930 ONWARDS)

Researchers such as Willems, Read and Beatriz Muniz de Souza all designate the year 1930 as the starting point of the Pentecostal 'explosion' in Brazil, following the laying of solid

³⁸ W. R. Read, V. M. Monterroso, and H. A. Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, 1969) 37.

³⁹ Conde, *Historia*, 75, 84, 98, 99, 100, 112, 116, 119, 121, 122, 126, 127, 128, 129, 141, 148, 149, 169, 249, 250.

⁴⁰ Berg, *Enviado por Deus*, 71.

⁴¹ H. C. Tucker, *The Bible in Brazil* (New York, 1912) 237.

⁴² W. H. Endruweit, *Pentecostalism in Brazil* (Evanston, 1975) 30-31.

⁴³ Conde, *Historia*, 32.

⁴⁴ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 153-155.

⁴⁵ Conde, *Historia*, 6-316.

⁴⁶ Read, *New Patterns*, 225.

⁴⁷ Endruweit, *Pentecostalism*, 35.

⁴⁸ Berg, *Enviado por Deus*, 45, 72, 95.

foundations in the first 20 years.⁴⁹ It is this explosion which is attracting the attention of so many today.

W. R. Read, an American Presbyterian, wrote in 1965 that 'during the last 35 years about 3 million souls have turned to Christ and formed themselves into congregations of the Pentecostal family of churches. While the traditional churches during the same period, with the aid of hundreds of missionaries and millions of dollars, have increased from probably 300,000 to 1,000,000, the Pentecostals, with the aid of very few missionaries and frequently without any financial assistance at all, have increased from less than 100,000 to over 3,000,000.'⁵⁰ Hollenweger wrote in 1969 that 'Pentecostalism in Brazil is the most numerous Protestant body in any country having a Latin language. There are approximately four million Pentecostals in Brazil (about 70% of all Protestants).'⁵¹ The secular magazine *Manchete* in December 1983 speaks of 12 million Pentecostals in Brazil.⁵² Certainly Key Yuasa in 1981 estimated that Pentecostals then were about 80% of Brazilian Protestants.⁵³ Although it is impossible to be precise about statistics, it

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is evident that Pentecostalism in Brazil has grown numerically since 1930 in an extraordinary way.⁵⁴

In the 1930s the Pentecostals moved deeper into the interior, establishing churches more densely in all the states.⁵⁵ The Assembleias de Deus established a publishing house in the 1940s which has produced many tons of literature.⁵⁶ However the Congregacao Crista refuses to use literature, radio or TV broadcasts, and open-air preaching, relying only on the personal testimony of their members. Nevertheless it had constructed 777 church buildings by 1962, and by 1967 the number exceeded 1,000. This means that an average of 45 church buildings were constructed by the Congregacao Crista, alone, every year.⁵⁷

From the 1950s onwards a new factor emerged in the growth of Pentecostalism. Harold Williams, a missionary of the Four Square Gospel church, held tent meetings in Sao Paulo with special emphasis on divine healing.⁵⁸ As great interest was manifested, various Pentecostal pastors joined the enterprise and this eventually led to the establishment of independent Pentecostal churches, the principal of which was Brasil para Cristo founded by the dynamic Manoel de Melo, an ex-Assembleias de Deus pastor,⁵⁹ who separated from Williams and the Assembleias de Deus because of rivalries in the struggle for power. Melo is a powerful orator,

⁴⁹ Rolim, *Pentecotisme*, 351.

⁵⁰ Read, *New Patterns*, 12.

⁵¹ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 65.

⁵² T. Batista, 'Protestantes: os herdeiros brasileiros de Lutero' in *Manchete*, no 1650 (Rio de Janeiro, 3 December 1983).

⁵³ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 97 refers to K. Yuasa as 'a Japanese Brazilian who does not belong to the Pentecostal movement but knows it thoroughly'. I heard him give the figure of 80%, quoted above, at a series of lectures on Brazilian Protestantism at the 'Curso de Obreiros' da Alianca Biblica Universitaria in Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil in July 1981.

⁵⁴ Read, *New Patterns*, 218.

⁵⁵ Conde, *Historia*, 96, 213, 248, 292, 309.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 348.

⁵⁷ W. R. Read, et al, *Church Growth*, 69.

⁵⁸ Souza, *Experiencia*, 37.

⁵⁹ Read, *New Patterns*, 144-153.

often attracting crowds in Sao Paulo of 100,000.⁶⁰ He spent, and still spends, large amounts of money to buy time on a major radio station⁶¹ and his movement has grown rapidly. By 1963 Melo had 1,100 organized churches throughout Brazil.⁶² In Sao Paulo he built what he boasted was the largest church building in the world to seat 25,000,⁶³ which, when I visited it, reminded me of a gigantic aircraft hanger.

Manoel de Melo's denomination, Brasil para Cristo, has therefore clearly taken third place in the Brazilian Pentecostal league, but during the 1950s numerous other Pentecostal churches were established and grew side by side.⁶⁴ They emerged because of administrative dissatisfaction and rivalries amongst the leaders of the existing movements. By 1965 W. R. Read estimated that the relative strengths of the various Pentecostal groups were as follows.⁶⁵

Assembleias de Deus	58%
Congregacao Crista	18.3%
Brasil para Cristo	6.7%
Total of a large number of smaller independent Pentecostal groups	17%

In 1974 W. A. Cesar speaks of 'more than 100 autonomous Pentecostal churches in Brazil'.⁶⁶ The more churches that appear, the more bizarre become their names. For example: The Evangelical Church of the Holy Spirit, The Christian Pentecostal Church of the

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Bible, The Evangelical Crusade for the Return of Jesus, The Church of the Fount of Living Water.⁶⁷ What is more, to confound most of the sociologists who saw Pentecostalism exclusively as a working class religious movement, middle-class Pentecostal churches such as the Igreja Pentecostal da Nova Vida in Rio de Janeiro, which has a luxurious air-conditioned building containing much imported marble and having its own private parking facilities, grew up in the 1960s.⁶⁸ Also in the 1960s Pentecostalism spread within the traditional Protestant churches, with the movement of renovacao espiritual (spiritual renewal).⁶⁹

In the remainder of this essay I will try to outline what seem to be the factors which have contributed to this outstanding growth of Brazilian Pentecostalism. There is no single explanation. For the sake of clarity I will divide the numerous factors into two groups, external and internal, though inevitably there will be some overlap.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 145.

⁶¹ Ibid, 150.

⁶² Ibid, 153.

⁶³ Ibid, 152.

⁶⁴ Souza, *Experiencia*, 47-53.

⁶⁵ Read, *New Patterns*, 174-175.

⁶⁶ W. A. Cesar, 'Urbanizacao e Religiosidade popular' in *Revista de Cultura* no 7 (Petropolis, 1974) 26.

⁶⁷ Souza, *Experiencia*, 47-53.

⁶⁸ Cesar, loc. cit.

⁶⁹ Read, *New Patterns*, 165-167.

EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING GROWTH

Sociological Factors

There is a general consensus among Brazilian social, political and economical scientists, and non-Brazilian specialists, that a basic transformation in Brazilian society has been felt with increasing intensity since 1930 which is not yet ended. The 'Brazilian revolution' which began during the regime of Getulio Vargas (1930-45) and the changes which came with increasing intensity after World War II were both economic, political and social.⁷⁰ Such a process of change has produced a climate favourable to Pentecostal expansion.⁷¹

In 1930 the worldwide economic depression paralysed exportation of agricultural production, around which the Brazilian economy was centred.⁷² President Vargas therefore set Brazil on a new economic course exerting every effort to diversify the economy through industrialization and agricultural expansion.⁷³ This new stage of Brazilian capitalism was directed towards the production and manufacture of goods for internal consumption so as to provide employment and a higher standard of living for the people.⁷⁴ Every stimulus was given that Brazil's infant industrial sector might expand. By 1940 the growth of industry in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro was beginning to attract large numbers of people from different parts of Brazil as the economic advantages over the agricultural sectors became apparent. Nine large densely populated urban areas developed which by 1950 housed 9 million people, by 1960 15 million and by 1970 24 million inhabitants—25% of the population of Brazil.⁷⁵ All these inter-related processes of industrialization, urbanization and internal migration led to a drastic change in the socio-economic panorama of the country. The system of

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the large agricultural estates was weakened and the landowners lost much of their former power. Now new social classes were emerging with the industrial middle and working classes. The urban masses had arrived as new factors on the stage of Brazilian history.⁷⁶

Brazil's industrial revolution has occurred parallel to the growth of Pentecostalism. As the processes of industrialization and urbanization have developed, so has Pentecostalism. Interestingly, the same thing has happened in Chile.⁷⁷ The clear relationship between industrialization, the accompanying social change in Brazil, and the growth of Pentecostalism is further underlined when we notice that the areas most affected by such change are where the most Pentecostals are, while in those areas untouched by change there are few. Read and Ineson observe that the 23 micro-regions in Brazil with the highest concentrations of Pentecostal communicants are all located in the areas of highest economic development.⁷⁸ Willems points out that 61.5% of Brazil's Protestants are in the south where the population is only 35% of the total population. In the north-east however, which has 22.1% of the total population, there are only 9.2% of the Protestant family. The south has been the focal area of

⁷⁰ I. L. Horowitz, (ed) 'State and Man in Brazil', in *Masses in Latin America* (New York, 1970) 20.

⁷¹ Endruevit, *Pentecostalism*, 49.

⁷² Read and Ineson, *Brazil 1980*, 144.

⁷³ E. B. Burns, *A History of Brazil* (New York, 1970) 292, 320.

⁷⁴ Rolim, *Pentecotisme*, 352.

⁷⁵ Read and Ineson, *Brazil 1980*, 146.

⁷⁶ Rolim, *Pentecotisme*, 352-353.

⁷⁷ Willems, *Followers*, 68.

⁷⁸ Read and Ineson, *Brazil 1980*, 165.

Brazil's industrial growth but the north-east has been little affected by any sociocultural change.⁷⁹

The link between industrialization, social change and Pentecostal growth is confirmed yet further when we look at Willems's statistics regarding the very heart of Brazil's industrial growth, the state of Sao Paulo. These show that 58.1% of the Protestant population are located in the industrial area of the state.⁸⁰

There seem to be various reasons why the industrialization and urbanization processes have contributed to the growth of Pentecostalism. First of all as the masses flock from the interior to find employment in the large urban centres they have been liberated from the *patrao* system. No longer are they obliged to follow the religion of the landowner on which their life depended, but they are free to go their own way. The very fact that they have ventured to travel hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles in search of a better life is evidence enough that they are open to change.

Not only are the migrating masses free from the *patrao*, but they are separated from all family and friendship ties, and those of tradition. No longer are there any group pressures which oblige them to remain, at least in name, Roman Catholics. 'Neither feudal loyalties or subtle controls of kinship groups find much chance to survive in the impersonal and atomistic society of the city.'⁸¹ However the migrant who is far away from his 'personal community'—'the group of people on whom he can rely for support and approval'—often feels deprived of a sense of security and social identity, rather than feeling liberated.⁸² The shock of drastic social change is severe. The migrant reacts by seeking, mostly through trial and error, a group of people with whom he may identify

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and in whose midst he may find emotional affinity. Among the alternatives, one of the most readily accessible and for various reasons the most attractive, is the Pentecostal church.⁸³ for the Pentecostal movement is equipped to provide the rural migrant with a new social identity, relative emotional security, and even a measure of material assistance.⁸⁴

D'Epinay, in his excellent study of the Pentecostal movement in Chile, points out that Pentecostalism is attractive for the rural migrant arriving in the large city because it takes over the role of the traditional social system.⁸⁵ The same is true of Brazil. Pentecostal preaching is aimed at the individual and a free decision is called for, but once that step has been taken the group dominates the individual. All the Pentecostal member's acts come to be regulated and controlled by his church so that 'nothing remains to him of the domain in which his personal conscience is the sole judge'.⁸⁶ As Bryan Wilson observed, such sects 'make a totalitarian claim on the individual'.⁸⁷ Whether it be what clothes to wear, how long his or her hair should

⁷⁹ Willems, *Followers*, 69.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 268.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 80.

⁸² J. Henry, 'The Personal Community and its invariant Properties' in *American Anthropologist* 60 no 5 (October 1958) quoted in Willems, *Followers*, 83.

⁸³ Willems, *Followers*, 83.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 86.

⁸⁵ C. L. D'Epinay, *Haven of the Masses* (London, 1969) 130.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 128.

⁸⁷ B. R. Wilson, *Sects and Society* (Westport, Connecticut, 1961) 1, 4.

be, what to do with his spare time and what not to do with it, all is controlled by group dynamic processes.⁸⁸ These enforce a new incarnation of the old traditional social system, with the pastor playing the role of the *patrao*, and as such his followers approach him. Brazilian Pentecostals do not appear to find such a system oppressive, because without doubt the Pentecostal church fills a void, by enabling the individual to be integrated into a group, organised on the old model. However, D'Epinay perceptively remarks, 'Pentecostalism teaches how to believe and live, not how to think.'⁸⁹

It is for this reason that I must question the theory of sociologists such as E. Willems who seem to regard the Pentecostal movement as a transitional link between traditional rural society and modern urban society.⁹⁰ It is argued that, in accordance with the Durkheimian concept of society as an organic totality, social re-balancing is demanded every time there is disorganisation, and Pentecostalism appeared as a social mechanism of re-adjustment for individuals in a situation of anomie.⁹¹ So B. Muniz de Souza argues that Pentecostalism is 'a mechanism of integration in the passage of traditional to modern society',⁹² and C. P. F. de Camargo says that 'Pentecostalism's sociological function is to reorientate conduct in sacral terms for those unprepared for participation in an effective way in urban-industrial society. Pentecostalism leads to social integration.'⁹³ But I would hesitate to consider Pentecostalism in Brazil to be such a positive factor in the preparation of men for the exercise of responsibility in society. How can this be true of a movement which utterly dominates every aspect of the conduct of individuals and never allows them to think for themselves? How can it be true of a movement which in fact teaches withdrawal from society in a very extreme way, no doubt reflecting 'the painful experiences which

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Pentecostals have had of society'?⁹⁴ In my opinion the Brazilian Pentecostal movement must urgently rethink these areas of its practice. However, having said this, one does not want to lose sight of the undeniable therapeutic and psychological help Pentecostal believers receive from their beliefs and practices.⁹⁵ W. A. Cesar observes that Pentecostalism is primarily attractive to the lower classes 'who need greater comfort, a more dynamic religiosity to help them overcome the threat of secularization'.⁹⁶ Camargo says that Pentecostalism grows because its congregations create a warm, receptive, small-sized community for immigrants and those largely on the margins of society, teaching them that in Christ all their problems have solutions.⁹⁷ It gives their lives new meaning and generally brightens an otherwise drab existence,⁹⁸ helping to fulfill their needs and aspirations within a situation of change, suffering and marginalization.⁹⁹ D'Epinay speaks of Pentecostalism being

⁸⁸ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 491.

