

Fall 2008

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Allison Kidd Covington
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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Recommended Citation

Covington, A. K. (2008). Why Pentecostal? A Look at the Phenomenon of Rapid Pentecostal Growth in Latin America. *Inquiry: The University of Arkansas Undergraduate Research Journal*, 9(1). Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/inquiry/vol9/iss1/4>

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WHY PENTECOSTAL? A LOOK AT THE PHENOMENON OF RAPID PENTECOSTAL GROWTH IN LATIN AMERICA

By Allison Kidd Covington
Department of Anthropology

Faculty Mentor: Stephen M. Striffler
Department of Anthropology

Abstract

I first got the idea for my thesis studying Spanish in Costa Rica in the fall of 2006. Not long after I arrived at my host family's home, my host mother asked me whether or not I was "evangélica". I was somewhat confused by this question because it went against my previous assumption that the majority of Latin Americans—or at least Latin American Christians—were Catholic. Knowing a minimal amount of Spanish and very little about the culture, I answered yes, essentially translating "evangélica" as "Protestant". I would soon learn, however, that the term "evangélica" had much deeper meaning and held quite different connotations to my host mother and to many other Latin Americans than my definition of Protestant did to me.

I quickly began to grasp the difference between the Latin American understanding of "evangélica" and my own understanding of Protestant as I regularly attended church with my family. On my third Sunday, a revival preacher visited the church. He stood before the lively crowd, yelling in people's faces, "más, más, más!" as they commenced falling to the ground unconscious, where fellow worshippers quickly covered them in blankets. These experiences, combined with dozens of similar ones, caught my attention and inspired my research on the Pentecostal Church's immense growth throughout Latin America. I soon found out that when she said "evangélica", my host mother was not referring to being Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian or most other mainstream Protestant denominations. She was referring instead to the relatively new wave of charismatic and Pentecostal churches that have begun to overtake Latin America at an astounding rate.

Ultimately, this paper seeks to explain why the Pentecostal Church experienced such a huge and unprecedented growth spurt in the mid to late twentieth century. Why was Pentecostalism so attractive to Latin Americans at this specific point in history? In order to answer this question, I first looked at general characteristics of the Pentecostal Church. What are the major beliefs, practices, and theological stances of Pentecostalism throughout history and in present-day Latin America? Although Pentecostal churches vary greatly from one another, I was able to deduce several overarching qualities that can be applied to the vast majority of Pentecostal congregations: an emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit in each believer's life; speaking in tongues; healing; and the importance of missions and community outreach. This is by no means a comprehensive list, and there are certainly

Pentecostal churches that cannot be described by the above characteristics. For the purpose of this paper, however, it is important to define what exactly is meant by Pentecostal, and the previously mentioned aspects appear to be the most inclusive.

Having defined the term "Pentecostal", I explored various social and political stimuli for the movement's growth, keeping in mind the political turmoil that existed in the latter half of the twentieth century. Interestingly, some of the countries that experienced the most political upheaval at this time (e.g. Chile, Guatemala, Brazil) simultaneously experienced substantial Pentecostal growth. Two important social stimuli for Pentecostal growth have been the rights of both women and minority groups. Pentecostal congregations generally believe in the priesthood of all believers, or the idea that each believer, regardless of gender or social status, is equipped by the Holy Spirit to perform a vital role within the church.

The Pentecostal Church has served both as a haven to people who have been given a low position in society, as well as a place of empowerment. In general, Pentecostalism has given the masses a socially-acceptable mode of empowering themselves to live in their own society, while at the same time maintaining a degree of separation from it. In societies where the governments and social structures have been feeble, unpredictable, and in many cases threatening, Pentecostalism has given marginalized peoples a culturally-appropriate place of refuge and a vehicle for change. It has similarly served to forge new identities for individuals who have felt a sense of "social anomie" (a sense that one does not belong, or a lack of clear identity). As Latin Americans have been forced to relocate to urban areas or even the United States in search of work and/or safety, they have struggled to establish new identities. Pentecostalism has been the solution for many Latin Americans in these types of situations, giving them a community in which to be involved.

One of the last, and perhaps most important, questions that I address involves the Catholic Church. If it has held such a strong religious monopoly since the arrival of the Spanish in the sixteenth century, then why is its growth suddenly paling in comparison to that of the Pentecostal Church? The general conclusion to which my research led me was that the Catholic Church simply did not change to meet the needs of a changing society. While Pentecostal congregations consistently adhered to the priesthood of all believers, Catholic churches continued to be hindered by their hierarchical structures, which provided

the marginalized peoples no refuge from their daily struggles. The Pentecostal Church has placed considerably more power in the hands of the lay people and less in the hands of one authority figure. It is also known for its worship styles, being more oral and spontaneous in nature than the liturgies and formulaic prayers of many Catholic churches. Ultimately, Pentecostalism has molded itself to fit society, while at the same time offering a shelter from society's ills.

(For full text, go to <http://inquiry.uark.edu/>)

Mentor Comments

Stephen Striffler's are brief and to the point. What more

needs to be said when one's student has received a Teaching Academy Undergraduate Research Award?

Allison Covington's thesis is exceptional. Few anthropology majors are able to engage in original research in other countries. Allison's project is rooted in her own research and experiences with Pentecostalism in Costa Rica. This not only provides for an engaging narrative, but a point of departure for a review of the scholarly literature on religion in Latin America that is thorough, analytically sharp, and wonderfully informed by her own research. The result is a remarkably nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the rapid rise of Pentecostalism in Latin America.

Why Pentecostal? A Look at the Phenomenon of Rapid Pentecostal Growth in Latin America

Allison Kidd Covington

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to Dr. Steve Striffler, for spending his time reviewing and editing my thesis. He was continually encouraging about my work and his positive attitude enabled me to remain optimistic throughout the process. I am also grateful for the constant encouragement of my husband, James, who helped me to stay focused on my work and inspired me to do my best.

I. Introduction, Beliefs, History, and an Explanation for Growth

Introduction

During the fall of 2006, I lived with a family in Costa Rica while studying Spanish. Much to my surprise, one of the first questions my host mother asked me was whether I was *evangélica*. This question caught me off guard in two ways. First, I simply assumed that my family – like most Latin Americans – was Catholic. Weren't all Latin Americans Catholic? Second, as I would learn, I had very little idea as to what she meant by *evangélica*. I incorrectly translated this as "Protestant" and thus confirmed that I was indeed Protestant (which she of course understood as *evangélica*). When I revealed that I was *evangélica*, my host mother stunned me by quickly lifting her hands and screaming "*alleluia!*". As I would subsequently learn, the term *evangélica* has much deeper meaning and bears different connotations to her and to many other Latin Americans than my simple translation of Protestant does to me. Needless to say, I was caught off guard by her excitement.

I began to understand the difference between the Latin American understanding of *evangélica* and my own understanding of Protestant while attending church with my family. The first two services were not unlike what I had expected. They were at least three hours long, compared to the one hour church services at home, and there was a great deal of dancing, but neither of these differences made me feel uncomfortable or out of place. During my third week, however, a revival preacher visited the church, and as he screamed in people's faces "*más, más, más!*", they commenced falling to the ground unconscious, where they were quickly covered in blankets by their fellow worshippers. Growing up Methodist, I had never witnessed anything of this nature before. My interest was piqued. Were these experiences genuine or perhaps manufactured? Did the same things occur in churches at home? Was there some aspect of Latin American culture that encouraged these actions?

During my four months abroad, I visited several other churches and each demonstrated similar charismatic practices. At one church a young man danced and gyrated in front of the

congregation and then ended his “routine” by rolling all over the church floor. In yet another congregation a man began to play his guitar, quickly beginning to weep and speak in tongues. Not only were the actions of these church members distinct, but their stories were as well. For instance, a seven year-old boy came to one service and preached for nearly an entire hour. He told us about a bullet being lodged in his body and how it miraculously disappeared. This young boy was now visiting churches in several nearby countries to give testimony to his miraculous encounter with God. After spending a semester with a Pentecostal family, I began wondering what was so contagious about this movement and what made it particularly appealing to people in that region of the world. This is the question which my research seeks to understand.

In order to investigate this phenomenon and its implications, I will first examine the basics of the Pentecostal Church, looking at general theological stances and basic practices which are common to the majority of Pentecostal churches. Of course, due to the vast size of the movement today, there will be no definition of Pentecostalism that will be completely satisfying and appropriate to each and every situation. It is important, however, to have a grasp of the broad, overarching themes that are common throughout the movement as a whole. Secondly, I will render a brief history of the Pentecostal movement. Examining its history and the effects it has had on different people in various locations is necessary to understanding why it has been so infectious in Latin America at this particular moment in history. Next, I will include examples of Pentecostalism’s movement to Latin America and how people received its message. The greatest portion of this research, though, will be dedicated to scrutinizing and understanding the question of *why* Pentecostalism has been so popular at this particular point in history. What are the circumstances of Latin American society that have helped to foster its immense growth?

What is Pentecostalism?

The Pentecostal movement’s huge growth has caused the term to have a somewhat ambiguous meaning. While the term Pentecostal often evokes thoughts of women wearing long dresses and never cutting their hair, in present-day Latin America these people are actually in the minority. Others think of people speaking in tongues, prophesying, and participating in wild worship services. While there is much truth to this image, some Pentecostals don’t quite fit into that description either. In fact, many Pentecostal church services would appear fairly sedate and not much out of the ordinary. It seems that the popular images of ecstatic dancing, uncontrollable laughter, and fainting have been exaggerated in films and literature, causing people to think that each Pentecostal congregation must have these practices. This is not always the case, and many Pentecostals tend to exercise their charismatic gifts more in private than in public settings.

In more recent years, Pentecostal churches have often been stereotyped as mega-churches, large stadium-style buildings brimming with masses of people. Of course, many Pentecostal churches reflect this image, but countless others consist of a humble building that typically hosts the Pentecostal population of the nearby neighborhood. While Pentecostalism often refers to one specific denomination, it can also refer to the much wider scope of charismatic churches. For the purposes of my research, I will use the latter definition, since the charismatic experience is precisely the phenomenon I wish to explore. While the Pentecostal, or charismatic, Church is known for having numerous schisms (i.e. Assembly of God, Full Gospel Church, Apostolic Church, Methodist Pentecostal Church, among many other indigenous or independent congregations), many similarities exist among these factions. Spirit baptism, healing, mission work, and the emphasis on Christ’s second coming are common beliefs among the majority of “Pentecostal” or “charismatic” churches.

Spirit baptism is perhaps the most overarching of these categories, for it is baptism of the Spirit that brings healing, empowers people to be effective missionaries through the speaking of tongues and the Spirit's divine guidance, and prepares believers for Christ's second coming and his imminent rule. Spirit baptism largely represents the ability to speak in tongues, a fundamental Pentecostal practice. Among the vast variety of churches, however, people interpret this phenomenon differently. Some believe that spirit baptism is necessary for conversion. In general, though, Pentecostals believe in the doctrines of "initial evidence" and "subsequence", meaning that speaking in tongues is one of the first confirmations of Spirit baptism, which is a *subsequent* experience to conversion (Anderson 2004: 190-191). Pentecostals typically validate their practices with passages in Acts 1-2 referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, which enabled the people to speak and understand unknown languages. For the Pentecostal Church, speaking in tongues is a normative experience that is to be expected when one is filled with the Holy Spirit. Even though Paul explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 12 that speaking in tongues is a gift not given to all people, the Pentecostal Church has gotten around this issue by differentiating between tongues as a "gift" and as a "sign". The latter, they say, is experienced by all for the individual's personal edification and assurance, while the former may be used in public for the edification of the entire church body (2004: 191).

