

*Pentecostalism, Conversions,  
and Politics in Brazil*

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In numerical terms there is no hyperbole in the notion of an explosion of Protestantism in Brazil. In what is nominally the country with the world's largest Catholic population, some 20 million out of a population of 150 million are Protestant.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of those *Protestants – crentes* (believers), as they are generally called in Brazil – are Pentecostals. Protestantism in Brazil has exploded numerically as, especially in the past thirty years, millions of Brazilians, in urban and rural areas in every major region of the country and up as well as down in the class structure, have converted to a wide range of Pentecostal churches. The Assemblies of God have remained the largest single group, with a still expanding membership estimated at 8 million in 1990. The Congregacao Crista was estimated at upwards of 2 million and Brasil para o Cristo at 1 million at the same time. These numbers in the older Pentecostal churches were augmented by membership in a second generation of churches branching out of the original groupings during the 1950s and 1960s, many of them numbering in the hundreds of thousands. And by the 1980s there was phenomenal growth in a "third wave" of churches, represented by Bishop Edir Macedo's Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus. This church, which has now established temples in New York, had over 600,000 members in 1990 in seven hundred temples spread throughout Brazil; its message was diffused through fourteen radio stations, a press, and a television station in Sao Paulo.<sup>2</sup>

Behind the explosion of numbers in recent decades is a longer history of institutional development and consolidation first at the local and eventually at the national level.<sup>3</sup> In the early years of the twentieth century, small Pentecostal congregations were established by Swedish missionaries in Belém, in the north of Brazil, and by an Italian in Sao Paulo. After the initial Euro-American input (the two Swedes and the Italian had briefly been associated with Pentecostals at the

Chicago mission of William H. Durham), the slow expansion from the 1920s onward was indigenous. But though in this sense rooted from the beginning in the local, the members of small congregations, meeting in private houses or tiny shanty temples, felt and were made to feel that they were a marginalized minority group.

This remained the case at least up to the 1960s, but by the 1970s and 1980s Pentecostalism was well established even at the national level. In 1977 I attended a special service in the large central regional temple of the Assemblies of God in Abreu e Lima, close to Recife in northeastern Brazil. A congregation of six hundred celebrated the triumphant consolidation of the Assemblies in the region and throughout Brazil. The service marked the end of a week of study in which pastors, evangelists, deacons, and senior members of congregations from all over the region had taken part. The church-triumphant theme dominated the exhortations that night. The pastor of the regional church took the theme of his address from a hymn, sung by the choir, about the founding of the Assembly in Belem in 1919. He pointed to his mother, seated with dignitaries of the church and the town, as the link with the beginning. He recounted the story of the church's growth in the region. Groans of anguish accompanied his stories and images of the trials of early *days* – *crentes* dismissed from jobs because they owned up to being *crentes*, politicians listening to priests and preventing the establishment of temples. But then he referred to the times to be greeted with alleluias – over 12,000 members of the Assembly, baptized and with certificates that can now be used to get jobs, temples where the Catholics now have nothing.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1980s Brazilian Pentecostals not only constituted the major, visible, organized religious group in thousands of Brazilian localities but had clearly arrived at the level of the national institutional matrix. Paul Freston has given us an account of the formation of an extremely influential coalition of mainly Pentecostal Protestant politicians in the congressional Constituent Assembly that produced the present Brazilian constitution in 1988. Behind it he shows us a council of leading Pentecostal pastors who were responsible for mobilizing the votes of Pentecostals in support of *crente* politicians. The same group may have played a decisive role in the presidential elections of 1989, when they swung Protestant support behind successful candidate Fernando Collor against the Workers' party's Luís Inácio da Silva.