⁸⁹ D'Epinay, *Haven*, 55.

⁹⁰ E. Willems, 'Protestantism as a factor of culture change in Brazil', in *Economic Development and Culture change* 3 no 4 ed B. F. Hoselitz (Chicago, 1955) 103.

⁹¹ F. C. Rolim, 'Pentecostalismo de Forma Protestante', in *A Religiao do Povo* (Sao Paulo, 1978) 81.

⁹² B. M. de Souza, 'Aspectos do Protestantismo Pentecostal em Sao Paulo', in *Protestantismo e Imperialismo na America Latina*, ed W. A. Cesar (Petropolis, 1968) 106.

⁹³ C. P. F. de Camargo, *Catolico*, 147.

⁹⁴ D'Epinay, *Haven*, 128. It should be noted that only Manoel de Melo's Brasil para Cristo church preaches and practises any positive socio-political action.

⁹⁵ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 457-458.

⁹⁶ Cesar, *Revista de Cultura*, no 7, 20.

⁹⁷ Camargo, *Catolicos*, 148.

⁹⁸ J. M. Davis, *How the Church Grows in Brazil* (New York, 1943) 83.

⁹⁹ Camargo, *Catolicos*, 148.

'a communal religious answer to the confusion of large sections of the population, caused by the gnomonic character of a society in transition'.¹⁰⁰ Clearly the fact that Pentecostalism has met with such a phenomenal response is because, in market terms, it supplied a demand, from the 1930s onwards, caused by the upheaval of a society in change.

Underlying all this there may be yet another layer, another factor, which has contributed to Pentecostal growth in a situation of change. D'Epinay says that 'underlying Pentecostalism is a social protest'.¹⁰¹ Rolim suggests it is 'a reaction against a capitalistic society'¹⁰² and Abdalazis de Moura, north-eastern regional secretary of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, maintains that it is a 'conscious or unconscious protest against existing political, social, economic or religious forms'.¹⁰³ Willems terms it, 'a symbolic subversion of the social order'.¹⁰⁴ There certainly is an element of truth in all these statements, since the underprivileged masses who have mainly accounted for Pentecostalism's astronomical growth in Brazil are those people who have suffered most at the hands of modern society. Rather than improve their lot in life, as they had hoped, they have in fact become poorer. This has obviously led to severe disillusionment and, deep within such people, there must be a desire for liberation from the structural elements of society which are interpreted as sources of oppression and exploitation. Hence the organizational spontaneity and social self-help which the Pentecostals emphasize in Brazil serves as a means of rejecting 'the paternalistic tutelage of the upper classes'.¹⁰⁵ The emphasized social equality within Pentecostalism negates the class system. The monopoly of the Roman Catholic church and its priestly hierarchy, seen as the bulwark of the traditional social order, is utterly rejected. Now the supernatural powers are directly accessible to every believer. The Pentecostals 'hug themselves in self-descriptions as "chosen people" and the "people of God"'.¹⁰⁶ The 'Gifts of the Holy

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Spirit' separate the believer from others and give him a feeling of power which is in strict contrast to his social powerlessness.¹⁰⁷ It is hardly surprising that Pentecostals ignore and often denounce as 'sinful worldliness', the conventional criteria of social differentiation like wealth, family belonging, education and profession. 'The social reality is replaced by a putative social order in which the sect represents an élite called by God and confirmed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.'¹⁰⁸ In other words, the structure and creed of Pentecostalism serve as a symbolic inversion of the conventional social order.

Similarly with Umbanda, the even faster growing mass religious movement of Spiritism in Brazil,¹⁰⁹ there is the attraction of the feeling of power involving those who get in direct or indirect touch with the world of ghosts. It is a compensatory mechanism that 'all of a sudden turns humble, small officials and maids into containers of enlightened spirits and carriers of sublime messages'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁰ D'Epinay, *Haven*, 15.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 124.

¹⁰² Rolim, *Religiao*, 86.

¹⁰³ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 105.

¹⁰⁴ Willems, *Sociology of Religion*, 209.

¹⁰⁵ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁶ *Op. cit.*, 209.

¹⁰⁷ L. P. Gerlach and V. H. Hine, *People, Power, Change* (Indianapolis, 1970) 42-43, 163-164.

¹⁰⁸ Willems, *Sociology of Religion*, 209.

¹⁰⁹ B. R. Wilson, *Magic and Millennium* (London, 1973) 108-120.

¹¹⁰ C. P. F. de Camargo, *Kardecismo e Umbanda* (Sao Paulo, 1961) 125.

In short, the Pentecostal movement has, as Read says, 'caught the sociological tides in this enormous country'.¹¹¹ However there are other external factors which prepared the way for such growth.

Religious factors

In the 1950 census 93.5% of Brazilians declared themselves Catholics, but in 1958 the average attendance at mass was only 10%. The majority in fact practise 'folk-Catholicism' involving the cult of the 'saints', which are promoted by the people to de facto deities that can mete out punishments and bestow benefits at will. The statues of popular saints such as the Virgin Mary, St. Anthony and St. Benedict are worshipped as if each effigy represents a separate supernatural being, and each virgin is believed by many Catholics to be a distinct saint. Festas, pilgrimages, street processions, etc, revolve around this cult of the saints.¹¹² 'Christ has lost prestige as a helper in the affairs of life. He lives in virtual banishment, while the Virgin and the saints are daily approached for life's necessities.'¹¹³

The divergence of Latin American folk-Catholicism from orthodox Catholicism has largely come about because of the enormous lack of priests in the continent. A century ago one priest might be taking care of up to 100,000 people! Nowadays, whilst the world average for Roman Catholics is one priest per 1,344 Catholics, and in Europe it is one per 1,067, in Brazil it is one per 7,692. Clearly Brazil has been ripe for the development of folk-Catholicism,¹¹⁴ and it is this folk-Catholicism which has in some ways carried out a pre-evangelism for Pentecostalism as there are a number of links between the two religions.

No doubt one of the attractions of Pentecostalism to the rural Catholic of the lower classes¹¹⁵ is that there is a fair amount of familiar ground there. According to Rolim, 81% of converts to Pentecostalism

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were formerly folk-Catholics and the other 19% have been Protestants or Spiritists.¹¹⁶ I am not suggesting that Pentecostalism encourages the worship of the saints, but the living supernatural world that most Brazilian Catholics move in, with belief in evil spirits, magical powers, miracles and powerful saints, is far nearer to Pentecostalism than to any other Protestant church.