Closely tied to baptism of the Holy Spirit is the Pentecostal emphasis on healing, and huge numbers of people are attracted to the church for this very reason. People suffering from such physical ailments as cancer, arthritis, blindness, alcoholism, etc. claim to have been cured after accepting the message of Pentecostalism and often believe that their previous sickness was a result of not having the Holy Spirit or even of possession by evil spirits. Not only does conversion promise physical healing, but converts have also testified to its emotional healing and its effect on family relationships. Many women have found restoration for their families, which have been broken by both alcohol abuse and their husbands' tendencies to spend their money on alcohol and other women. First, the women are freed from the depression that results from their husbands' actions, and then they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be good wives and win their husbands over to Christ. In this case, miracles occur when the Holy Spirit fills women with its power, enabling them to make a positive difference in the life of their family.

An emphasis on missions is also important to most churches, and this, too, is a result of the importance members place on Spirit baptism. Early Pentecostals declared that mission outreach was of the utmost importance, believing that God had endowed them with the ability to speak in tongues so that they could reach all peoples of the earth with Christ's redemptive message before his quickly approaching return; a divine call and Spirit baptism were the only prerequisites for missionary service (2004: 214). To them, missions were only possible through the Holy Spirit's empowerment, and for this reason, little training or formal education was required of missionaries. In their belief system, anyone could be empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve as a missionary, and in fact, all church members are considered to be missionaries, whether overseas or in their own community. Above all, Pentecostal missionaries aim for a contextual, or practical, mission outreach (2004: 212). Their goal is to meet the immediate spiritual, emotional and physical needs of the people and to relate their message in such a way that it can be received and effectively practiced in any cultural context. This has likely been a significant factor in the movement's growth.

All of the aforementioned aspects of the Pentecostal Church comprise what many Pentecostals call the "full gospel", or the principle that Christ is Savior, Healer, Baptizer, and Coming King. This theology is so ingrained that some Pentecostal churches are referred to as

“Full Gospel” Churches and “Foursquare Gospel” Churches, referring to these four principals. Pentecostals believe that Christ, through his Spirit, has the ability to save, heal and baptize here on this Earth, while most other Protestant denominations would limit these powers to the Early Church or to Christ’s second coming.

Brief History of the Pentecostal Church

Pentecostal practices can be traced back to New Testament times, more specifically the Early Church. In fact, Pentecostal churches frequently use the New Testament book of Acts to uphold their practices and doctrines. The book of Acts traces the founding and growth of the Early Church and begins with a description of the Pentecost, the event whereby the Holy Spirit descended upon numerous people and manifested itself by enabling them to speak in tongues. The apostle Paul also mentions speaking in tongues when he addresses the topic of spiritual gifts to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 12. The use of tongues and other charismatic gifts began to decline quite early in the church’s history, but there were always small groups of believers who maintained these practices.

In the second century, the Montanist¹ movement argued that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely tongues and prophecy, had been restored to the church (2004: 19). Their stance was largely a rebellion against what they felt to be the “cold orthodoxy” of the church (2004: 19). Early Christian writings alluded to charismatic gifts, for instance, Bishop Irenaeus of Gaul (c. 139 - 202) who wrote about his gifts of prophecy, casting out demons, healing, and even the raising of the dead (2004: 20). Although a number of early believers confirmed their charismatic gifts, a greater number of believers were radically opposed to such an idea. Many great thinkers and religious leaders of the time (e.g. St. Augustine) claimed that these gifts were no longer accessible to the church since they were used solely for God’s purposes of expanding the Early Church. In general, western Christianity denounced the use of charismatic gifts, while the eastern churches remained more mystical and outspoken about their belief in charismata (2004: 21).

During the Middle Ages, eastern and western thought began to diverge even more, as the Catholic Church denied these gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely speaking in tongues. They generally equated the use of tongues with demon possession, and even their liturgy book *Rituale Romanorum* distrusted such practices, proposing exorcism of demons in anyone who demonstrated “ability to speak with some facility in a strange tongue or to understand it when spoken by another; the faculty of divulging future and hidden events; display of powers which are beyond the subject’s age and natural condition” (2004: 22). Thomas Aquinas took a slightly more moderate view on the subject, claiming in his *Summa Theologica* that the gift of tongues still existed, but could only be gained by studying other languages (2004: 22).

Charismatic gifts were even scarcer during the years of the Protestant Reformation. Some testified to occasional episodes of charismata in the Anabaptist movement, but such happenings generally encouraged more aversion to these practices (2004: 23). Even major reformers, namely John Calvin and Martin Luther, believed that God had eradicated such signs

¹ Montanism was a movement in Christianity during the 2nd century AD, mainly in Asia Minor, Phrygia, and portions of the Mediterranean world. Its leader, Montanus, spoke in tongues and prophesied at his baptism. Followers of this movement were interested in charismatic gifts and believed that the Holy Spirit continued to speak through prophets, causing the mainstream Christian Church to label Montanists as heretics. There are numerous parallels between Montanism and present-day Pentecostalism. In fact, Pentecostalism has often been labeled Neo-Montanism.

and wonders (2004: 23). While charismatic gifts were typically rejected by the mainstream churches and their leaders, peripheral movements still existed that emphasized these gifts. The Quakers, for instance, claimed that when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they would commence trembling, weeping and seeing visions. Another group of people began a revival in the Cévennes Mountains of southern France. People from the entire region joined the group to witness the prophesying that occurred at their meetings, which eventually caused the members to be imprisoned and killed (2004: 24).

Yet another outburst of charismata came from the Scottish Presbyterian Church in the nineteenth century, as minister Edward Irving taught the gifts of prophecy and tongues. These practices soon broke out in Glasgow and also in Irving's own church in London. This movement, often referred to as the Irvingite movement, ended up forming its own church, known as the Catholic Apostolic Church, which would later spawn the New Apostolic Church in Germany (2004: 24). This church was careful to maintain charismatic traditions and planted some of the first seeds of the modern-day Pentecostal Church. One of the first North American Pentecostal churches formed after a revival that was attended by Russian Pentecostals and Armenian Presbyterians, where a young Russian boy prophesied the Turkish invasion, causing a number of attendees to leave for North America (2004: 24).

The present-day Pentecostal movement draws much of its inspiration from the Methodist Church and its founder John Wesley. In the nineteenth century, the Holiness movement arose, based upon a particular interpretation of Wesley's teachings. Influenced by both the German Pietist movement² and the doctrines of Lutheranism, Wesley stressed a personal encounter with God and above all, a new birth by the Holy Spirit, emphasizing what he termed a "second blessing". By this, he referred not to an initial conversion experience, but the sanctification and purification that would later occur in a true convert. The emphasis on emotion and religious experience over mere knowledge was encouragement for believers who possessed the gift of charismata.

Some charismatics, however, took Wesley's doctrine of the "second blessing" and interpreted it in a way that he had not quite intended. It was this interpretation that spurred the growth of the Holiness Movement and eventually Pentecostalism itself. Members of this movement believed that this "second blessing" was "the baptism of the Holy Ghost", or, in other words, the power of the Holy Ghost in one's life that enabled both sanctification and other acts of divine power such as prophecy, healing and speaking in tongues. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Keswick Convention added to the teachings of the Holiness Movement, by recognizing the "second blessing" as enabling a convert to engage in acts of service (2004: 29). By the turn of the century, three viewpoints existed regarding the "second blessing". The Wesleyan position stated that the "second blessing", or baptism with the spirit, was the act of sanctification. The Keswick position held that Spirit baptism provided power for Christian service. The "third blessing" position claimed a "second blessing" of sanctification and a "third blessing" of "baptism with fire", which was also a provision of power, most often in the form of tongues (2004: 29). This third stance laid the foundation for the first modern-day Pentecostal churches in Europe and the United States.

The idea of power from the Holy Spirit also found its place in the growing healing movement, which would have a major effect on Pentecostalism. John Alexander Dowie had a huge influence on this movement, namely through his Divine Healing Association and the

² The Pietist movement was closely related to Lutheranism and flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe. At its core, this movement stressed individual virtue and devotion to religious principles.

subsequent Christian Apostolic Church, both founded in the 1890s. In Chicago he initiated several “healing homes” and even published a periodical, *Leaves of Healing*, which made the records of miraculous healings available to people across the globe. Dowie even pioneered the town of Zion near Chicago, intending this small community to be a theocracy. In this experiment, Dowie emphasized racial and gender equality, sending missionaries overseas and raising support for the disadvantaged. Healing was a large part of the city’s function, as he shunned the use of both medicine and doctors and emphasized the miraculous healing power of Christ. Dowie’s emphasis on healing and his acceptance of peoples from all backgrounds were major factors in the development of the modern-day Pentecostal Church.

Working through the healing movement, Charles Fox Parham was also a tremendous impetus for the modern-day Pentecostal Church. He left his position as preacher in the Methodist Church in 1895, and soon thereafter experienced a miraculous healing from rheumatic fever. It was through his own personal experience with healing that he was inspired to begin a healing ministry. In his periodical *The Apostolic Faith*, Parham not only gave witness to divine healings, but he also preached a belief in premillennialism (a worldwide revival before Christ’s second coming), and a “third blessing” in addition to sanctification (Anderson 2004: 33). Parham soon opened Bethel Gospel School in Topeka, Kansas, which served to train future missionaries. He encouraged his first group of students to spend some time reading the book of Acts and find evidence of Spirit baptism. Concluding that the evidence of Spirit baptism was speaking in tongues, the students set aside New Year’s Eve of 1900 to pray for this experience in their own lives. By the culmination of their “watch-night” service, both Parham and one of his students had experienced the gift of Spirit baptism, although many people doubted their experience. Obviously not deterred by people’s skepticism, he continued to preach at Holiness missions in both Kansas and Missouri, where thousands of people were said to have received Spirit baptism in his movement known as the “Apostolic Faith” (2004: 34). Parham also founded the doctrine of “evidential tongues”, which stated that speaking in tongues was a necessary sign of being baptized by the Spirit. Parham’s belief in tongues differed, however, from the present-day interpretation of this phenomenon. He believed in *xenolalia*, or the idea that speaking in tongues enabled the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the Earth by giving people the capability to speak other known languages. This differs from the present-day idea of *glossolalia*, the ability to speak unknown languages, which only hold meaning for the speaker and/or the discerner.