The Protestant explosion in Brazil is not, then, merely numerical; it involves a rapid institutional inclusion of organized Pentecostalism at all levels of Brazilian society. But the question remains, What is the social, cultural, and political impact of the explosion? More pointedly, Is the Pentecostal explosion the epicenter of transformations of Brazilian society as deep as the Protestant explosion in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?<sup>5</sup> Or, as a marxist-inspired stereotyping of Pentecostalism among the "popular classes" used to have it, does the explosion, in its individual and institutional aspects, merely reinforce alienation, diverting the most oppressed classes from political engagement and rein-

forcing the hegemony of the rich and powerful? <sup>6</sup> Are Pentecostals so otherworldly in their concerns as to stand aside from the social engagements in which gender and race relations in civil society are being transformed? <sup>7</sup>

These are grand questions, and I cannot hope to address them fully in this chapter. But I can indicate where case-study data and argument are taking us on subissues that must be addressed on the way to answering these questions. First, there is the issue of the range of *crente* political dispositions and behaviors. Nested in this issue are questions about the uniform characteristics of *crentes* as citizens and about the likelihood that Pentecostal leaders of the kind described by Freston will succeed in mobilizing *crentes* in political campaigns. Second, there is the issue of the way or ways in which Pentecostalism informs biography such that when *crentes* go out from their congregations and return to home and neighborhood their dispositions as citizens have been significantly shaped.

### *The Range of Crente Political Dispositions and Behaviors*

Many observers of Pentecostals in Latin America have challenged the stereotype of the uniformly politically conservative evangelical Protestant. Phillip Berryman is only the latest challenger when he chides the left for neglecting possible allies among evangelicals in the struggle against doctrinaire neoliberalism.<sup>8</sup> The challenges have been diverse, with a range of concessions to stereotype. Some, like Berryman when he points to participation by evangelicals in Brazil's Workers' party, have mounted the challenge on the basis of observed behavior in the formal political arena and local community associations.<sup>9</sup> At least some Pentecostals in some circumstances, it seems from these studies, act out of Pentecostal moral vision to become citizens adept not only at critique of their political economies but at political action for change. Others have argued that the Pentecostal challenge to the political-economic status quo might come not so much from immediate, overt political behavior as over time, from the nurturing of a Pentecostal counterculture and the practices of a distinctive Pentecostal way of life.<sup>10</sup> In David Martin's richly developed argument, meant to apply throughout Latin America, Pentecostals may vote conservatively or appear to endorse the status quo by remaining apolitical or refusing to adopt causes espoused by the left, but in their world apart they acquire the values, expectations, motivations, and disciplines that make them latent carriers of liberal-democratic transformation.

On this dimension of difference among challengers I have tended to the latter perspective, though I have not been surprised by the reports of Pentecostals as actors in radical politics, at least on the local scene. John Burdick has taken me to task for failing to note that Brazilian Pentecostals participate in movements for radical and gender justice as well as being, in some localities, stalwarts in Latin America's largest and most vital party of the left, the Brazilian Workers' party.<sup>11</sup> The involvements that he found among the Pentecostals he studied in the state of Rio de Janeiro do not surprise me, but the Pentecostals I studied in a semirural

town on the periphery of Greater Recife (most intensively in the years 1977-1988) did not act in the same way as Burdick's. The difference, I believe, is not a difference between Pentecostals or even between observers but one of time and place: In semirural towns of the Northeast at the time, there were neither parties nor movements for radical change for Pentecostals to join.

In early 1993, a brief return to Campo Alegre (the name I give to the town where I had done my earlier fieldwork) confirmed this belief. Campo Alegre had become the center of its own municipality, the third municipal elections had just concluded, the Workers' party had fielded candidates for council, and, though Pentecostals had been far from a solid bloc, a few had been prominent in support of Workers' party candidates. Of particular interest to me was that my friend Severino, through whom I have been exploring the complexities of Pentecostal political orientations since 1977, had, by all accounts, skillfully mobilized support for a Catholic neighbor whose candidacy had been endorsed by the Worker's party. Severino's own account of his involvement will be examined below. For the moment it is enough to note that the mere fact of Severino's small involvement in radical politics suggests to me that the difference between observers who posit long-term latent radicalism and those who report actual involvement of Pentecostals in radical or party politics does not involve a serious difference about the possibility and actuality of Pentecostals as critical citizens.