'The Latin American people constantly fear bad luck and ask religion and its rituals for protection. Here lies', says Emile Pin, 'the explanation of a certain passivity, and a perpetual supplication for miracles, the liberating intervention.'¹¹⁷ They therefore approach the saints via the institutionalized device of the *promessa* (compact or vow) at a time of sickness, economic crisis or danger, because the saints are believed to bestow benefits and allot punishments. If the afflicted person is blessed then a specific act is promised in honour of the

¹¹¹ Read, *New Patterns*, 130.

¹¹² Willems, *Followers*, 34-35.

¹¹³ J. A. Mackay, *The Other Spanish Christ* (New York, 1932) 112.

¹¹⁴ K. Yuasa, 'The Image of Christ in Latin American Indian Popular Religiosity' in *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Bangalore, 1983) passim.

¹¹⁵ Willems, *Economic Development* 3 no 4, 324.

¹¹⁶ Rolim, *Pentecotisme*, 367.

¹¹⁷ E. Pin, *Elementos para una Sociologia del Catolicismo Latino-Americano* (Bogota 1963) 30, quoted in Willems, *Followers*, 36.

saint.¹¹⁸ So, too, Pentecostals make vows in a similar fashion. Souza, for example, tells of a man who vowed to become a Pentecostal 'if the Spirit would lead him to a job'.¹¹⁹ They also believe God punishes broken vows. Sickness is said to return if they abandon the faith. In fact Souza says that believers who do not keep their vows 'are persecuted by constant fears of sickness'.¹²⁰

Popular Catholicism also believes that evil powers attack people, but they can be protected by the *benzedores* (blessers) or the cross.¹²¹ Similarly Pentecostals believe in demon possession and demons causing sickness. Often one hears in Pentecostal churches such prayers as 'I command you blind spirit to come out of him.'¹²²

Another important aspect of folk-Catholicism is the large number of *festas* (feasts), with the *Festa do Divino Espirito Santo* being one of the more widespread in rural areas. In fact, in many regions, these celebrations in honour of the Holy Spirit constitute the pinnacle of the annual round of religious *festas*.¹²³ Its climax is the day of Pentecost when thousands gather in great festivities. The pantheon of saintly helpers, included in which is the Divino Espirito Santo, is thought of as a local pantheon. One enters a compact with the Virgin of Lapa, the Virgin of Aparecida, the *Divino Espirito Santo*, etc and they have their local shrine. Migration to a distant city alienates from this. However, once again, the link with Pentecostalism can be seen. For as soon as the rural migrant goes to a Pentecostal church he finds himself on familiar ground. Here, more than in any other Protestant denomination, with the Pentecostal emphasis on the Holy Spirit, a lost element of his own religious background is brought back to him in a new and exciting way.

Thus various aspects in the rural migrant's religious background of folk-Catholicism greatly reduce any intellectual barriers which might hinder his acceptance of Pentecostalism. Popular Catholicism has in a number of ways provided the stage for the attraction of Pentecostal doctrines and characteristics which the large masses of rural low-class people encounter upon their arrival in the fast-growing urban centres.¹²⁴

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We must not close this section on the external factors that have contributed to rapid Pentecostal growth in Brazil without noting that this was preceded by the laying of solid foundations by the historical Protestant churches, such as the Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists.¹²⁵ They prepared the way for the Pentecostal movement by slowly making Protestantism more acceptable as they were seen over the years to be conscientious businessmen, sober and industrious labourers, and punctually paying debtors. It became evident to all that there were clear advantages in dealing with such folk!

Also the traditional Protestant churches established first-class schools which gradually won the respect of non-Protestants who naturally came round to the idea of sending their children

¹¹⁸ R. Bastides, 'Religion and the Church in Brazil' in *Brazil, Portrait of Half a Continent*, ed T. L. Smith (New York, 1951) 346.

¹¹⁹ Souza, *Experiencia*, 94.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 167.

¹²¹ Endruweit, *Pentecostalism*, 132.

¹²² O. Boyer, *Curai enfermos e expeli demonios* (Rio de Janeiro, 1965) 196-197.

¹²³ Willems, *Followers*, 133.

¹²⁴ Endruweit, *Pentecostalism*, 101.

¹²⁵ Willems, *Sociology of Religion*, 213.

there, as these schools were the best. So a steadily growing number of influential friends and defenders were won over to being at least sympathetic to Protestantism.

This rise in the prestige of the Protestant churches had opened the way for a more general tolerance when Pentecostalism started to develop into a mass movement, though it still had to cope with its fair share of opposition and persecution. The Pentecostals capitalized on the slowly increasing goodwill towards Protestantism and invaded the wide-open fields with unprecedented proselytising zeal.¹²⁶ These wide-open fields had already been to some extent prepared by early traditional Protestant missionaries who had laboured fearlessly and tirelessly in distributing the Bible and its teaching, though Pentecostalism did not recognise this then.¹²⁷ Rather, the Pentecostals believed all the traditional denominations which did not aim at an immediate mystic-emotional union with the 'Spirit' to be 'dead' or 'cold', and that the purity of their own doctrines required a strict separation from the 'world' and its more or less corrupt churches. Thus within Protestantism the Pentecostals gained a distinct identity whose 'higher standards' proved to be one of their attractions. It is to these internal factors—typically distinguishing Pentecostal features which have also contributed a great deal to Pentecostal growth—that we shall now turn.

INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING GROWTH

Pentecostal doctrines

It is not necessary to attempt a detailed description of every aspect of Pentecostal teaching. All that is needed is to pin-point those doctrines which seem to have contributed most to Pentecostal growth in Brazil.

The Pentecostals' belief in the present-day experience of the outpouring or 'baptism' of the Holy Spirit as occurred on the day of Pentecost and the ensuing 'gifts of the Spirit' is, not surprisingly, an element which attracts much attention and generates great enthusiasm amongst worshippers. 'The first experience with the Spirit the Pentecostal seeks as anxiously as a Plains Indian seeks his vision, to put a seal

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of approval from God on him.'¹²⁸ Then he feels he really 'belongs'. For without this initial 'baptism', which most Pentecostals believe is evidenced by 'speaking in tongues'¹²⁹ he feels inferior to the rest of the group and knows that he cannot progress to any office within the church. However, if after being 'baptised' his 'receiving the Spirit' is further validated by energetic and successful evangelistic work and he shows signs of having received more than an ordinary share of 'gifts', then he knows that a kind of career is open to him in the church.

Another attraction of the 'baptism in the Spirit' and subsequent exercising of the 'gifts of the Spirit' is that these are highly pleasurable experiences,¹³⁰ but of course their authenticity is not empirically verifiable. I have witnessed what seemed to be the psychology of suggestion playing a part in inducing 'speaking in tongues'. 'When one belongs to a group in which it is

¹²⁶ C. P. Wagner, *Look Out! The Pentecostals are coming* (Illinois, 1973) 73-74.

¹²⁷ Read and Ineson, *Brazil 1980*, 24-29; F. C. Glass, *Through Brazilian Jungleground with the Book* (London, nd) passim.

¹²⁸ Willems, *Followers*, 138.

¹²⁹ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 515.