Pentecostalism’s Emergence in Latin America

The Protestant church, in general, went through three successive waves as it became more prominent in Latin America. The first occurred roughly in the nineteenth century and consisted mainly of the more “traditional” denominations (e.g. Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc.). These churches struggled against the Catholic Church for their own rights, and for the most part their growth was fairly limited. The second wave was fundamentalist and began to replace the first wave churches after World War II (Stoll 1990: 101). Second wave churches, however, tended to shun the use of excessive emotion in worship and were reluctant to hand over control to Latin Americans. By the 1960s, Latin Americans began reacting against the control of the second wave churches and formed their own unique brand of Christianity, Pentecostalism. Even though the Pentecostal Church had been introduced much earlier by North American and Swedish missionaries, it was not until the 1960s in most Latin American countries that it became

so widespread and began to overtake the first two waves of Protestantism, and more significantly, the Catholic Church.

At the time of the Pentecostal Church's emergence in North America, Pentecostalism was already beginning to emerge in South America, particularly in the Southern Cone countries of Chile, Argentina and Brazil. Although a fair number of Latin American Pentecostal churches were founded by North American missionaries, this was not true of all of them, especially those farther south. In fact, the first Pentecostals in South America were Chileans. In 1909, the Methodist Church of Valparaíso banned a group of Chileans who were showing signs of "Spirit baptism", which the church perceived to be indications of possession (Slootweg 1998: 54). Brazil's first charismatic church was founded in 1910 when Daniel Berg, a Swedish missionary, and his friend Vingren traveled to Belém, a town in the Brazilian state of Pará. Berg had immigrated to Chicago at the turn of the century, but in a visit to Sweden, a close friend introduced him to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Upon his return to Chicago, he joined a local congregation, and Vingren was told in a dream that he and Berg were to go as missionaries to Pará. Neither knew where Pará was located, but when they found out, they wasted little time in making the trip.

They began doing missionary work with the local Baptist congregation, but their belief in charismata was not quite taking hold as quickly as they had anticipated. Some Baptists, however, eventually experienced Spirit baptism and zealously began evangelizing those around them, much to the consternation of their pastor. In fact, the pastor was so alarmed by their teachings that he dismissed Berg and Vingren, along with the sizeable following that they had accrued. Similar to the situation in Chile, a group of "dissenters" formed the first charismatic (Assembly of God, in Brazil's case) congregation in Brazil after being cast out of another Protestant church. Many other Pentecostal congregations formed likewise, being expelled from a more "traditional" Protestant congregation that did not espouse such charismatic practices.

An Explanation for Growth

While Pentecostalism definitely experienced a growth spurt in the early twentieth century, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that these churches began to multiply at an unprecedented and unforeseen rate. According to the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, evangelical growth (a large portion of which is Pentecostal) in Brazil grew by 77% between 1960 and 1970, and by 155% from 1970 to 1980 (Stoll 1990: 8) This same source also claims that evangelicals have nearly tripled their population since 1960 in Argentina, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, and that they have almost quadrupled since 1960 in Brazil and Puerto Rico. In El Salvador, Costa Rica, Peru, and Bolivia, the evangelical population has actually quintupled (1990: 8-9)

Why, after being introduced in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, did the Pentecostal church not take root for another sixty or seventy years? Until the latter half of the twentieth century, the Pentecostal church in Latin America consisted mainly of a minute minority of charismatic believers who had been ousted from mainstream religious life. Not only had they been expelled from the mainstream Protestant denominations, but they were also a movement that was radically different from the Catholic Church, which had been dominant since the arrival of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Even against the will of the Catholic Church and some of the leading Protestant denominations, Pentecostalism had no trouble with growth in the latter half of the twentieth century. José Míguez Bonino suggests that Latin American soil was an excellent planting ground for the Pentecostal message, claiming that "it fed on the vital

juices of this land, and the new Latin American popular masses proved that the taste of the fruit met the demands of their palate” (1997:56). What was it about the Pentecostal message that caused it to bear so much fruit at this specific point in Latin American history? While there has always been a “remnant” of charismatic believers, what has caused this remnant to explode in Latin America at this particular moment?

Scholars have identified numerous reasons for such an unprecedented growth spurt. Daniel R. Miller, in *Coming of Age*, outlines seven common explanations that scholars have given for this growth. The first is a political explanation, which has been analyzed in detail more recently by David Stoll. This idea essentially states that the U.S. Religious Right’s increased missionary involvement in Latin America during the 1970s and 80s was a government-backed conspiracy against Communism and other left-wing liberation movements (Miller 1994: xiv). Similarly, Catholics tended to be perceived as leftists, due to their involvement with the guerrillas and the Liberation Theology movement, while Protestants were known for being against revolution.

These popular perceptions created a safe environment for Protestant missionaries, since it was likely that they would not be targeted by paramilitary forces. They also attracted many locals looking for an escape from military repression. Other scholars have said that growth came from the promise of healing for alcoholism and other common diseases, or that people hoped for economic help. Often the Pentecostal Movement has been associated with the “health and wealth gospel”, or the idea that devoting one’s life to God will miraculously cure diseases and release one from financial burdens. In fact, many Pentecostal preachers draw huge crowds by making such promises to prospective members.

Still others give a sociological or psychological explanation for the growth phenomenon. The sociological explanation seeks to explain Pentecostalism as a bridge between indigenous or lower-class lifestyles and a changing, modernizing world in which they have grown to feel out of place. The psychological model claims that conversion to the Pentecostal faith is a response to lurking fears of natural disasters, violence, and moral vices. Pentecostalism openly faces these fears and exposes them as ploys of the Devil that can be conquered with a new faith. Finally, and more subjectively, it is plausible that Pentecostals have truly found Jesus and have experienced him in a way that is more personal than their previous experiences. This is the response that most Pentecostals themselves would give, and while this must be taken into consideration among the other explanations, our question still remains: what is it specifically about Pentecostalism that makes their religious experience so meaningful at this point in history?

With regard to fundamental beliefs, Pentecostals have essentially the same beliefs as the more traditional Protestant denominations (Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc.), but these groups are dwindling in comparison to the present Pentecostal growth. It is evident, then, that the Pentecostal churches offer something more than just a belief system. While a combination of the above outlined explanations is certainly plausible, I maintain that above all else, Pentecostalism is a response to changing political and sociological conditions. These changing conditions have created the psychological, medical, and economic needs that are often the immediate causes for Pentecostal growth, and these immediate causes would not exist to their present degree were it not for the changing social and political climate of most Latin American countries during the late twentieth century.

I believe that the Pentecostal Movement in Latin America suggests a general disillusionment with both society and government, which causes individuals to actively seek their own solutions to daily struggles rather than passively watching the situation worsen as they

hope for Christ's return in their lifetime. In general, the Pentecostal Movement represents a liminal state, as members of the movement actively try to change society, while at the same time distance themselves from its moral and social ills. The distinctive emotional and spiritual aspects of Pentecostalism allow Latin Americans to deal successfully with their daily struggles and changing lifestyles, giving them new identities amidst their tumultuous surroundings.

Looking briefly at the historical situation in Latin America in the latter half of the twentieth century is helpful in presenting the connection between the time period and the onset of Pentecostal growth. With the onset of the Cold War in the 1950s, the United States government became increasingly suspicious of any left-wing activity taking place in Latin America and was quick to brand any such activity as Communist. Guatemala was one of the greatest concerns of the United States government, both for its proximity and its assertion that Latin American countries should band together against US pressure. Perceiving this as a very grave threat to U.S. security, the U.S. government deserted its promise of nonintervention into the internal affairs of Latin American countries and began training "proxy" forces, local Guatemalan forces that were trained by the CIA to defend the anti-Communist cause. In the 1950s, Jacobo Arbenz became Guatemala's second reformist president, who caused more Communist scare in the US when he seized large coffee plantations and even land from the United Fruit Company to redistribute land among the poor. Responding to these perceived threats, the CIA led a coup to overthrow Arbenz and replace him with somebody who would instill policies more favorable to U.S. interests and national security.

While Guatemala was receiving large amounts of attention due to its physical proximity to the U.S., similar events were occurring throughout Latin America. In Chile, the United States supported a coup of Salvador Allende's socialist government in 1973. Again perceiving a Communist threat, the U.S. government supported Allende's enemies in Chile and helped orchestrate the bloodiest coup in Latin American history. Thousands of Allende's supporters were massacred, tortured and kidnapped, never to be seen again by their families.

In Brazil, João Goulart, known for his socialist tendencies, was overthrown in 1964 and replaced by a U.S.-backed military dictatorship. This dictatorship implemented industrial reform, but at the expense of the poor; wages were kept at a minimum and workers were forced to work in unregulated conditions (Chasteen 2006: 286). Similar situations plagued the rest of the continent as well, particularly in countries like El Salvador, Argentina and Nicaragua. While the 60s, 70s, and 80s are generally synonymous with military dictatorships and U.S.-backed coups of socialist governments, the period from the 1990s to the present-day has been marked by neoliberal economic policies that have generally been detrimental to the lower classes, often forcing them to move to urban areas in search of jobs. While much of Latin America's population has continually faced oppression since the days of the Spanish conquest, the past fifty or so years have been marked by especially intense subjugation and instability, both politically and socially.

II. Social and Political Stimuli for Growth

Early Studies on the Pentecostal Movement: Willems and d'Epina

It seems no coincidence, then, that Pentecostalism embarked on a huge growth spurt just when it appeared that the government would have no power to reach the masses with the practical help that was so desperately needed. Taking the matter into their own hands, Pentecostal churches have sought ways to cope and react to the suffering surrounding them.

Some of the earliest and most important scholars on the Pentecostal movement, Emilio Willems and Christian Lalive d'Epinay, sought to understand just how the quickly growing Pentecostal movement was meeting people's needs. As people are uprooted to urban centers and disconnected from a once stable life, they often develop a sense of anomie, a feeling of lacking purpose and being disconnected from one's surroundings (Droogers 1998: 10). Because of increased industrialization and urbanization, people are forced to relocate to urban areas and must live in a seemingly impersonal and unstable environment among myriads of nameless faces. French sociologist Emile Durkheim described anomie as

the result of a gap in the regimentation of the individual in society, the concept being related to a characteristic of society itself: the structure of that society, in the security of which the individual used to find support, is in a state of 'rupture', which in turn involves the loss of the consensus that regulates the normative orientation and existential definition which give meaning to the life of the individual or group. (d'Epinay 1969: 32-33)

In the latter half of the twentieth century and even towards the end of the first half, Latin American society at large was quickly changing, and consequently many people's lives were transforming as they were forced to adopt new and unfamiliar lifestyles. The disjuncture between a comfortable and familiar life, and one that is uncomfortable and foreign caused many people to search for either new or renewed identities. Not surprisingly, the uprooted people belonged predominantly to the lower classes. As R.K. Merton explains, a sense of anomie comes from "a lack of adjustment between the goals and objectives in force in a society and the means which are available to groups and individuals for achieving those goals" (1969: 33). In other words, the lower echelons of society did not have access to the financial, political or social means to move up the social ladder. They did not possess the money to gain an adequate education or the social contacts to help them gain entry into the professional world.