But there are important differences about the extent of variety in the politics of Brazilian Pentecostals and differences too about how Pentecostal belief and/or practice works and is worked on to affect quality of citizenship. Emilio Willems, in comparison with most more recent observers, minimizes variety in the politics of Brazilian Pentecostals.<sup>12</sup> All Pentecostals, in the religious communities that they construct, symbolically subvert the traditional social order. Political challenge spills over as an unintended consequence from Pentecostal religious life. In their religious beliefs and practices, the poor come to see themselves as having a status altogether different from and higher than that awarded them in the secular society or in the Catholic church. They learn how to organize themselves without traditional hierarchy and acquire both the skills and the confidence to demand a more egalitarian order in society at large. Echoing a powerful sociological account of the social origins of revolution, Willems seems to imply that Pentecostals become critical citizens through their experience of status incongruence: From the incongruence between their status and experience in their religious world, on the one hand, and in the social, political, and economic relations of everyday life, on the other, arises a critical consciousness and the aspiration to achieve congruence. Insofar as there is variety among Pentecostals as Brazilian citizens it will arise from different strategies drawn from a Pentecostal repertoire as to how congruence might be achieved. But, in possibly different ways, all Pentecostals will have a potential to contribute to the development of a less authoritarian, more democratic Brazil.

John Burdick acknowledges variety in Pentecostal citizenship in the form of concessions to the old stereotype of Pentecostal conservatism and quiescence.<sup>13</sup>

He finds, nonetheless, a central Pentecostal logic that, political circumstances permitting, will facilitate Pentecostal participation in social movements and lead individual members of conservative-leaning collectivities such as the Assemblies of God toward involvement in radical-left party politics. Yes, the ordinary Pentecostals of Duque de Caxias, focused on the Kingdom that is not of this world and acutely aware of corruption, will usually not bother to cast votes; they shy away from the morally dubious wheeling and dealing of local politics; they seem disposed to accept poverty, valuing the simple, trusting virtues of the poor exalted in the Gospels; they value God-ordained order and legitimate authority and abhor the confusion, violence, and disorder that normally accompanies radical struggle in the workplace or residential area in Brazil. But they do not renounce the world entirely, regarding themselves as obliged to strive for "improvement" and "cleanliness" in the world; accepting poverty, they feel called to fight against unjust and degrading immiseration; their "sacralization of poverty carries with it a compelling denial of legitimacy of the rich and powerful ."<sup>14</sup>

Here, then, in the religious logic of Pentecostalism, in what Clifford Geertz would recognize as a distinctive Pentecostal religious culture, is room for "the development of a highly critical social consciousness" and for the social-movement and party-political action Burdick describes. But these developments from religious culture through critical social consciousness to radical political involvement will be conditional on opportunity, in Burdick's view. Pentecostals, moved to critical consciousness by religious culture, will often stay out of radical politics because Catholic activists marginalize them or because traditional patron-client politics blocks out alternative politics. Conversely, under conditions of opportunity, Pentecostals will tend to act radically and effectively, unrestrained by the clerical caution or the emphasis on organic social harmony that reins in Catholic lay activists. I think Burdick is arguing that, despite all the tensions and inconsistencies of Pentecostal religious culture, the impulse toward critical citizenship will be experienced by all Pentecostals, or at least by all Pentecostals of the Assemblies of God that constitute the largest single Pentecostal church in Brazil.

My own studies of members of the Assembly of God in Campo Alegre lead me to disagree. Attempting a Geertzian exploration of Pentecostal religious constructions of past and future, I found not one but at least two Pentecostal logics that nurtured quite divergent political dispositions. One of these, the religious culture of the sect *crente*, as I called it, was very close to the single logic so well reconstructed by Burdick, though, as already noted, through the 1980s I found no instance of the sustained radical action in movements or party politics of the kind that Burdick found. The other, the religious culture of the church *crente*, moves and motivates members of the Assembly of God to eschew political involvement and to endorse conservative, even authoritarian agendas, if only as a consequence of lack of interest in developing a critique of a rejected secular order.

The Pentecostals I called church *crentes* are much less disposed than sect *crentes* like Severino to consider any public dimension in the private troubles of *everyday* life.<sup>15</sup> These troubles are trials in which the individual *crente* is required to re-

main faithful to the terms of salvation won for us by Jesus Christ against the powers of darkness. That fidelity is found and guaranteed in maximum immersion in the life of the temple and risked by political engagement – thought likely to be fruitless anyway – in the world beyond it. God's time and space in the temple must be protected by leaders of the church, who may enter into alliances with legitimate power to do so. The organized church for the church *crente* becomes the unit of citizenship, negotiating the structures of unequal wealth, power, and expertise for the prosperity of the church. In this way, time and space won for God may be maximized and, through that victory, the individual's chances of sustained fidelity to the terms of salvation increased. The individual church *crente*, then, is not concerned to exercise critical citizenship, however sharply aware of corruption, sin, and injustice in the world at large. The church *crente*, from deep religious motivation, abdicates citizenship. In turn, church pastors in the Campo Alegre region, exercising a sort of collective citizenship for the victory of their church, have negotiated and made alliances with local elites, and those alliances, in effect, help preserve the political-economic status quo.