¹³⁰ Willems, *Followers*, 138.

expected that the most advanced spiritually will speak in tongues',¹³¹ and 'when seekers of the gift are even told what they must do',¹³² it would be strange if no one in such circumstances began to do what was expected. However such are not the only situations in which I have observed people 'speaking in tongues' or 'prophesying'. Willems comments that these emotional experiences provide 'a coveted change in the otherwise dreary and often hopeless life of the lower classes', and the 'compensate the convert for his feeling of a class-conditioned inadequacy'.¹³³ Hollenweger maintains that speaking in tongues 'has an important psycho-hygienic function' and adds, 'anyone who rejects it must offer a substitute which has the same function and effect'.¹³⁴

Of the nine 'Gifts of the Spirit' which Pentecostals believe can be received by Christians subsequent to their being 'baptised in the Spirit'¹³⁵ in accordance with I Corinthians 12:8-10, the most emphasised are 'tongues', 'interpretation', 'prophecy' and 'healing'. Brazilian Pentecostals believe that the more sensational ones attract attention to the gospel, which is certainly true. 'They are a sort of divine advertising'.¹³⁶ According to the Pentecostals these gifts 'arouse the indifferent',¹³⁷ 'convict of sin',¹³⁸ 'attract to the Gospel and lead to conversion'.¹³⁹ 'They attract the attention of the masses and prove the heavenly origin of the message given by the preacher'.¹⁴⁰ Brazilian Pentecostals definitely affirm their success is because these gifts enable them to witness 'with power'.¹⁴¹

'Speaking in tongues', for the Pentecostal, is 'speaking in a tongue of men or angels which the speaker has never learnt'.¹⁴² The 'gift of interpretation' enables a Christian to give the gist—not word for word—of a message from God in tongues,¹⁴³ and the 'gift of prophecy' Conde defines as 'a supernatural utterance, inspired by God, in a known tongue'.¹⁴⁴ Certainly we can see that for people who come from a background of the very sacred world of folk-Catholicism, where the supernatural is widely believed in, the demonstration of such 'super-

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natural gifts of the Spirit' can only serve to enhance the appeal of Pentecostalism, and authenticate its divine origin. However it is the 'gift of healing' which undoubtedly is the most attractive of the gifts of the Spirit.

Healing clearly plays a great role in Brazilian Pentecostalism as a recruiting technique.¹⁴⁵ It is exploited by some groups more than others, but my experience tallies with Souza's observation during her investigation of Pentecostalism in Sao Paulo. She reports that 'healing

¹³¹ Souza, *Experiencia*, 135, 142.

¹³² Read, *New Patterns*, 138.

¹³³ Willems, *Followers*, 140.

¹³⁴ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 372.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 518.

¹³⁶ L. Tavares, *O Espirito Santo e o Movimento Pentecostal* (Sao Paulo, 1966) 36.

¹³⁷ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 164-165.

¹³⁸ Willems, *Followers*, 127-128.

¹³⁹ Vingren, *op. cit.*, 39, 41.

¹⁴⁰ Conde, *Historia*, 29.

¹⁴¹ Read, *New Patterns*, 42-43.

¹⁴² Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 342.

¹⁴³ Vingren, *op. cit.* 41.

¹⁴⁴ Conde, *Historia*, 84.

¹⁴⁵ Endruweit, *Pentecostalism*, 122.

constitutes the principal factor of conversion of all our informants'.¹⁴⁶ 'People become Pentecostals', remarked a young farmer, 'because they believe if you are ill and you change to that religion, you'll soon get well.'¹⁴⁷

Nearly all Pentecostals in Brazil claim to have personally experienced the effects of the 'gift of healing'. Some pastors, such as Manoel de Melo and Davi Miranda, have become quite famous as a result of the healings achieved through their ministries. Not surprisingly, Conde claims that healing constitutes one of the secrets of the Pentecostal advance in Brazil.¹⁴⁸ Conversion testimonies frequently contain references to healing. Souza again reports that, 'in every Pentecostal meeting I attended, there were several references to divine healing either in their testimonies or during the sermon and prayer'.¹⁴⁹ She records a typical new convert's testimony: 'Before my conversion I lived in vice and sin. I was sick and the doctors gave up my case. But when I accepted the Holy Spirit my illness miraculously disappeared and from then on I have enjoyed good health.'¹⁵⁰ Pentecostals therefore come to consider good health as 'a divine reward for those who follow the Lord'.¹⁵¹ Orlando S. Boyer explains that Pentecostals believe that all disease is a consequence of sin and the fall. It is from Satan who desires our destruction, whereas God desires our happiness. He points to Scriptural support for this, such as: Psalm 103:4; Exodus 15:26; Isaiah 53:4-5; Mark 16:18; Acts 10:38; James 5:14.¹⁵² Sin is related by Pentecostalism to sickness which Christ took care of in his redemptive work. Therefore for those who faithfully follow Christ healing for sickness is guaranteed by the atonement.

By viewing healing as part of the atonement, Brazilian Pentecostalism inevitably gives it too prominent a place in their church life. All of their healing services and healers do have the positive effect of creating faith and expectancy but their view leads them to believe that everybody must be healed and does not allow a place for suffering in God's purposes. Therefore where there is no healing the results can be terribly damaging. Much gossip always ensues as to whether the problem is lack of faith or, more usually, whether sin is the problem. This can push the sick person to despair, and to make claims that in some cases are more wishful thinking than fact. It has also pushed some healers to sheer deception 'to encourage faith'.¹⁵³

However, the fact is that by radio, television and press the word is spread that healing is available and experienced at the Pentecostal

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church. Bearing in mind the despicable social conditions in which the majority of Brazilians live, with extreme poverty, poor diets and the resultant poor health, about which they can do little as they cannot afford the expensive medical care available, it is easy to see why divine healing is such an attraction. Levy Tavares, a Pentecostal leader says, 'It is the reality of Brazil itself that draws people to Pentecostal meetings. For in a country that has a great lack

¹⁴⁶ Souza, *Experiencia*, 166.

¹⁴⁷ D. Pierson, *Cruz das Almas* (Washington, 1952) 179.

¹⁴⁸ Conde, *Historia*, 29.

¹⁴⁹ Souza, *Experiencia*, 101.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 95.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 167.

¹⁵² Boyer, *Curai Enfermos*, 11-15, 61, 75-76, 79, 119, 170-171, 200.

¹⁵³ Cf M. Baughen, 'The Gifts of Faith, Miracles and Healing', an All Souls Church. London paper (London, 1981) 3.

of hospitals, in which medicine is too costly for the majority, one logically expects that the promise of divine healing, which happens through faith in God alone, attracts the masses.¹⁵⁴

Within such a context it is not surprising that the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, a doctrine which Pentecostals boldly and regularly proclaim, is another major attraction of Brazilian Pentecostal teaching. They firmly believe that their movement is part of the 'latter rain' (Joel 2:23-29; Acts 2:17-21; James 5:7) before Christ's return and the new age. The expectation of the second coming dominates Pentecostal eschatology. 'He is coming soon', affirms Vingren, 'to establish his millennial reign'.¹⁵⁵ Thus people have hope of a better world, one day, which will be vastly different to their present misery.