Both Willems and d'Epinay analyzed the correlation between the phenomenon of an increasingly transnational society and the rise of Pentecostalism, each coming to a slightly different conclusion. While both hold that Pentecostalism has functioned as a type of escape, or a way to respond to the crises brought about by the change from a primarily rural to a primarily urban society, Willems and d'Epinay emphasize slightly different functions of the religious movement. Willems believes that Pentecostal churches serve as a transition into modern society by equipping members with a new identity and social structure which will help them to successfully enter and adapt to modern society (Míguez Bonino 1997: 59). D'Epinay, on the other hand, sees Pentecostalism more as a "refuge", or a new society in which members may be protected from modern society and may create a new identity almost entirely apart from it (1997: 59). While Pentecostalism certainly fulfills aspects of both scholars' ideas, it actually seems to fall somewhere in between.

Pentecostalism, as suggested earlier, seeks to place members in a liminal state, both spiritually and physically. In a spiritual sense, Pentecostals are on Earth simply to prepare themselves and others for being united with Christ, either at their death or at his second coming. Their existence, then, is merely transient, as they will soon be delivered to God's presence for eternity. Pentecostals demonstrate the same liminality (or "in-between state") in their physical lives. On this Earth, they must live among secular society, while at the same time maintaining a degree of distance from it. In this aspect of the Pentecostal faith, many members differ in how they demonstrate their physical liminal state. Some have as little contact with the world as

possible, while others actively involve themselves in the world, trying to seek solutions to people's suffering. The latter approach is becoming more and more prevalent now, while the former has been more associated with earlier Pentecostals.

D'Epinay's study on Chilean Pentecostalism examines the strong correlations between economic crisis, social migration, and the growth of Pentecostalism. According to d'Epinay, Pentecostalism elicited such a large response "because it supplied a demand which was caused by the slow transition from a traditional and seigniorial type of society towards a secularized and democratic society" (d'Epinay 1969: 30). D'Epinay outlines this slow transition in Chilean society, beginning with the late nineteenth century, when the Chilean economy was faring reasonably well. The production of the coal-industry, the rich copper and nitrate mines, and agriculture contributed to Chile's high export rate. By the 1930s, however, the Great Depression had set in, and as money's value was dropping, prices were soaring. This economic stagnation signaled a period of internal migration, which largely meant that large numbers of people were pouring into the major cities in search of work. This huge entry of people into the cities, however, was not connected to industrialization, which meant few available jobs and little infrastructure to maintain these large influxes of people. People were not attracted by the jobs and social improvement that larger towns and cities might offer; in fact, most cities lacked both of these qualities. It was the rural crisis and lack of jobs in the agricultural sector that forced people to look for jobs elsewhere, even if the prospects were not very promising. It is certainly interesting that Chile's economy really began to decline in the same years that widespread Pentecostal development initially started.

D'Epinay claims that the simultaneous collapse of Chile's economy and Pentecostal growth is not a mere coincidence, but a cause-and-effect relationship. In other words, as the economy declined and internal migration rose, people were searching for something to reduce their feelings of anomie. As d'Epinay examined Pentecostalism more thoroughly, he noted marked similarities between Pentecostalism and the traditional rural *hacienda* system, and he concluded that the Pentecostal church drew much of its influence from the hacienda's family structure, which consisted of both the people and their leader. Under this social structure, a group of families would live and work together on a piece of land that had been allotted to them. The *hacendado* both protected them and kept watch over them to ensure that they completed their duties. Those who had been displaced from the countryside no longer had this structure and needed something else to replace it. In the cities they only encountered disorder, and feelings of anomie and anxiety persisted.

According to d'Epinay, Pentecostalism solved the problems of the people, by mirroring the former *hacienda* system (1969: 33). The Pentecostal Church, in d'Epinay's observations, usually had a leader who was both protective and authoritarian. While he looked out for his congregation's physical and spiritual well-being, he also punished anyone who strayed from his rules or who began to exhibit too many worldly qualities. The Pentecostal preacher, then, fulfilled the role of the *hacendado*, returning both order and familiarity to the lives of uprooted people.

Emilio Willems, through his study of both Brazilian and Chilean Pentecostalism, also came to the conclusion that it was attractive to people who were suffering from a sense of anomie. Rather than creating a *new* and *separate* community, however, he deemed Pentecostalism as a way to integrate members into the *existing* society. For him, Pentecostalism was a protest against the standard social structure. In his research, Willems especially focuses on the large number of schisms in the Pentecostal Church, most of which sought to make

Pentecostalism more culturally relevant. During the early years of the church, many new Pentecostal sects arose, largely a result of excessive foreign control. European and North American missionaries were often seen as hindrances to the Chilean and Brazilian Protestants, who did not always agree with the worship styles and belief systems that they imported and imposed on them (Willems 1967: 104). Foreign missionaries were also extremely reluctant to hand over any authority to the Chileans and Brazilians (this was also the case in other countries), which frustrated their efforts to employ a more “nationalistic” or “culturally-relevant” form of worship.

Largely for these reasons, a “nationalistic” fervor began to spread through the Protestant churches, where foreign missionaries were criticized and where splits arose. The Chileans and Brazilians detested the foreign monopoly on religion and desired their own religious autonomy. The Baptist church in Brazil faced a huge schism in 1923, mostly a rebellion against North American control. In a letter written by the dissenting members to the Brazilian Baptist Convention, the following was stated:

We have come to think that exactly the same Gospel, which in England is adapted to the British and assumes Saxon characteristics, can do the same in Brazil by imparting purely Brazilian approaches and characteristics to our work. Even here in Brazil, the methods adopted in Rio de Janeiro are not always appropriate in Recife or Bahia and vice-versa. Let us then live within the liberty which the Gospel establishes. (1967: 107)

This document evidences the desire to form an autonomous, purely Brazilian congregation that appeals to their own cultural practices and beliefs. The authors even suggest that Brazil itself is so large that it would require multiple types of churches to accommodate its diverse population. More negative sentiments toward foreign religious power were expressed later in the same document:

Is the Brazilian Baptist people inferior to other peoples?...For how long do the missionaries want to have us under their tutelage as if we were children?...Their mission here consists of helping us to develop the work, but not to direct it perpetually as if they did not intend intelligently and sincerely to develop the national forces by providing opportunity to direct and to serve. (1967: 107-108)

While most schisms were of the “nationalistic” type, as Protestant churches began gaining autonomy, the schisms also arose more and more due to doctrinal differences. For example, during a revival in the Methodist temple of Valparaiso, Chile, many participants began to experience Spirit baptism, described by the American missionary Hoover as

[...] laughter, weeping, shouting, and chanting”; some people talked in tongues or had visions, some fell in ecstasy and “felt themselves removed to some other place—to heaven, paradise, some beautiful fields, combined with various experiences—they talked with the Lord, with angels and with the devil...Those who underwent such experiences felt great pleasure (*gozaban mucho*), and usually were much changed and full of the spirit of worship, prayer and love. (1967: 109)

Many church members were frightened by these occurrences and even labeled these experiences as “possession”. Some went so far as to say that this was blasphemy. Such divergent beliefs and practices were the cause of many church splits. In fact, this is how the Latin American Pentecostal church formed in the first place. In the case of Valparaiso’s Methodist Church, two separate church bodies were formed: the Iglesia Metodista Pentecostal (Methodist Pentecostal Church) and the Iglesia Evangélica Pentecostal (Evangelical Pentecostal Church). Pentecostal

churches, then, were forming from more traditional Protestant churches as a result of both “nationalistic” fervor and doctrinal differences. The importance that these dissenters placed on a purely Brazilian or Chilean form of Christianity resulted in the birth and subsequent growth of the Pentecostal movement and shows Willems’ emphasis on Pentecostalism as a method of social integration. In other words, the movement sought to become like its cultural surroundings in many aspects instead of rejecting the local culture.

According to Willems, this is ostensibly why the Catholic Church began to decline in number and why Pentecostalism (and Protestantism in general) gained such a large following in the twentieth century. Pentecostalism offered immediate help for the actual needs of the lower classes, while the Catholic Church still practiced forms of folk-Catholicism, which was primarily a rural religion and focused on saints that were highly localized and thus inaccessible to the vast majority of migrants (1967: 132-133). Folk-Catholicism’s association with crops, animals, droughts, floods, and evil spirits of the jungle did not resonate with the immediate, pressing problems that so many people were actually facing as they were relocated to urban centers (1967: 132). Pentecostalism, unlike much of Catholicism, offered *immediate* salvation from sickness, sin, anomie, and other social ills through Spirit baptism. While becoming Pentecostal didn’t always ensure deliverance from poor living conditions, it almost always allowed the faithful participant spiritual and emotional deliverance from these conditions, through the thrill of temporary ecstasy and the comfort and empowerment of group of identity. According to Willems, this deliverance, whether physical or emotional, enabled participants to become more incorporated into society at large.

Looking at the Pentecostal movement today, Willems has a much more accurate view of its function. He describes it as a protest movement against the historical social hierarchies and as a struggle against the feelings of social anomie. D’Epinay, on the other hand, attributes very little agency to the Pentecostal movement. He suggests that Pentecostalism is a “haven” or “refuge” for the masses, a protective covering rather than a proactive protest movement. By indicating that the Pentecostal church is a symbolic reinstitution of the *hacienda* system, he implies a static movement that does not integrate itself into modern society. Perhaps d’Epinay’s ideas resonate much more with the mid-twentieth century Pentecostalism that he wrote about, a movement that generally sought to dissociate itself altogether from the rest of the world in order to remain pure and unpolluted by worldly influences. At this time Pentecostalism tended to see the world in strictly black and white, or good and evil. Over time, and especially in the present century, Pentecostalism has transformed into a movement that seeks more and more to immerse itself in the world so that it might bring relief to human suffering and be a “light to the darkness”. This does not mean that Pentecostals have become more worldly, but only that they find their place helping people in society rather than fleeing from society.

An Increasing Role in Social Outreach

Not surprisingly, Pentecostal churches in the third world are widely known for their social outreach programs. Donald E. Miller devoted four years of his life to studying firsthand this important facet of Pentecostal congregations and concluded that Pentecostals’ increasing participation in and innovation of “community-based social ministries” has been one of the major factors in their expansion (2007: 211). In more recent years, Pentecostals have been shedding their former image as legalistic Christians who separated themselves from the world by outmoded dress and hair styles and cared more about saving souls from hell than seeing to people’s immediate physical needs. Instead, they have chosen to blur the line between the sacred

and the profane (2007: 59), following the example that Christ set for them through his life, effectively becoming the “hands” of Christ (2007: 57).

In other words, Pentecostals have immersed themselves more and more into the lives of both believers and non-believers, taking heed of physical needs almost or just as much as spiritual needs. Miller calls this the “holistic approach”, which basically functions under the assumption that “it is impossible to divorce moral and spiritual needs from physical and economic needs” (2007: 62). Having traveled extensively throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, Miller accrued countless examples of Pentecostal social outreach programs. In São Paulo, Brazil, for instance, a local Pentecostal congregation would take buses into the poorest sectors of the city to distribute warm meals to nearly 2,500 people every night. No formal preaching occurred at these outreaches, but members of the congregation could frequently be seen praying with the recipients (2007: 44). To cite another example, a congregation in Santiago, Chile largely focused on programs which sought to strengthen families, hardly surprising since Santiago is ranked third in the world in terms of domestic violence (2007: 55). I certainly witnessed the emphasis on social outreach when I was in Costa Rica, even though Costa Rica has a relatively stable economy and government. My host mother was a counselor and dealt with both members and non-members of the congregation, advising them in marital and family struggles or any other problems they may have faced. She was also in the process of accumulating funds to build a small facility on the church grounds that would allow the church to initiate an outreach to school-aged children who needed a hot meal and a place to go during their lunch break each day.