The sect *crente* abdicates citizenship to no one and is disposed, in the living of a religious culture, to critical citizenship. Among the Bible stories through which Pentecostals depict the world, sect *crentes* emphasize those that demonstrate a public dimension to private troubles and the responsibility of the individual to determine and challenge those who are responsible for gross injustice in the world. The sect *crente*, while acknowledging the need for withdrawal from the world and caution in worldly involvement, seeks engagement in the world to fulfill the responsibilities of faith rather than withdrawal from it within the confines of the temple. It is this religiously motivated engagement and sense of responsibility to challenge injustice that dispose the sect *crente* to critical citizenship.<sup>16</sup>

I will elaborate the argument about how different ways of being Pentecostal affect citizenship below. But there is yet another type of Brazilian Pentecostal citizen to add to the abdicating and critical types discussed so far. This is the pragmatic citizen, my term for a type that was foreshadowed for me by some members of the leadership of the Assemblies of God in the Northeast of Brazil but has become much clearer as a distinct type in Paul Freston's discussion of the "third wave" of Pentecostalism in Brazil. For Freston, the "third wave" is represented mainly by the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, as noted above.

In Freston's account, the new church embodies a religious culture markedly different from the first wave of small local marginalized sects and the second wave of established churches of the kind that the Assemblies of God now constitute. The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus calls for and receives converts to therapeutic healing and individual success in this life. In contrast to older Pentecostal groups, Freston claims, the new church "offers a moralized version of the yuppie gambling ethic, an overnight flight to rapid enrichment."<sup>17</sup> This is the message announced in mass gatherings that have filled the Maracanáo stadium in Rio de Janeiro and spread through radio and television stations owned by the church. At

its upper levels, executive-style leaders play hard at electoral politics: "the Universal Church shows a frankly pragmatic relation to politics, characteristic of a business empire expanding on many fronts."<sup>18</sup>

This noncritical pragmatic citizenship is clearly very different from both the abdicated and the critical Pentecostal citizenship described earlier, but like them it seems to emerge from yet another distinctive Pentecostal religious culture and a particular way of living that culture.

### *Ways of Being Pentecostal in Brazil*

Until this point, the small response to the grand question about the implications of the Protestant explosion for deep social and political transformation in Brazil has been to argue that only one of at least three types of Pentecostal religious culture found in Brazil disposes Pentecostals as citizens to be agents of deep transformation. In this section I shall elaborate that argument as I reflect on the different meanings that conversion has had in the lives of Pentecostals. Again, it seems to me, only one of several modes of Pentecostal conversion is at all likely to dispose some Pentecostals to become critical citizens, whether in civil society or in the arenas of state politics.

My reflections start with and were provoked by Severino, who has been my star case of the sect *crente* in Campo Alegre. Because of his thoughtfulness, his conversational eloquence, and his prestige among all *crentes* in Campo Alegre, I have relied on him as a sort of guide to the whole range of themes and variations in Pentecostal cultures and types of citizenship to be found among members of the Assembly of God in the town. Until my most recent interviews with him, in December 1992 and January 1993, I had regarded Severino as having worked out a coherent religious culture, drawing, with deliberation, from a known repertoire of Pentecostal myth, belief, and practice. I thought of Severino as living out of that religious culture, as those of us who have been influenced by Geertz are wont to think of the way religion works in everyday life. His critical citizenship emerged from a Pentecostalism that I believed I, and he too, could distinguish from the Pentecostalism of those coreligionists who had abdicated their citizenship. Variety among Pentecostals, on a scale from abdicated citizenship to Severino's critical citizenship, could be explained in terms of quite different Pentecostal logics or religious cultures.