The problem with their presentation of this teaching is that, apart from Manoel de Melo and his Brasil para Cristo movement which is a member of the World Council of Churches¹⁵⁶ and which is actively involved in politics,¹⁵⁷ Pentecostals believe there is no hope for this evil world apart from Christ's return, and our only task is to await the 'Kingdom'. In other words, Pentecostalism's hope is totally outside history, and in effect it is a firm upholder of the status quo.¹⁵⁸ This is something the military government is fully aware of, and at present it is blatantly wooing the Pentecostal electorate in an effort to make up for the loss of support from the Roman Catholic church which nowadays takes a firm, usually biblical, stand on political and social issues. However, Pentecostal pastor Conde says, 'The mission of the church is to save souls. Let the politicians take care of the social problems.'¹⁵⁹

This attitude towards eschatology and history has positive effects for Pentecostal church growth. For while such a pessimistic world view encourages escapism, it also promises the Pentecostal faithful an instantly perfect world, without having to struggle and strive for it, and in which they will be the rulers, when Christ returns.

In the meantime the only faint hope of better days in this age is summed up in the Pentecostal slogan, 'Social renewal through individual new birth.'¹⁶⁰

For this reason, but primarily because of the imminence of Jesus' second coming,¹⁶¹ there is a special urgency to rush the gospel to the whole of Brazil. Souza observes that the return of Christ is also an intensifying factor in the appeal for conversions.¹⁶²

That such teaching is so popularly received in Brazil is further helped

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by the fact that Brazil has a rich historical tradition of messianic movements. It can be traced back to Messianic Sebastianism and aboriginal tupi messianism in the 16th Century.¹⁶³ The most noted of such messianic movements is that of Padre Cicero de Juazeiro (1870-1934)

¹⁵⁴ Tavares, *O Espirito Santo*, 36.

¹⁵⁵ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 58, 120.

¹⁵⁶ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 107.

¹⁵⁷ Endruweit, *Pentecostalism*, 140.

¹⁵⁸ Read, *New Patterns*, 155-156.

¹⁵⁹ E. Conde, *O Testemunho dos Seculos* (Rio de Janeiro, 1960) 180.

¹⁶⁰ Endruweit, *Pentecostalism*, 148.

¹⁶¹ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 40, 58.

¹⁶² Souza, *Experiencia*, 101-102.

¹⁶³ Willems, *Followers*, 134.

who is remembered as a great missionary worker and father of the poor.¹⁶⁴ Each year, around 200,000 people gather at Juazeiro to pay homage to him on Remembrance Day. It is, therefore, nothing strange in Brazil for people spontaneously to follow such movements. Especially attractive is the Pentecostal eschatological hope of the imminent return of Christ to usher in a new and perfect age.

The final aspect of doctrine that I shall focus on as being significant to Pentecostal expansion would perhaps seem at first sight, to those who are familiar with Brazil, a strange choice. For Brazilian Pentecostals maintain extremely rigid teaching about sanctification which can only be described as outrageously legalistic. It was a matter which J. Merle Davis in 1943 saw as a real hindrance to growth.¹⁶⁵ The Pentecostal is forbidden to smoke, drink alcohol, go to the cinema or theatre, play football,¹⁶⁶ watch television, gamble, dance, etc. Men's hair must be cropped short and a moustache must be small,¹⁶⁷ though one group has now arisen in which only men with moustaches can take public part in services! The women however fare much worse. In the intense heat they are banned from wearing sleeveless dresses, cutting or trimming of hair, using hair clips, shaving legs, using cosmetics, etc.¹⁶⁸ However, rather than feel oppressed by such legalism it seems that Brazilians find the system to be a positive attraction.

Hollenweger comments that, 'For Pentecostals, rigorist ethics seem to be the only way of protesting against the moral perplexity of our times.'¹⁶⁹ To have things explained in such simple black and white terms appears to be a real comfort to them. W. A. Cesar says that because Pentecostalism is a phenomenon which originated and grew in urban society, but which is marginalized, it developed a body of doctrine opposed to the typical behaviour in the urban world.¹⁷⁰ So legalism becomes a symbolic protest against the world and the traditional church. It is a most valuable symbolism because it is a means of personal identification for all Pentecostals—the 'tribal mark' of the 'chosen few'.

The Pentecostals' rigorist ethics have the added advantage of bringing moral and economic improvements.¹⁷¹ For the believer is taught to be honest and dedicated to work, coupled, as we have seen, with abstention from immoral pastimes, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, gambling and so on.¹⁷² He is also taught a single standard of sex morals which of course implies a deep change in the traditional husband-wife relationship, and wives testify of how their husbands, after conversion to Pentecostalism, treat them better.¹⁷³ Such positive changes prove to be effective selling points for Pentecostal pastors on the radio and television. So Vingren relates a testimony: 'God blessed the brother's

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¹⁶⁴ M. I. P. de Queiroz, *O Messianismo no Brasil e no Mundo* (Sao Paulo, 1968) 286-287; Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, 3, 347.

¹⁶⁵ Davis, *How the Church grows*, 119.

¹⁶⁶ Even young boys are frowned upon for playing football, and in Brazil at that!

¹⁶⁷ My moustache used to be bigger than it is now, and I once went to speak at a Church in Recife where a rule against this was actually pinned on the door, much to my embarrassment!

¹⁶⁸ Souza, *Experiencia*, 80, 147-150.

¹⁶⁹ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 405.

¹⁷⁰ Cesar, *Revista de Cultura*, no 7, 22.

¹⁷¹ Willems, *Economic Development*, 3 no 4 327, 331.

¹⁷² The effects of such a 'Puritan ethic' were long ago observed by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London, 1930).

¹⁷³ Souza, *Experiencia*, 164-165.

poultry yard, and as a result he had more chickens and eggs than all the other farmers together. The unbelievers were astonished and said, "This is because he is a Pentecostal".¹⁷⁴ Evidently the Pentecostal doctrine of sanctification is attractive to Brazilians in itself, and because of its positive effects.

Pentecostal communication

If certain aspects of Pentecostal teaching are real attractions in Brazil, the way it is communicated is also very important.

The atmosphere of Pentecostal services is absolutely electric. There are bands, choirs, chorus singing and the active participation of all.¹⁷⁵ When it is time for prayer the noise is similar to that of the roar of the Niagara falls! Indeed the genius of the worship service is congregational participation. Pentecostals tell us the worship is 'of the people, by the people, for the people'.¹⁷⁶ Anyone who has a song to sing, a message in tongues or an interpretation, or a testimony to give, has an opportunity. All stiffness and formality is avoided, exactly in keeping with the Brazilian way of life, and the worship service is conducted in a way which offers the best possible opportunities for emotional release.¹⁷⁷ *Gloria a Deus, Deus maravilhoso and Aleluias* are shouted out by the congregation many times as the meeting progresses and gathers pace.

The music is no Anglo-Saxon dirge. 'The Pentecostal hymns are sung in the unadulterated rhythm of the samba and other folk dances.'¹⁷⁸ 'Autochthonous musical expression'¹⁷⁹ with 'genuine rumba, cha-cha and samba compositions, accompanied by indigenous accompaniments'¹⁸⁰ fill the air. The hymns often use the imagery and key words of popular songs, and apply them all to one true friend.¹⁸¹ The end result is genuine Brazilian worship enjoyed by all.