Just as Pentecostal congregations often aid people’s immediate physical needs, they frequently demonstrate a concern for mental and emotional needs as well. It was mentioned above that there are counseling services as well as outreach programs for marriages and families. This was a particularly important point, since families are often the only element of stability in the life of a lower-class person who has been uprooted from his or her home in search of a job (of course many families are temporarily separated as a husband or single mother might have to travel to find work). A large number of converts are alcoholics looking for mental and emotional stability and support to enable them to get rid of the physical addiction. Pentecostalism serves to reverse the alcoholic’s belief system, allowing the alcoholic to adopt a new belief in spiritual power and giving him the ability to reject (at least to some extent) the exclusively rational worldview that he previously had (Mariz 1998: 205). The Pentecostal Church also frames alcoholism as a curse or sickness from Satan that can only be overcome by choosing Christ, which endows the alcoholic with a conviction that he has a distinct role to play in his own destiny (1998: 205). The recovering alcoholic is then able to remove any feelings of guilt or blame and is thus empowered and inspired to fight against this disease that has basically made him its victim.

Also dealing with the effects of alcoholism are women whose husbands struggle with this disease. Large numbers of women have joined Pentecostal congregations looking for a divine solution to their family problems, which very often involve a husband who spends the household’s income on alcohol and other women. A large portion of male Pentecostal converts have been men whose wives first joined a local congregation attempting to ameliorate their family situations, which typically involved their alcoholic or abusive husbands. After diligently attending services and praying, immersing themselves into the community of believers, and demonstrating a loving and patient attitude toward their husbands, many women have succeeded in persuading their husbands to convert.

Women and the Pentecostal Movement

Many women, as illustrated in the instances above, have found empowerment in the Pentecostal movement, namely through the process of conversion. Not only have they found hope for their husbands and families through conversion, but a number of working-class women have found a feeling of legitimacy and agency through the ideology and organization of the Pentecostal church. Cornelia B. Flora looked specifically at working-class women in Colombia and how these two aspects (ideology and organization) of the Pentecostal church were attractive to this particular population. It is especially noteworthy in Colombia that such a large number of women have become Pentecostals. Since Colombia, like many other Latin American countries, is such a highly Catholic country, becoming Pentecostal, or Protestant in general, is looked upon as a deviant act; it is seen as going against one's own tradition and upbringing. What is more attractive about the Pentecostal church, then, to many previously Catholic women?

First of all, Catholics both historically and presently have tended to identify women as the weaker sex, relegated to the sphere of procreation and motherhood. In 1961, the Cardinal of Colombia opposed a law which would give married women full property rights. This is just one of many examples illustrating the Catholic Church's reluctance to give women equality. Ironically, the Catholic Church sees women as spiritually strong. Of course, their primary example of this is the Virgin Mary, and this belief is exemplified through their emphasis on the Virgin and a plethora of other female saints. While the emphasis on women's superior spirituality appears to be more liberal and in favor of women, it actually has a huge downside. Because men do not have the same inherent degree of spirituality as women, they have a natural excuse for repeated sins, as they are powerless to change this part of their natural temperament (Flora 1980: 414). This leaves women in a weak position, being forced to continually forgive their husbands (it is assumed that their spirituality will enable them), thus reinforcing the attitude of machismo.

The Pentecostal Church, on the contrary, differs greatly in two domains that are related to women's status: 1) lack of emphasis on the Virgin Mary and the saints and 2) the belief in the priesthood of all believers (1980: 414). First, the demise of the Virgin Mary suggests equal moral potential among all members of the church (1980: 414). In other words, men are capable of attaining the same degree of spirituality as women and "his deviations from the straight and narrow are no longer viewed as natural foibles of the weaker male spiritual nature, but instead as a falling away from God" (1980: 414). Without the ideal of the Virgin Mary and other female saints, men and women have the same spiritual capabilities and the same degree of responsibility for their spirituality. Men must take responsibility for their actions, which means that women are not left having to tolerate their poor decisions. The second point, the priesthood of all believers, gives each believer a responsibility for sharing the Gospel. The Holy Spirit is not just available to the educated, the upper-class, or those who are trained in preaching and teaching, but he enables each member to play an equally important role. Both women and men are expected to become proselytizers, and in response they enrich themselves with a thorough knowledge of the Bible. In one survey, Pentecostal women read their Bibles a minimum of once per week and usually more, while Catholic women of the same social class rarely read the Bible (1980: 415). Because more, generally speaking, has been expected of Pentecostal women, they have eagerly become more involved, utilizing this socially-acceptable mode of empowerment.

The organizational structure of Pentecostal churches has also been a huge selling point for women. While women make up the majority of both Pentecostal and Catholic churches in

Latin America, Pentecostal women are markedly more involved in their churches than Catholic women. In the Catholic Church, women are expressly excluded from preaching or ministerial positions. The Pentecostal Church, however, allows women into the lower ranks of official church workers, although they are still not allowed the status of minister in most cases. Pentecostal women are often active evangelists and may even travel for several weeks at a time to visit other churches and other countries, preaching and leading revivals. Often the minister and his wife will form a team, both taking major leadership roles in the church. Aside from being given important leadership roles within the church, Pentecostal women have the opportunity to become part of numerous organizations within the church. While Catholic women have also been given similar opportunities, their participation is generally much lower and composed mainly of middle-class women (1980: 418). In the village of Palmira, Colombia all but the two newest Pentecostal churches had an active woman's group, while less than half of the Catholic parishes had such a group (1980: 418).

Another important facet of the involvement of Pentecostal women is the fact that their women's groups are integrated into the existing social structure. Many Catholic women are involved in the Catholic Church by becoming nuns. This system, however, is almost a separate entity from the Catholic Church itself. All Pentecostal groups, however, are integrated into the already existent religious hierarchy of the church. While Pentecostal women are still only part of the lower levels of the hierarchy, they are a definite and necessary component of their church's organizational structure. Their placement in the lower levels of the hierarchy is supported by the Biblical basis for women to place the majority of their energy into their homes, but they are by no means relegated solely to the domestic sphere. By having lower-ranking jobs in the church, they are not inhibited in their roles as mothers, wives, and grandmothers, but they are enabled to merge the social and domestic spheres, effectively giving them a dual sense of purpose.

The burgeoning population and participation of women within the Pentecostal Church has caused many people to ask whether or not Pentecostalism has become a vehicle for the feminist movement in addition to being a religious movement. Are women using the resources of this church to gain more rights and more respect in cultures that are often centered on machismo? Are they using it to gain political power or social prestige? It has to be noted that feminism is generally looked down upon in Latin American society. Many individuals of the lower-classes see feminism as something only for "elite, professional women with few interests in common with 'ordinary' women" (Craske 1999: 162).

This resentment of feminism, however, remains prevalent among the urban poor women who fight for labor equality and crime reduction, among many other causes. These women are antagonized by a society that stereotypes them as being both anti-men and rebellious against their call to motherhood (Jaquette 1998: 5). Indeed, many Pentecostal women have developed social programs that have, in fact, bettered their own lives and have empowered them in a society where they are often undervalued. Pentecostalism, in numerous ways, has become an acceptable vehicle for women's activism in a society where this is often frowned upon. The Pentecostal interpretation of Scripture, with its heavy emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, supports women's activism. Of course, their activism is only supported to a certain degree; their interpretation of the Scriptures does not give them the power to take men's roles, but it does allow them to have a voice.

One of the most important questions to ask, then, is the following: how has Pentecostalism allowed women to be activists in socially acceptable ways? Anne Motley Hallum, in her article *Taking Stock and Building Bridges: Feminism, Women's Movements, and*

Pentecostalism in Latin America, analyzes several aspects of the Pentecostal movement that have given women agency and security in a society where many women feel helpless to provide for the health and welfare of their families. While men usually bear the burden of providing the financial means of survival, they are very rarely involved (at least historically) in other aspects of household management. Resisting the effects of poverty has been one of the principal factors in this movement's attraction to women. Pentecostal churches have offered a venue for women to share their resources, assist each other in child-care, support each other financially and emotionally in hard times, and to raise their standard of living (Hallum 2003: 176).

Anthropologist Sheldon Annis, in his analysis of micro-economic change in an indigenous Guatemalan town, discovered that the most successful segment of the population in terms of wealth was members of the evangelical movement, most of which were Pentecostals; Catholics only had 81% the wealth of the Pentecostals in this case study (2003: 177). This study, among others, has also shown that Pentecostals are generally more employed in more lucrative, promising jobs, that they are more inclined to complete a higher level of education, and that those involved in agriculture have enjoyed consistently higher yields and greater income than both Catholics and the non-Christian portion of the population (2003: 177).

Women, having the burden of maintaining their families' health and safety, have found hope in the Pentecostal message that has inspired and enabled them to be proactive against poverty. Whether or not these women have embraced a God who truly provides for their needs, or whether Pentecostalism has empowered them psychologically is not a question with a definite or tangible answer. Whatever the case, the movement *has* empowered many women and their families to change their circumstances to some degree or another. Hallum claims it is not so much a good *work* ethic that has allowed Pentecostals to prosper, but rather a good *savings* ethic (2003: 177). Pentecostal teachings do, in fact, emphasize being good stewards of one's resources and warn people from investing too much in the things of this world.

Some of the gravest effects of poverty have been physical illness and disease. With the primary responsibility for their families' health, women have flocked to Pentecostal churches in large numbers, searching for the most affordable, effective and convenient means to restore health to their children, husbands, and other family members. In the most impoverished neighborhoods of Latin America, women often have no other option than to trust in the power of divine healing. Without nearby medical care, without means of traveling to the nearest hospital or medical clinic, and without the financial ability to receive medical attention, the option of faith healing is often the only hope. Again, whether believers are healed by a divine act of God or whether it is merely a placebo effect is not a question that can be objectively answered. It does appear, though, that the Pentecostal movement is a vehicle used by women to gain power and to establish change in their families. The Pentecostal Church itself cannot be referred to as a "woman's movement" or "feminist movement", because the church does not directly endorse women's rights or feminism in the popular interpretation of these terms. It simply upholds the priesthood of all believers, or the belief that all believers, regardless of gender, have an equally important role to play both in spreading the Gospel and in managing the church's affairs. In this way, women have been able to effectively use Pentecostalism as a means of enabling them to take control of their lives. The power they seek in this movement is in most cases not political. They are not typically fighting for political office, for the chance to be the central authority figure of the church, or to liberate themselves from their association with motherhood. Their objective is simple in many cases: survival.

In Linda Green's case study of a Guatemalan village, consisting mainly of children and women made widows by a long civil war, Pentecostalism functioned as a "religion of survival" (1993: 162), providing church members with a chance to socialize at evening services and work together to build homes and produce a harvest (1993: 173-175). As civil wars, severe economic recessions, and forced relocations have made living conditions extremely sub-par and separated many families, women especially, as the primary caregivers, have found hope in the Pentecostal message. Pentecostalism has given them a community that offers help and emotional support in times of need, and empowers them to exercise their rights and improve their sense of self-worth. Certainly in a transnational society, where diverse values are merging, women have a better chance than ever to defeat society's traditional views about women.