But reflection on my more recent interviews has led me to question whether I had not relied too exclusively on clearly and permanently different religious cultures to explain different types of citizenship. Those interviews, from which extracts are presented below, led me to the following conclusions:

1. Severino does indeed continue to articulate a distinctive Pentecostal logic or Pentecostal religious culture that accounts for the critical citizenship displayed in his participation in the 1992 electoral campaign.

2. Over time, however, Severino's religious culture develops: He draws on the wider Pentecostal or wider still evangelical Christian repertoire as he reflects upon and reinterprets the myths, beliefs, and religious orientations that inform his citizenship.
3. It is inconsistent with Severino's own discourse and incompatible with my knowledge of his biography to speak of his critical citizenship's arising simply from his living out of a fixed religious culture, acquired once and for all at the time of conversion.
4. The quality of Severino's citizenship is to be accounted for not only by his religious culture but by the developmental quality of that culture. In the context of what I had previously learned about Severino, the recent interviews suggest to me that Severino might be a case of continuing spiritual conversion, a kind of conversion that several rather diverse Christian theologians may help us appreciate.
5. The differences in quality of citizenship between Severino and church *crentes* may be explained not only in terms of different Pentecostal religious cultures but also in terms of different modes of conversion to Pentecostalism. These different modes of conversion mediate how Pentecostal convictions, shared across the different religious cultures, are expressed in everyday life.

In this paper I wish to elaborate points 4 and 5, but some further details about Severino and his situation, not evident in the interview extracts, must first be recorded. Severino, now approaching sixty years of age, became a *crente* as a young teenager. He was the son of a poor itinerant sharecropper and rural laborer, and his account of his conversion suggests that it had to do with freeing himself from many aspects of his father's condition. Against the will of his father, young Severino attended night school to learn to read and write. Turning away from his father's folk Catholicism, he started attending the meetings that his Pentecostal teacher conducted after classes. His conversion, marked first by baptism of water and later by the experience of baptism in the Spirit, he describes as a slow process of "reading, reading, reading and thinking, thinking, thinking," a process that continues.<sup>19</sup>

Severino's conversion story is very different from most of those I heard from members of the Assembly of God in Campo Alegre. Most members of the Assembly focus their whole religious biography around the story of a once and completed conversion; that is how religious biography is told even in contexts other than public testimonies, where we might expect highly stylized accounts. In the usual telling, after a life of dissipation or feeling lost and directionless there is an arrival. Conversion is an arrival at the truth, at the rules for good living, at a right relationship with God. It is a turning away from the world and a settling down into the world that is a part of the church, where the corrupting social engagements of the material world can be excluded as far as possible. In Severino's

telling of his religious biography, the one conversion figures less prominently, and, using imagery curiously similar to that favored in the primers and hymns of the Catholic base communities, he describes that conversion as a setting out on a journey. The conversion has provided orientations and training for the journey, but the reading and thinking must go on. Conversion has committed him to analyzing a changing world, to talking about his changing responsibilities in the world, to working out what God would want him to do for the good of his changing neighborhood. In this sense, Severino's conversion is a continuing one.

That does not mean that he does not share much of the simple, conservative theology of his coreligionists. He reminds me of this, firmly, in the 1993 interview. I asked questions that I hoped would prompt him to talk about any religious motivations in his foray into electoral politics in the 1992 municipal elections. Severino's first responses indicated that he saw no connection. As a *crente* his responsibility in the community was "to preach, to counsel, to show that the Gospel is true, that it is salvation for all who believe" "I asked him, Is there any relationship between preaching and the sort of action you have taken in the material world?" "No, no," he replied, "these are completely different things."

But he agreed that he was completely different from other *crentes*, who would never engage politically on the left as he had done because they believed that, as *crentes*, they should keep out of politics: "Let's put it this way. Many [*crentes*] don't want to enter into political matters because they think there's no need, that it's not worthwhile. But people who live here can't get by without political involvement; I think the group can't get by without political involvement because, though not all politicians are good and true, there is a sort of politician that we need."

Here Severino appears the mildest of political radicals. But he was beginning to indicate a significant *religious* difference – a difference with consequences for his politics – from those many other *crentes*. He agreed with those others that it was not so good for a *crente* to become a politician and that preaching the truth was prior and sufficient. But, unlike them, he felt a responsibility as a *crente* to know the material needs of his neighbors, to know who could best help in the political struggle to satisfy those needs, and, at least, to help that person.