By the time the preacher stands to deliver the message the atmosphere is nearing fever pitch, and the extemporaneous sermon certainly does not dampen things down. 'The message is preached in a style similar to a very excited football commentary.' Professor Hollenweger sees this as an important aspect of Brazilian Pentecostalism. 'It is an oral religion. Sermons are not prepared in the study but on the spot.'¹⁸² This method undoubtedly is helpful in communicating to Brazilians because it holds their attention, though solid content is generally lacking. Leonard sees danger in it when he comments: 'The Holy Spirit teaches them; any ass can become one of their preachers. It is a religion against study and against progress.'¹⁸³ Hollenweger rightly points out that this is too harsh, but the absence of solid content in preaching and teaching is very marked.

¹⁷⁴ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 162.

¹⁷⁵ Davis, *How the Church grows*, 82-83; W. Scopes (ed), *The Christian Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York, 1962) 125.

¹⁷⁶ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 87, 119-20.

¹⁷⁷ Souza, *Experiencia*, 89-108.

¹⁷⁸ Willems, *Followers*, 146.

¹⁷⁹ Read Monterroso and Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth*, 323.

¹⁸⁰ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 465.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 464.

¹⁸² This was expressed to me by Prof. Hollenweger in a personal interview at Birmingham University on 26.10.83.

¹⁸³ E. C. Leonard, *L'illumination dans un protestantisme de constitution recente (Brasil)* (Paris, 1953) cited by Hollenweger, *op cit*, 91.

People are also attracted to Pentecostal services by the genuinely warm fellowship there. Many speak of deciding to attend just one meeting, but they have never stopped going, thanks to the 'warm

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Pentecostal fellowship'.¹⁸⁴ It is so acceptable to the poor masses lost in the anonymity of vast cities, and something the large Roman Catholic parishes can never match. Inside a Pentecostal church they are not just numbers but are treated as people who matter and who are loved.

Pentecostal communication is not only carried out through its church services. There are house meetings and open-air meetings crammed into a hectic weekly schedule.¹⁸⁵ Most Pentecostal groups make great use of the radio to convey their message to the masses,¹⁸⁶ and some now even use the television. The Assembleias de Deus is also engaged in a vast literature crusade, publishing their own national weekly newspaper, *Mensagem da Paz*, plus magazines, Sunday school lessons, hymn books, tracts and books.¹⁸⁷ Recently they even published a book by John Stott called *Balanced Christianity!* But there is a great dearth of solid 'home-grown' Brazilian Pentecostal literature. The Pentecostals also have their own recording studios and produce their own records which sell increasingly well.¹⁸⁸ The Pentecostal 'hit parade' has helped to make evangelical music popular in Brazil.

The Congregacao Crista, as noted earlier, is the one exception to this mammoth Pentecostal publicity drive. The fact that they refuse to use any of the above mentioned public means of communicating their message, whether by open-air meetings, printed matter or radio and television,¹⁸⁹ no doubt accounts for their slower growth.

Pentecostal ecclesiology

We have pin-pointed certain Pentecostal doctrines, and the means and methods used in communicating them, as being important internal factors which have contributed to Pentecostalism's accelerated growth in Brazil. Finally we highlight the Pentecostal church concept, structure and organisation as being further keys to the spread of this movement.

Pentecostalist Conde announces, 'The church is a people called out from the world who profess allegiance to the Lord.'¹⁹⁰ Pentecostals stress the sharp dichotomy between church and world arising from their eschatological views. Apart from Manoel de Melo, who has a slightly more balanced approach, they advocate total separation for the 'pure church'.¹⁹¹ This isolationist concept of the church has meant that Pentecostalism has become a sub-culture largely protected from secularization. It has proved to be an integrative force of the first magnitude producing an esprit de corps not easily duplicated anywhere in Brazil, except in kinship groups and political cliques.¹⁹² Admission into the 'pure church' is guarded, with a 'born-again' experience and adult baptism in water as pre-requisites, and after admission a

¹⁸⁴ Berg, *Enviado por Deus*, 63-67.

¹⁸⁵ Read, *New Patterns*, 132.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 167; E. R. Norman, *Christianity in the Southern Hemisphere* (Oxford, 1981) 67.

¹⁸⁷ Read, *New Patterns*, 169.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 167.

¹⁸⁹ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 85.

¹⁹⁰ Conde, *O Testemunho*, 191-192.

¹⁹¹ Souza, *Experiencia*, 46, 73.

¹⁹² Willems, *Economic Development* 3 no 4, 330.

system of strict discipline is enforced to maintain purity.¹⁹³ The moral standard of the member's life is watched as a hawk watches its prey. No one who fails to keep the rules is allowed to remain inside the church. Ruthlessly

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they are rooted out lest they damage the church's testimony and hinder its progress.

Pentecostal church organisation is a remarkable mixture of free congregationalism and a more centralised system.¹⁹⁴ Each church is intended to be free and independent. Great 'blessings' and success are attributed by the Pentecostals to this. Within this system the role of the 'mother church', the local church reproducing itself, has proved to be an effective means of expansion in Brazil.¹⁹⁵ These 'mother churches' have a lot of small *congregacoes* or house churches started by its members. As the *congregacoes* grow they can break off and become 'mother churches' which in turn continue the process.

Linked with this, the Pentecostals have a tremendous church construction programme in which they make use of the bricklayers, carpenters and electricians, who are numerous amongst them, on their free days and week-ends.¹⁹⁶ Hence Read, Monterroso and Johnson can say, 'We know of no Pentecostal church built with American dollars.'¹⁹⁷

Another important factor is that, unlike some other Protestant churches in Brazil, Pentecostal churches either became independent at an early stage or never had any foreign connection at all.¹⁹⁸ 'The Pentecostal movement has historically been a three-fold self-movement (self-supporting, self-propagating, self-governing) without the hindrances of the institutional superstructure of foreign subsidies.'¹⁹⁹ Freedom from foreign patterns allowed the Brazilian Pentecostal churches to adapt freely to local conditions.

Therefore the national leadership developed its own criteria for choosing pastors based on qualifications that are spiritual rather than academic.²⁰⁰ This means that any member is a potential leader. Pentecostal pastors emerge from the ranks through in-service training in the local church. Such training lasts many years so that most pastors are over 40 when they become full pastors of a church. Someone in whom leadership qualities are noticed may pass through an ascending process as follows, before becoming a full pastor: doorkeeper, open-air speaker, Sunday school teacher, deacon, leader of a small satellite church, full pastor. Little provision is made for their financial support,²⁰¹ for they must support themselves and 'trust the Lord'. In this way pastoral and spiritual gifts are tested and developed. Calling to the ministry is verified over a long period by success in communicating the faith and multiplying churches.²⁰²

¹⁹³ Conde, *Historia*, 19, 23, 26.

¹⁹⁴ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 80.

¹⁹⁵ Vingren, *Gunnar Vingren*, 154-158.

¹⁹⁶ Rolim, *Pentecostisne*, 362.

¹⁹⁷ Read, Monterroso and Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth*, 37.

¹⁹⁸ Endruweit, *Pentecostalism*, 179.

¹⁹⁹ Read, *New Patterns*, 225.

²⁰⁰ Conde, *Historia*, 51-53.

²⁰¹ Read, *New Patterns*, 134.

²⁰² Endruweit, op cit, 185.

The obvious difficulty with this system is the lack of adequate theological knowledge gained by the pastors, which means that they tend to emphasize the emotional and exhortatory aspects of their message rather than give any systematic in-depth biblical teaching. The Assembleias de Deus have tried to deal with this by bringing their pastors together for ten days every three months, but this is not widespread,²⁰³ and many seem to view even this with suspicion.