While my host family had never dealt with extreme poverty or bloody civil wars, they were definitely part of a changing society that was becoming increasingly globalized. Although women were not given the same kinds of rights as they are in the United States (most women were confined to staying at home with their children and serving their husbands), they have certainly been gaining more rights over the years. The Pentecostal Church has been a big factor in this process of change, which was evident the life in of my host mother. For instance, she was going back to high school so that she could gain her diploma, and every other Saturday she would travel two hours to San Jose to take church-related classes. Also, as part of her involvement with the church, she would sometimes go on short-term mission trips to neighboring countries. While I was there, she was planning several lengthy trips to Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and even the United States to share her testimony and evangelize. I distinctly remember a conversation I heard between her and my host father, where she was explaining her plans to him and making tentative arrangements for him to be taken care of when she was away. (Although my host dad was very interested in his family members and showed affection to each of them, he was never involved in daily chores such as laundry, cleaning and meal preparation.) These are just a few examples of the ways that the Pentecostal movement gives women increased freedom and status. Because Pentecostalism tells them that they are doing God's work, it becomes socially acceptable for them to leave their homes and families temporarily, something that was once entirely unacceptable.

Racial Identity Found Through Pentecostalism

John Burdick, in his research on Pentecostalism and black identity in Brazil, found that the Pentecostal movement has attracted a great number of black converts through an appeal to their emotions and sense of identity (1999: 109). Brazilian Pentecostals, one of the fastest growing Pentecostal groups in Latin America, have a high percentage of black members. This fact is ironic on many levels, according to Burdick (1999: 110). First of all, Christianity in general has been tied to slavery historically. Slavery is particularly important to mention since Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish it, only in 1888. By the mid-twentieth century, then, former slaves were still living to tell their struggles firsthand, and undoubtedly many were still haunted by the terrors that they once experienced on a daily basis. Even though the slavery system was officially abolished in 1888, remnants of the old order surely existed long into the twentieth century. It is ironic that black Brazilians, still reminded of their former status as slaves, would want to join a religious group that was once supportive, at least to some degree, of the struggles that they and their ancestors once endured (1999: 110).

Secondly, Protestantism in general has been associated with white North American imperialism, which would associate conversions with the adoption of white cultural traits (1999:

111). According to Walter de Oliveira Passos, blacks who convert to a Protestant denomination must pass through “a whole process of self-rejection, of whitening, of self-negation and alienation” (1995: 5). In fact, the Pentecostal church, and the majority of Protestants in general, reject religions of African origin, denouncing them as forms of witchcraft and as a work of the Devil. Lastly, Pentecostalism’s emphasis on both individualism and universalism is often seen in opposition to the development of group or ethnic identity (1999: 111). Pentecostalism’s emphasis on universalism, or the concept of multi-ethnic worship, does not give particular attention to black forms of worship, but instead groups black converts with the rest of believers. Multi-ethnic worship seems as if it would be contrary to the goal of gaining black identity.

If Christianity, and especially Pentecostalism, have been negatively understood by so many blacks in Brazil, then why are blacks the prime constituent of Brazil’s Pentecostal population? Is there some aspect of the Pentecostal faith that has allowed blacks to overcome their qualms? Academic opinion and the black movement itself have both looked upon Pentecostalism as a white religion that alienates blacks from their African roots and values, but it appears that blacks in Brazil, and other countries, have used Pentecostalism to reinforce their own cultural identity. In fact, many black Brazilians view their faith as a central and necessary component of their ethnic consciousness. Understanding conversions to Pentecostalism as a rejection of one’s own ethnic heritage and values makes the flawed assumption that Pentecostalism is static. It seems, however, that blacks have been highly successful in taking a faith once associated with white North Americans and Europeans and molding it to suit their own cultural backgrounds, while still maintaining its fundamental structure and belief system.

Pentecostalism has given many blacks a place to create a new ethnic identity, not surprising since “ethnic identities have frequently drawn direct sustenance from Pentecostal faith” (1999: 113). The heart of the Pentecostal message encourages believers to take pride in their own unique identity and tells individuals that they are made in the image of God. Because Pentecostalism places so much worth on the individual and believes that every member of the congregation has an important role, little room is left for racist discourse. In the case of much of Brazil’s black population, the Pentecostal faith has provided emotional stability, and to some degree has been proactive in their struggles against racism. Just as many women have found emotional solace from their family problems and an often-oppressive social hierarchy, so also many Brazilians of African descent have discovered a way to make their situation more positive.

Economic Growth, Development and Upward Social Mobility

Not only have racial and gender groups gained a form of social mobility through increased senses of value and identity, but the lower classes in general have also seemed to gain considerable mobility from economic changes spurred by the Pentecostal Movement. Of course, if one were to ask a Pentecostal if he or she joined the church for the economic benefit, none would answer affirmatively. Using the church for economic benefit would be viewed as immoral or underhanded. I am not proposing in this section that people consciously convert to advance themselves or their society economically. I do, however, believe that it has given strength and momentum to the movement, furthering the church’s image as a beacon of hope in society.

In the twentieth century, German sociologist Max Weber developed theories attempting to explain the general correlation between Protestantism and social mobility. Weber observed that Protestants tended to dominate managerial positions, while Catholics tended to remain in the working-class sector. After investigating the matter more thoroughly, Weber concluded that that

there was a “traditional ethic” and a “protestant ethic”. The “protestant ethic” evolved out of the Protestant Reformation and the “traditional ethic” referred to the state of the Catholic Church. The “protestant ethic”, according to Weber, comprised two novel ideas: 1) each profession has value, as long as one is called to his or her profession, and 2) salvation is received through God’s grace alone, or in other words, he has *predestined* some to gain eternal life and conversely he has condemned others to suffer eternal punishment.

The first idea encouraged Protestants to take their professions seriously, causing many to expend more time and energy on their jobs since they were God-ordained. Secondly, as the concept of predestination became more commonly accepted, Protestants began to feel that they had no control over their salvation and became increasingly fearful. In an effort to suppress their fear and gain assurance of their salvation, they became harder workers and tried to produce good fruit in their lives. This, according to Weber, produced the capitalist system.

While Pentecostals do not generally accept reformist John Calvin’s views on predestination, their behavior greatly mirrors that of the Puritans whom Weber described. Like the Puritans, Pentecostals are known for their heavy restrictions on alcohol, drugs and other moral vices (Miller 2007: 164). By not wasting money on these expensive habits, they can put aside money to invest in their own business or education, which in turn supplies them with more capital. As Pentecostal churches encourage savings, a hard work ethic, and wise spending, individuals are able to be better off financially. When Donald Miller and his colleagues traveled throughout the world observing Pentecostal congregations, they came upon one Pentecostal woman in Caracas, Venezuela who began her own ministry to help children and youth who had grown up in dysfunctional homes. As they asked the youth about their conversions, each one alluded to becoming more disciplined and gaining more control over his or her life. Fewer and fewer of them were engaging in casual sex and many had given up alcohol and drugs. A large percentage of this group was entering the workforce and attending college or vocational school (2007: 161). In this case and many others, Pentecostalism has offered members a haven in which to prepare themselves to be more successful and more integrated into society.

Anthropologist James Dow looks at the growth of Protestantism, specifically Pentecostalism, in Mexico and claims that it should be understood at the social level. According to him, Pentecostalism is not in opposition to Catholicism (although there is certainly a decent percentage of Catholics that abhor the Pentecostal movement), but is instead the catalyst for needed religious and social change (Dow 2005: 6). Not incidentally, much of the Pentecostal church in Mexico is comprised of indigenous people, most of whom have converted from the Catholic Church or some type of folk-Catholicism. Dow, along with other scholars such as Jean-Pierre Bastian, has theorized that these former adherents to folk-Catholicism have made the switch to Pentecostalism in order to avoid taking part in the expensive *cargo* systems, which often involve throwing large parties in honor of local divinities or saints and are mainly practiced in the Indian regions of Mexico and Guatemala. Wealthier members of society typically end up spending large sums of money to throw these religious *fiestas*, and Protestantism has offered a way out of this obligation (O’Connor 1979: 261). Not only has it removed the obligation itself, but it has also removed the hierarchical stigma that has become increasingly associated with these *cargo* systems. Because only wealthy people can afford to throw such celebrations, the lower classes are excluded from full participation.

Ultimately, Dow proposes that Protestantism is a reaction against *cargo* systems, and more broadly, traditional economic and religious systems that do not support an investment-oriented, capitalist economy (2005: 10). According to Dow, the expulsion of *cargo* systems has

helped Indian communities in a time of social change and forced migration (2005: 1). As communities have been shifting both geographically and culturally, the removal of traditional economic systems and the implementation of more modern systems have helped these communities to adjust to the encroaching and inevitable modern society. While this example largely deals with economic explanations of Pentecostalism, it also shows the resulting sense of collective identity that so many members gain from it. In this example, it is not just members of the same society connecting with one another, but it is indigenous, and often marginalized, groups interacting with the outside society, adapting to its ways as they become more physically integrated into it through migration.

Similar to Dow, Cornelia Butler Flora found in Colombia that Pentecostal growth paralleled the establishment of capitalism in the country (1980: 81). During the 1950s and 1960s, capital was shifting from the domestic sphere to the foreign sphere and land was becoming more commercialized. These changes introduced massive dislocations of people, often uprooting them to urban centers in search of work. While the development of the Colombian economy brought social dislocation to masses of landless lower class and indigenous citizens, Pentecostalism provided a culturally relevant social network and an explanation for their situation. Flora found that a large number of the songs sung in Pentecostal worship services dealt with themes of joy, earthly blessings, power, demons, health, and healing (1980: 85). Above all, she discovered that Pentecostal churches were culturally relevant and typically sought to relate to the individual's current social struggles by proposing divine solutions.

It is important, however, to reiterate that the goal of conversion is not financial. Gaining a higher economic or social status is not usually the intended consequence of conversion, although it has certainly followed a large number of conversions. Donald Miller illustrates seven factors that may potentially link the Pentecostal movement with economic advancement. First, the priesthood of all believers gives converts a feeling of self-worth; a lack of self-worth often keeps poor people stuck in the same circumstances, as they feel that they have no means to change their lives (Miller 2007:169). Second, the powerful worship experiences that occur in Pentecostal churches have the ability to forge community and identity among people who have felt alone in modern, urban culture (2007: 169). Like the first factor, this increases self-esteem and self-worth, providing converts a community of fellow believers who will help give them a sense of self-worth and strength to survive and become successful in society.

The third and fourth factors deal with the physical and emotional support that Pentecostal churches often provide (2007: 169-170). Many Pentecostal churches operate through cell groups, or small groups that meet weekly in one another's homes in addition to the entire congregation's weekly meetings. These smaller scale meetings give converts the opportunity to develop more personal relationships and share more private concerns. In the physical realm, Pentecostal churches have developed numerous educational and medical programs, often in the form of NGOs. By getting a good education or spending less on medical care, participants can climb the social and economic ladder more easily.