The key to knowing and discerning, for Severino, was *convivencia*, living and sharing experience and talking about experience. Through *convivencia* with all his neighbors, not just with fellow *crentes*, the *crente* learns about needs, about what sort of political action is necessary, about legitimate alliances, about what to accept and reject in the world. When I asked him whether his own political involvement was at odds with his need to withdraw from the material world, he noted, first, that we (fellow workers and neighbors) had to work together:

I arrive at the conclusion that I'm not going to display myself as a *crente* out there in the world doing everything. But at the same time *I* can't stop living with them or lending them my support. We can't have a *crente* completely in the world – I'm not

going to go along with it completely, drinking and playing around, defrauding people. But I have to live with them. I have to act politically to succeed on the two sides: managing my journey and at the same time defending any person as he deserves to be defended.

This theme of *convivência* as the basis for knowing and discerning right conduct is, I have come to realize, at the heart of Severino's religiosity. Those things that *creates* must do first and foremost, seeking salvation and preaching the Gospel, require *convivência*. Severino, in the years that I have known him, has never spoken of his conversion as an arrival at the fully articulated rules for salvation or the complete message to be preached. It appears much more of a setting out with a responsibility to weigh what the rules mean in given situations and what constitutes witness and effective communication of the faith in everyday life. Salvation and evangelization, for Severino, are slow processes, requiring constant analysis of the world, sharing life with one's neighbors and talking with them. Here, in a way of holding and living the revelations of his first conversion, is the basis for Severino's religious differences from those coreligionists I have called the church *crentes*, and in those religious differences are the seeds of divergent types of citizenship.

In the first part of the interview, then, we see Severino affirming Pentecostal constants: the separation of religion and politics, the primacy of evangelization and the seeking of individual salvation in the life of a *crente*, a respect for established authority in church, state, and civil society. But in the rest of the interview we see him reflecting on his responsibilities in his community, puzzling about his social identity as he applies broad principles of New Testament morality to a complex, changing society. As he reflects, puzzles, and analyzes, his discourse is very similar to that of Catholic base community (CEB) leaders I have been interviewing in Sao Paulo and very dissimilar to that of the church *crentes*. And Severino, in the quality of his citizenship, is much closer to CEB Catholics than to that large group of his coreligionists.

But those Pentecostal constants are never far away. If the voice of the faithinformed citizen sounds base-community Catholic, the voice of the man of faith remains identifiably Assembly of God Pentecostal. Knowing that Severino is neither carelessly eclectic nor prone to compartmentalize his life into discrete areas of activity, I have been led to consider that he shares a mode of living out of religious faith and myth with the base-community Catholics despite his differences from them on articles of faith and religious myth. It is this mode of living faith that I call continuing conversion. Cecilia Mariz, reflecting on similarities and differences among Pentecostals and base-community Catholics in Recife, has anticipated this line of thought. She notes the tendency toward political conservatism that is deeply rooted in the constants of Pentecostal religious culture, and she compares this with the critical citizenship that is nurtured in the religious culture of the base communities.<sup>20</sup> But she finds similar experiences of and emphases on a particular sort of conversion in both groups and suggests that this sort of con-

version stimulates critical citizenship because it involves "a questioning of the world as taken for granted ... and experiencing the limits of a conventional commonsense view of life and becoming critical of it." In the case of the Pentecostals,

the requirement of converting counteracts a fatalistic outlook on life by encouraging people to disagree with and rebel against reality as conventionally defined. It disposes people to believe that their lives can be changed. Even Pentecostalism, with its otherworldliness and its respect for constituted authority, fosters a critical, nonfatalistic outlook on life that can work against the movement's official posture of avoiding involvement in "worldly" affairs.<sup>21</sup>

Social scientists tend to operate with a notion of conversion that is too simple and undifferentiated to allow appreciation and further investigation of this point. We tend to think of conversion as an event, a precise turning to a clearly defined set of beliefs and/or practices and/or commitments shared with a group of fellow devotees. Conversion is a problematic discontinuity demarcated by distinctive continuous states on either side of the conversion happening – the solid-state before and the even more solid-state after. The discontinuity, the conversion itself, demands explanation in terms of some psychological disposition or set of social circumstances. The consequences of conversion in terms of quality of social participation and citizenship may be inclusive: By virtue of conversion the convert is incorporated as an endorsing, noncritical participant into the dominant economic and political projects of the society. Alternatively, they may be exclusive: The convert, protected by high walls of practice and symbol, is excluded by choice and/or rule from active, critical participation.