Nevertheless, the Pentecostal informal apprenticeship scheme produces strong leaders, and even though they sometimes demand the kind of blind devotion with which the people have been familiar in the Roman Catholic church and which is related to the *patrao*, the dangers of this are no greater than the dangers of missionary paternalism in other Protestant organisations.²⁰⁴

Pentecostal pastors are men of the people. They are not separated from the members by social distance or cultural barriers, and this must be another aspect of the attractiveness of Pentecostalism.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, seasoned by experience in a number of roles in the church on the way to becoming a pastor, the Pentecostal leaders have been able to enlist the members into every church activity, which constitutes another secret of Pentecostal expansion in Brazil.²⁰⁶

Willems says that, 'In the historic churches missionary work is assigned to specialists but in Pentecostalism it is the concerted action of all.'²⁰⁷ It is evident therefore that Pentecostal growth results from the mobilization of its entire membership,²⁰⁸ and they have developed their own devices for the purpose of expansion and 'global' action.

Willems has observed that a set pattern is followed by the group engaged in establishing a new church.²⁰⁹ Stage 1: Prayer meetings at the mother church in which God 'shows' the Pentecostals where he wishes the next church to be founded. Stage 2: Preaching activities in that territory which is divided into smaller sectors. A group of faithful come two or three nights a week to the territory and, divided in little groups as many as there are sectors, they attempt to attract the people by singing and preaching.²¹⁰ At times they meet in a public square where a service is held with prayers and singing,²¹¹ in true Brazilian style. In between the songs different ones stand forward and tell the passers-by their experiences, how they were healed and how since they 'accepted Jesus' they have always been happy. It is not the specialists or paid professionals who do this but people who are met everyday by the passers-by so that many are attracted and ask how they too can experience such a changed and better life.²¹² This whole procedure is repeated, during perhaps a year of strenuous effort, until there are many new members, with enough funds accumulated through collections, to buy a piece of land where the church is to be built. Stage 3: Then all participate directly in the building process, and when the new church is completed the sponsoring church attends the dedication ceremony. Of course now both churches are ready to start the whole process all over again.

²⁰³ Read, *New Patterns*, 134-135.

²⁰⁴ Endruweit, *Pentecostalism*, 186.

²⁰⁵ Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 57.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 160.

²⁰⁷ Willems, *Followers*, 145.

²⁰⁸ Gates, *Industrialization*, 52.

²⁰⁹ Willems, *Followers*, 145.

²¹⁰ Read, Monterroso, and Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth*, 316-317.

²¹¹ Read, *New Patterns*, 145.

²¹² Souza, *Experiencia*, 117-118.

However that is not all that Pentecostal members are enlisted in. On top of all this there are week-night prayer meetings, testimony meetings, choir and band practices, hospital and prison visitation, tract distribution, etc. There is something for everyone to do with rarely a night off. You need to be fanatical and very fit to be a Brazilian

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Pentecostal! For when the week-end arrives there are often evangelistic and divine healing services on the Saturday night culminating in the great day of the week, Sunday, the Christian 'day of rest', which is packed solid with more work for God.²¹³ Is it at all surprising that Pentecostalism grows in Brazil?

Because of the fact that the majority of Brazilian Pentecostals come from the lower strata of society there is much material help which such folk stand in need of. Whilst, as we have seen, most Pentecostals shrink from any form of political involvement with the outside world, they do much within their ranks to ease their members' plight. Hollenweger refers to the Assembleias de Deus in Sao Paulo establishing 'a provident fund for expectant mothers, the sick and the orphaned', as well as a community centre with dental clinic and a school. There is also 'a hospital, old people's home, a secondary school and Bible School' under construction.²¹⁴

But the Congregacao Crista is the movement by whom charity is practised in the most organised fashion, because their 'Waldensian heritage [Francescon] leads to the demand for a high degree of responsibility towards fellow men'.²¹⁵ They call it *obra de piedade* which is a department operated mostly by women. It holds weekly meetings attended by about 100 women who perform duties comparable to those of social workers. Many of these present cases requiring help, to qualify for which the recipients must be members of the Congregacao Crista in good standing. The ultimate decision of what to do is left to the presiding deacons who seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in prayer. Sometimes the needy receive food, clothes, fuel, money, etc, but everything is done strictly anonymously with the names of donors never being revealed. 'All glory belongs to God.'

Many of the volunteers in the *obra de piedade* have accepted old people in their homes where they are cared for as part of family. The *obra* maintains a placement service and pays subsidies if a family is unable to defray the expenses. Willems comments that, 'institutional charity in the form of orphanages and old people's homes seems to be incompatible with the Pentecostal ideal of Christian brotherhood.'²¹⁶ Pentecostalism has thus also found means to mobilize its vast human resources to the last man.²¹⁷ No matter how humble, unskilled or uneducated, the individual convert feels needed and relied on, and a practical back-up system has been established by Pentecostals to support their ever expanding spiritual advance. As one put it: 'God cares for our souls, so we have to care for bodies.'²¹⁸

²¹³ Ibid, 123-124; Vingren, *Gunner Vingren*, 122-5; Conde, *Historia*, 227.

²¹⁴ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 80.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 90.

²¹⁶ Hollenweger's example of the construction of an old people's home cited earlier is an exception to the general rule. Willems is correct here.

²¹⁷ Willems, *Followers*, 148-149.

²¹⁸ Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 80.

CONCLUSION

Pentecostalism has caught the massive sociological tides of change in Brazil. It has done so because the expressive nature of Pentecostalism,

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which was attractive to the Latin temperament in the first place, has been developed in a truly Brazilian way. Freed from foreign domination early in its history, the Brazilian Pentecostal movement developed its own apprenticeship scheme for training leaders which has been essential to its growth. For by avoiding the use of theological colleges, which would inevitably have been dominated in the formative years by North American and European influence, it ensured that its theology was not monopolized by a specialized, alienated and foreign-trained professional élite but remained the domain of people who were in touch with the real world of Brazil, were able to communicate with the man in the street and were in a position to develop an authentically contextualized Brazilian church.

Being Brazilian-led meant that as it developed it took on board, quite naturally, aspects of the traditional social system which the mushrooming urban masses felt bereft of. Its egalitarian principles came to express something of the people's protest against an oppressive and unjust modern capitalist society, and its warm fellowship ministered vital therapeutic and psychological help to those suffering people traumatized by the upheaval of an anomic industrial world. Pentecostalism gave and still gives to the marginalized masses a new identity within a community where they are respected as individuals and given a reason to live. The Pentecostal emphasis on the supernatural together with its rigorist ethics proves to be a haven of protection from the horrors of bewildering secularization. The stress placed on healing plus practical charity are tangible incarnations of the gospel, and the continual Pentecostal drum-beat announcing the imminent second coming of Christ gives Pentecostals hope that right will soon come out on top. In the meantime, however, every Pentecostal is mobilized to spread their message with almost fanatical dedication day and night. It all adds up to a formula which has produced much fruit for the Pentecostal movement, the roots of which stem from a factor which can be summed up in the words found stamped on all Brazilian industrial products today—'Made in Brazil'.

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