Fifth, Miller proposes that Pentecostalism ritually assists people in gaining control over themselves and their environments (2007: 170). Known for casting out evil spirits and demons, Pentecostals can use demon possession to explain people's problems and can subsequently deal with this through their commonly practiced rituals (2007: 170). It could be that their methods of exorcism actually deliver believers from demons. On the other hand, the changes they experience following exorcism could be due to the placebo effect, or to the possibility that their methods of exorcism are actually some form of psychotherapy. Whatever the case, countless

numbers of Pentecostals have testified to being released from the power of evil spirits and have thus gained a heightened sense of control over their lives, allowing them to gain more social mobility. The last two factors that Miller deals with relate to both the skills and discipline gained from involvement in a Pentecostal congregation. All-night fasts, lengthy prayer meetings, and the management and organization involved in maintaining the church have given converts entrepreneurial skills and the work ethic to succeed in their jobs (2007: 171).

A growing movement within the Pentecostal Church is the “health and wealth” movement, or churches that preach the “prosperity gospel”. In short, their message makes a promise to people, especially to the poorest members of society. In many situations, pastors guarantee people that if they convert or give money to the church, God will make them financially prosperous and cure them of any disease. Some pastors have made these promises not because they believe in them, but to exploit poor people who are eager to try anything for a better life. Unlike the situations previously described, people convert and “commit” their lives to Christ, with the explicit expectation that he will bless them physically and financially. In fact, one specific church was decorated with yellow and red flowers, the yellow symbolizing wealth and the red symbolizing health. The rise of “prosperity gospel” churches has surely been an influential factor in recruiting members from poverty-stricken areas.

With the exception of “health and wealth” churches, where people are promised a return for their conversion, people rarely convert with the overt goal of enriching themselves financially. Even in the cases of “health and wealth” churches, the majority of members would still not claim financial improvement as their primary motivation. It is a possible, however, that the improved economic status of so many converts has added impetus to the movement and made it more attractive as a whole. If so many people are changing their lives after converting, then it must have some power, right? People are attracted to a God who is powerful and at work in the lives of individuals. Perhaps people are attracted to the Pentecostal church’s God rather than the specific benefits of conversion.

Collective Identity in a Transnational World

Indeed, it appears that Pentecostalism has brought group identity to Latin Americans who have been uprooted in an increasingly transnational world. From women who are forced to provide for their families to black Brazilians who attempt to rise above their former persecution, Pentecostalism has offered the marginalized not only a haven from their suffering, but a medium for change.

Manuel Vasquez, associate professor of sociology and religion at the University of Florida, has studied Peruvian and Salvadoran immigrants in the United States, particularly in New Jersey and Washington, D.C. Many of these immigrants, forced to leave their home countries because of war or extreme poverty, have “been able to build community even in the face of a transformed and/or weakened national identity” (Vasquez 1999: 618). Just as Latin Americans have been made refugees within their own country or continent due to tumultuous political and social situations, they have also been uprooted as far as the United States, in search of work, safety, or both. A huge wave of Peruvians fled to the United States in the 1980s due to a civil war and a severe economic crisis, as did a large number of Salvadorans, for similar reasons. In the specific instance of being uprooted to the United States, Latino immigrants have frequently found their cultural identities threatened by the dominant culture. A religion that reinforces U.S. dominance or hierarchical structures is not appealing to most immigrants. Hierarchy and dominance are exactly what they were escaping from in the first place.

Pentecostalism is attractive largely because of its egalitarian nature. All who enter a Pentecostal church are brothers and sisters in Christ, and men and women alike are standing side by side praising God. Comparing Catholicism in Peru to her Pentecostal congregation in the United States, one woman explained, "In Peru Catholic women just listen to and obey the priest. Here it's different; the sisters can praise the Lord. They also are teachers, deacons, ushers, preachers. They are also missionaries; they missionize outside the U.S." (1999: 624). The egalitarian structure of the Pentecostal Church, then, has allowed many immigrants to restructure their identities in new situations. Many immigrants, coping daily with feelings of inferiority, have embraced the equality that they encounter in Pentecostal congregations. In many cases, this equality has even promoted a pan-Latino identity, as immigrants from different South American and Central American countries have come together for worship and fellowship. Certainly many of the distinguishing characteristics of Pentecostal worship have further aided the construction of group identity, especially among the uprooted.

Do Politics Play a Role?

All of the examples enumerated above point to some degree of change being gained as a result of involvement in the Pentecostal movement. As believers undergo a spiritual change, signified by acceptance of Christ and baptism of the Holy Spirit, physical changes also occur, namely more social equality, increased community, and freedom from the bondage of alcoholism and other diseases. How and to what extent do such changes take place? Do they occur on a small or large scale? Are they achieved politically? Although the Pentecostal movement is known for its social programs and community involvement, they are also known for their limited participation in politics. Of course, there are a numerous schisms within the Pentecostal movement, and some churches are more involved than others. A number of Pentecostal pastors and other prominent Pentecostal figures have run for political offices. This behavior, however, has not historically characterized the church as a whole. Many churches clearly voice their opinions on important and controversial political matters, and they often give their support to a particular candidate, but in general they do not immerse themselves in the political movement. They recognize politics as a necessary and inevitable facet of society, and for this reason they will comply with political processes. Generally, the Pentecostal Church claims to lean more on their own empowerment by the Holy Spirit to produce social change. Instead of making the government their central vehicle for social change, they assign the Holy Spirit this role, asserting that the Holy Spirit *can* use the government to effect social change if he so chooses.

Donald Miller writes about partnerships between Pentecostal churches and both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental organizations. As Pentecostals have become increasingly characterized by holistic ministry (a focus on all needs, whether physical, spiritual, emotional, psychological, mental, etc.), they have begun to partner with groups such as World Vision, Compassion International, Food for the Hungry, etc. (Miller 2007: 50). This type of partnership often requires the churches to have some degree of contact with government officials (2007:50). In the case of working with NGOs, Pentecostal churches are utilizing the secular resources around them. Since NGOs often operate under government licenses, proselytizing is prohibited, so any church that partners with one of these organizations must use the organization's funds for purely humanitarian purposes. This does not mean, though, that the church is restricted from providing religious education to children or adults that they serve; the only stipulation is that the NGO's funds cannot be directly applied to proselytizing. So, for example, an NGO might set up a child sponsorship program, which will pour money into a

community, often through a church. This money must be used, then, for programs that will improve the lives of children, such as educational programs, after-school programs, soup kitchens, etc. While the funds may not be directly applied toward church services or religious education, there is nothing stopping them from evangelizing.

In fact, relationships with NGOs have proven beneficial for many churches, shaping the church's image as a source of social aid in the community and often providing free leadership training for members (2007: 51). Through partnership with NGOs and governmental agencies, the Pentecostal church has begun to bridge the gap between the sacred and the profane. Whereas Pentecostals used to be associated with trying to remain within the sacred sphere, they have now intricately woven themselves into the profane, or secular, sphere, using its available resources for their own purposes. For the Pentecostals, true social change occurs when evangelism takes place and when one dedicates his or her life to Christ. In many cases, Pentecostals have used worldly resources to accomplish this end.

For example, the pastor of the church I attended in Costa Rica dedicated nearly forty-five minutes one Sunday to talk about the upcoming elections for the town mayor. He actively endorsed a particular candidate (a shock to me, since this is illegal in the United States) and encouraged church members to cast their vote for him. According to the pastor, not voting for him could jeopardize the future of their church and their denomination's freedom to worship. After church, my host mom and I visited two church members who had assembled a small booth on the side of the road to solicit support for the potential mayor. This church's public support of a candidate was not an effort to gain overt political power, but simply an attempt to maintain the freedom to continue practicing their religious convictions. In this instance the pastor was encouraging members to use their political power for the church's benefit. Voting was seen as a necessary and inescapable vehicle for gaining change and maintaining their freedom of religious practice.

Frederick C. Turner, in his article *Protestantism and Politics in Chile and Brazil*, explains that while the Pentecostal church is characterized by its social programs, people initially convert "because it fits their personal needs rather than because of its relationship to the alleged needs of their class or of society as a whole" (1970: 225). Dissatisfied with widespread government efforts to change society and discouraged by the present state of society, Pentecostals have taken matters into their own hands, at times making use of secular resources, to form their own vehicle for change in the midst of political corruption, increased urbanization, and poverty.

Internally, the Pentecostal movement appears to have minimal political affiliation, at least in the majority of cases. If there *is* affiliation, the end is rarely political in and of itself, but religious. A growing number of scholars, however, have begun to say that North American anti-Communist sentiment has been a huge external factor in the growth of evangelical, namely Pentecostal, churches in Latin America. David Stoll, in his book *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?*, avidly supports the hypothesis that the U.S. religious right has used missions as a means of furthering the U.S. government's interests in Latin America. According to Stoll, it is no coincidence that Pentecostalism flourished when the U.S. was staunchly anti-Communist and committed to averting its expansion.

In 1974 the Lausanne Congress met to reiterate the priority of world missions and to make a strategic plan to gain evangelical support for world missions. At this meeting, the term "unreached people group" was coined in order to refer to the huge number of groups that had still not heard the Gospel. In fact, Ralph Winter, a professor at the Fuller School of World Mission, estimated an astonishing 16,750 unreached people groups. By the end of the

conference, two central positions were established: 1) in order for the Gospel to penetrate into these unreached groups, the gospel would have to be de-Westernized, and 2) making the gospel known to the unreached was a “social responsibility” (Stoll 1990: 73). With the huge perceived need for missionaries, and the feeling that they were responsible for advancing God’s kingdom, an increased number of Westerners entered the mission field. Stoll believes that many of these evangelical groups may have even been funded by the CIA, although there is no established evidence (1990: 99). Sociologist Thomas Bamat noted the numerous newspaper and magazine headlines that insinuated the possibility of similar conspiracies: “invasion of the sects”, “cultural penetration”, “evangelical explosion”, “religious contest in the nation”, “new imperialist strategy”, etc. (Bamat 1986: 25-26). Just like many others, Bamat was wondering what was going on with the increased influx of fundamental North American missionaries. Were they truly inspired by God or were they on an undercover mission for the CIA?

Pentecostals, along with other Protestants, were fairly divided politically. A number of evangelical leaders in Latin America were anti-Marxist and avid supporters of conservative U.S. backed military regimes. For instance, many evangelicals supported Chile’s dictator, Augusto Pinochet, who is notorious for brutally murdering and torturing thousands of people who openly dissented from his authority and political views. Since they associated Marxism with Satan and secularism, many Pentecostals found Pinochet to be a far better candidate. Thanks to their endorsement, Pinochet became a patron of the Pentecostal Methodist Church, Chile’s largest Protestant denomination. On the other hand, there were groups of evangelicals who did not support the conservative dictatorships. Many of these were strong supporters of leftist reformers such as Arbenz and Allende (overthrown prior to Pinochet’s entrance).