This allows for two types of conversion that I think are to be found among Pentecostals in Brazil. These are once and complete conversions that involve selfexclusion from full social engagement, as found among the church *crentes* of Campo Alegre, and those once and complete conversions that involve the decidedly uncritical inclusion found among members of the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus described by Paul Freston. But neither of these types will do in the case of Severino. The need for another type emerges as we ask two questions that address the central puzzle presented by the 1993 interview. How does Severino's retention of basic Pentecostal beliefs and orientations, which he shares with his coreligionists the church *crentes*, figure in his sect-*crente* religious culture? How do the shared beliefs and orientations that among church *crentes* are conducive to abdicated citizenship become, in Severino at least, compatible with if not conducive to critical citizenship? The answer, I now think, lies in the dynamic mode in which Severino holds all his beliefs and orientations. Believing that the Kingdom is not of this world, Severino *also* feels called on to continue discerning good and evil in the world and to build on the good. Retaining the simple and clear morality to which he turned at conversion, Severino is *also* drawn to go on working out what that morality requires of him in a changing world. The responsibility to turn away from the world of his father was not completed at the

time of his teenage conversion; he must keep turning. Fidelity to the initial conversion requires continuing conversion, and, in Severino's case, that continuing conversion demands that he include himself critically in the wider society.<sup>22</sup>

This third type of continuing, socially engaging conversion that Severino has helped me define does not make him unique among Pentecostals, but it does help us understand one way in which Pentecostal religious culture works in the lives of many Pentecostals to dispose them to radical citizenship. I suggest, though I cannot prove it, that Severino exemplifies and illuminates the type of conversion that Mariz found motivating Pentecostals in Recife toward the radical citizenship of the CEB Catholics. Severino, I claim, is a Pentecostal akin to the radical Pentecostal citizens who speak in John Burdick's publications, and I would suggest that Burdick's cases of Dalila and MurCo, who have advanced further into radical politics than Severino in different circumstances, speak the language of continuing, socially engaged converts when they discern the Pentecostal devil in the social system and seek to create the conditions for evangelization in the political struggle against immiseration.

### *Conclusions*

I conclude this analysis with a pairing of three types of conversion and three types of political citizenship found among Brazilian Pentecostals. The critical citizen of some recent studies of Brazilian Pentecostals is likely to live Pentecostal religious culture as a continuing conversion that is a turning toward social engagement. The pragmatic political operator of third-wave Pentecostalism has experienced a once and complete conversion that includes him or her in would-be upwardly mobile postmodern Brazil. The abdicated citizen I found in the church *crentes* of Campo Alegre is that sort of citizen as a consequence of living the religious culture acquired at conversion as a once and complete guide for salvation within the haven of the church.

Further research is likely to indicate that this typology is altogether too neat and incomplete. But it does help us see where we are with research to hand in addressing the grand question about the historical impact of the Protestant/Pentecostal explosion. We do not know yet whether there are long-term unintended effects of millions of Brazilians' becoming "followers of the new faith," as Willems called them. But the exercise in typology attempted here suggests some conclusions about the likelihood of Pentecostals' being protagonists in movements for intended social change either in the formal political arena or, more widely, in civil society.

Our typology suggests, first of all, that even as more and more Brazilians become Pentecostal *crentes*, there is ever less likelihood of a mobilization of Pentecostals for the transformation of Brazil's social, political, or economic institutions. This is so not only because of the disillusionment and fragmentation that followed the attempted mobilizations in the congressional elections of 1986 and the presidential election of 1989<sup>23</sup> but for reasons suggested by our typology. As

three generations of Pentecostalism have developed and different streams have emerged in one or another Pentecostal church, Brazilian Pentecostals have become more variable in their propensity to be mobilized for anything other than purely religious ends. At the same time, Pentecostal religiosity has become so variegated that there is no clear affinity between some one Pentecostal religious culture and any identifiable social, political, or economic project.