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the Pentecostal growth of the 1970s was partially a product of U.S. anti-Communist fervor or if it was merely a coincidence. There certainly was a notable influx of North American missionaries around this time, but were they really coming under the auspices of anti-Communism? The correlation between the time period of the Cold War and Pentecostal growth does not imply that the U.S. government was funding or encouraging missionaries who would spread their anti-Communist sentiments in Latin America. As the field of missions changed and as the Lausanne Congress inspired many evangelicals to save the lost, many were drawn to Latin America because they believed it to be plagued by encroaching Communists who would impose secular ideologies on them. While evidence suggests that some groups of missionaries received government funding and support, there is no substantial evidence that the majority of groups were operating under these circumstances.

III. Conclusion

Why Pentecostal? Why not Catholic?

A variety of explanations have been cited for Pentecostalism’s huge growth spurt throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Pentecostalism has empowered women, forged a new identity for marginalized groups such as the black population of Brazil, increased economic prosperity, given people more opportunities to advance themselves, and decreased the sense of anomie that people have had to cope with in a transnational culture. Countless explanations can be given. While I have proposed that Pentecostalism responded to the needs of Latin American society at a particular moment in its history, it is still not completely clear why Pentecostalism has served as such a widespread solution instead of the Catholic Church. Indeed, most converts were formerly Catholic. The characteristics of Pentecostal worship and the main

points of Pentecostal ideology have not only been essential in helping Latin Americans, but have pulled many away from the Catholic Church. Leaving the Catholic Church has not necessarily been easy for most people, especially in the early and middle parts of the twentieth century. Breaking with the Catholic Church meant abandoning centuries of tradition. Becoming Pentecostal often meant losing favor with one's family and close friends. If leaving the Catholic Church meant persecution, then the Pentecostal Church must have been especially alluring to Latin Americans in order to persuade them to make such a change. What does the Pentecostal Church offer that the Catholic Church does not? What is it about the Catholic Church that makes it increasingly unsatisfying to Latin Americans in their present struggles?

Daniel H. Levine, a professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, has suggested that

the absence of competition made the Catholic Church a lazy monopolist, one that did little to ensure the vitality of its day-to-day operations, leaving it vulnerable to new forms of competition—including innovative religious expression—that begin to appear with growing force as the twentieth century passed its midpoint. (2007: 4)

In other words, as Latin American society was rapidly changing, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century, the majority of Catholic churches were not changing in a way that was favorable to the growing and shifting needs of the people. While the Catholic Church appeared to lag behind in terms of social programs and engaging worship, the Pentecostal Church was immersing itself in society and molding itself and its worship to fit society's needs. By the 1970s, the Catholic Church began to respond to the marked increase in Pentecostal churches and their own stagnancy.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal has been a notable movement in Latin American charismatic Christianity, emphasizing mass media and charismatic practice, and deemphasizing the use of clergy and forms of syncretic practice that were common in folk-Catholicism. More and more Latin Americans are turning away from the traditional Catholic Church and are turning to more culturally-relevant forms of worship. What, then, has caused such a remarkable religious shift? If a number of Catholics are maintaining many of their distinctive beliefs while at the same time "reforming" the Catholic Church by adopting charismatic practices, then the issue must largely be a matter of religious *practice*.

I suggest that the worship styles of the Pentecostal Church, unlike those of the Catholic Church, have functioned to forge new identities and strengthen feelings of self-worth in a changing world. One feature of Pentecostal worship style that has been so attractive is its orality. Whereas many traditional Protestant churches and the Catholic Church have emphasized the memorization of written creeds and liturgies, the Pentecostal Church has employed a much more spontaneous and less contrived style. Instead of using predetermined prayers, many Pentecostal churches have moments of open prayer, where everyone prays out loud at the same time. Those individuals who pray before the church usually pray spontaneously, not reading from paper or repeating prayers that have been used in the past. The idea behind Pentecostal worship is spontaneity, or allowing the Holy Spirit to guide one's heart and thoughts.

For Pentecostals, the rigid structure of most traditional Catholic worship services is inhibiting to their communication with the Holy Spirit and does not allow for genuine and personal worship. Furthermore, many feel that an over-emphasis on literacy and the written word have made religion too rationalized and unbending (Schultze 1994: 73). The Pentecostal faith, by its very nature, is fluid. By emphasizing a personal relationship and even personal

contact with the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals claim the ability to gain new insight and new revelation at any moment. Most traditional Protestant denominations would claim the Bible as the final authority, but Pentecostals, emphasizing a living and personalized faith, often give the Holy Spirit precedence, even over the printed word of God. The immediacy of an orally-based religion is powerful and offers instant solutions to struggles. God is not distant; all one has to do is pray and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals' acceptance and emphasis on orality has not only given them freedom of worship and expression, but it has also allowed them to re-create community (1994: 81). While the written word easily accommodates cultural reproduction and standardization, orality allows each culture and each church its own degree of uniqueness and individuality. Participants don't necessarily become swallowed by the dominant society, but they retain their own autonomy and culture. Orality has also lessened the weight on class differences, as the language of the people can be used and no one is limited by intellectual ability (1994: 82).

Another factor, also eliminating class differences, has been the Pentecostal Church's emphasis on the lay people of the congregation. The involvement of women in Pentecostal churches has already been mentioned, but the lay movement of Pentecostalism extends to *all* members and participants of a congregation. Indeed, this aspect of Pentecostalism has drawn both men and women, many of whom are dissatisfied with their position in the social hierarchy. In the latter portion of the twentieth century, many Latin Americans have been pushed even further down the social scale, the result of increased displacement due to both instability and oppression, and to the movement from rural to urban areas, which has stimulated a sense of anomie. While the Catholic Church tends to be more characterized by hierarchy, Pentecostal churches are increasingly associated with egalitarianism. This is not to say that *all* Catholic churches have an overly hierarchical structure; certainly many Catholic churches have responded to the present social and political situations and have adapted their structures to better fit the needs of their congregations. Generally speaking, however, Pentecostal churches have provided their congregations with more opportunities to participate in the activities of the church and to be integrated into the church structure.

Donald E. Miller describes the Pentecostal Church as "an organic image of a living entity with many different interrelated connections that are constantly in flux", while he associates the Catholic Church with "a hierarchical image" or "one that is very linear in structure and does not invite circles of interlinking role relationships" (2007: 188). In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul talks about the church being a body with many different members. Just as there are feet, eyes, hands, ears, etc. in a human body, the church is also a body, each member a different part with a unique gifting and function. While spiritual gifts and abilities differ among members, they are all equally important and cannot function without the others.

This Biblical passage is the essence of Pentecostal ideology. In fact, while I was in Costa Rica, the husband of one of my host sisters (he was the youth pastor of my family's church) preached a sermon on this exact passage, emphasizing the importance of each individual member of the church and encouraging everyone to use his or her gifting for the church. My host family's church evidences several aspects of this passage and the general emphasis on lay participation. For instance, each week the pastor would ask if anyone in the congregation would like to come forward and give their testimony or testify to something God had recently done in their life. Usually someone would come forward and share. One week in particular was memorable to me, as one of my host sisters and her husband came forward with their newborn son to tell of his healing (weeks after being born he had developed a life-threatening illness).

Also, my host mother, a housewife who faithfully cared for her husband, children and grandchildren, had an important role in the church as the children's director. She was in charge of Sunday school classes for children and youth and would often come around to each of the classes to talk for a few minutes or to advertise a new ministry. These examples show the importance given to everyday members of the congregation. The pastor and the rest of the congregation view each member as having great significance and the church is centered on the people rather than one individual.

Not only is everybody given an opportunity to serve, and thus become integrated into the church's structure, but there are many chances for personal interaction. In addition to the main meetings on Sunday, small groups of people gather throughout the week in people's homes to partake in fellowship, worship, Bible study and prayer. These times allow for the social interaction that is often not possible on Sunday mornings, when the main focus is worship and preaching. Small group times also provide participants with a personal support network in times of need. Members of these groups meet several times a week, sharing prayer requests and lifting one another up in prayer. Most of all, these small groups place the power in the hands of ordinary church members, removing the pastor from an authoritarian role and giving him the task of overseeing the church's ministries rather than dictating them (2007: 190).

A look at typical pastoral leadership also sheds some light on the trend of lay involvement. While there is always a head pastor, his or her power is disseminated throughout the church, giving the entire congregation a say in the direction of the church. Furthermore, the Pentecostal Church does not require rigorous academic training for pastors. In fact, Pentecostal churches tend to prefer pastors without any type of academic or theological training. Frequently a person will become pastor of a congregation immediately after a radical conversion experience. Since Pentecostals believe that the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is made available to all believers, a lack of education should not be an obstacle to becoming a pastor or another prominent figure in the church. Many Pentecostal pastors and members actually look down upon extensive theological or academic training, claiming that seminaries and other academic institutions produce pastors who are unable to relate to the common people that comprise their congregations.

Conclusion

The Pentecostal movement in Latin America has often been referred to as another "reformation" within the Christian Church. Just as people broke away from the Catholic Church in sixteenth century Europe, Latin Americans have begun to break away from both the Catholic Church and the more traditional Protestant denominations. In many Latin American countries, Pentecostals outnumber the other Protestant denominations, and in some countries they are competing with the Catholic majority. Many scholars are asking why people are suddenly questioning the Catholic Church's five-hundred-year reign in Latin America, not just a religious tradition, but a cultural and historical tradition as well. The Catholic Church is deeply engrained with the culture of Latin America. There must be fairly significant reasons, then, for the giant wave of new Pentecostal converts.

One of the first questions we have asked was "What is Pentecostalism?" After almost any amount of research on Latin America's Pentecostal movement, its diversity becomes immediately evident. No single definition can be applied to the term Pentecostal, nor can any one set of theological statements or practices. Pentecostal churches range from small congregations that hardly have a roof over their heads, to mega-churches comprised of thousands

of people. Some congregations regularly engage in the speaking of tongues and other charismatic practices, while others rarely engage in these activities publicly. Comprehending the complete breadth of this vast movement is an impossible task. Any attempt at understanding the roots and causes of this movement will result in some form of generalization.

While generalization is certainly inevitable, I have sought to form a theory concerning the implications of the Pentecostal movement, based on my own experience and the scholarly materials available to me. By merging my real-life experiences and the findings of others, I have concluded that Latin America's Pentecostal movement has been largely a response to a changing society, one that is becoming increasingly urbanized and is suffering the effects of poverty and violence and all the implications of these things. Participants have taken refuge in Pentecostalism and have found the empowerment necessary to make changes in their own lives. While the Catholic Church has upheld hierarchy through its structure, the Pentecostal Church has shed this hierarchical structure and granted all its members the opportunity to actively participate in worship and evangelism. Through tumultuous years of oppressive dictatorships, bloody coups, and both forced and un-forced relocation to urban areas, the ideology and structure of the Pentecostal Church has provided the marginalized with a vehicle for change. Unstable and unpredictable governments and insecure social circumstances have been a fertile ground for Pentecostalism. As many have lost hope, the Pentecostal Church has been a beacon to them, offering an alternative and supernatural solution to daily struggles. Pentecostalism has indeed offered a foolproof solution, for on the one hand, believers seize the promise of eternal life and an ultimate end to their pain on this earth, while on the other hand, they are encouraged and inspired to make this ephemeral life more bearable.

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