Second, the typology suggests that a large number of Pentecostals of the first and second-wave churches who are critical of Brazilian social, political, and economic injustices will express that critique only within the temple and in a private, inner life. The point is well taken that there may be long-term, unintended consequences for the wider society of critical practice in the religious sphere. In the meantime, those *crentes* who live out the religious culture acquired or confirmed at conversion as a complete and sufficient guide for salvation and evangelization and who exclude *convivência* as a requirement of faith will abdicate not only political citizenship narrowly conceived but social agency as well.

Third, pragmatic Pentecostal citizens may well be active social agents but not for a Brazil constructed out of critical religious vision. If Freston has characterized them adequately, these third-wave Pentecostals seem to espouse a sort of Christianity that includes them in the world on the world's terms. The North American evangelical Christian Jim Wallis has described a sort of contemporary born-again religiosity that seems very similar: "The Gospel message has been molded to suit an increasingly narcissistic culture. Conversion is proclaimed as the road to self-realisation. Whether through evangelical piety or liberal therapy, the role of religion is presented as a way to help us uncover our human potential—our potential for personal, social, and business success, that is."<sup>24</sup> A new Brazil, arguably, is not made by those who are followers of this new faith.

Finally, however, the typology reminds us of Brazilian *crentes* whose faith and mode of conversion call them like prophets to discern and challenge a broad band of injustice and corruption in the world. John Burdick has shown us how broad that band may be and how astutely and tenaciously that better world of Pentecostal moral vision may be pursued. The Pentecostals of Duque de Caxias, like Severino, live a faith that calls them to engage deeply in the very world that the forces of darkness rule – a faith that, as they tell it, calls on them to help bring the Kingdom of God into contemporary Brazilian reality. Perhaps it is in the negotiation of such tensions that citizens with the capacity to be agents of deep historical change are born. And perhaps Burdick is right in thinking that there are more Pentecostals of this kind of faith than I once thought there were. The evidence is not yet in.

#### NOTES

1. This commonly accepted estimate is found in Paul Freston, "Brother Votes for Brother: The New Politics of Pentecostalism in Brazil," in Virginia Garrard-Burnett and

David Stoll, eds., *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 67.

2. The 1990 estimates are reported in *Latinamerica Press*, September 20, 1990, and the source cited there is the National Council of Christian Churches. For details of the growth of the various Pentecostal groups up to the 1980s see Francisco Cartaxo Rolim, "Igrejas pentecostais," *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 42 (March 1982), pp. 29-59. The growth of the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus is documented in *Veja*, April 25, 1990, and in Freston, "Brother Votes for Brother."

3. This story, up to the 1970s, has been well told by Francisco C. Rolim, "Igrejas pentecostais," pp. 29-59. Freston, "Brother Votes for Brother," is the major source for the story of institutional growth and consolidation at the national level through the 1980s and into the 1990s.

4. Fuller descriptions of this and other services of the Assembly of God in the region may be read in Rowan Ireland, *Kingdoms Come: Religion and Politics in Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), chap. 4.

5. David Martin has posed just this question in his magisterial review of the literature on Pentecostalism in Latin America. See David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

6. A sophisticated form of this argument, with some impressive supporting evidence was once presented by Francisco Rolim. See Francisco Cartaxo Rolim, *Religião e classes populares* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1980). I have tried to summarise Rolim's argument of that time in *Kingdoms Come*.

7. John Burdick, as we shall see, has considered the stereotype of Pentecostal alienation and otherworldly orientation contained in this question and found it wanting.

8. Phillip Berryman, "The Coming of Age of Evangelical Protestantism," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 27, 6 (May/June 1994), pp. 6-10.

9. See Regina C. Novaes, *Os escolhidos de Deus: Pentecostais, trabalhadores e cidadania* (Sao Paulo: Marco Zero, 1985); John Burdick, "Struggling Against the Devil: Pentecostalism and Social Movements in Urban Brazil," in Garrard-Burnett and Stoll, *Rethinking Protestantism*, pp. 20-44; Cecilia Loreto Mariz, "Religion and Poverty in Brazil: A Comparison of Catholic and Pentecostal Communities," *Sociological Analysis* 53, S (Supplement 1992), pp. S563-S570.

10. See Emilio Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); Martin, *Tongues of Fire*; Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, chaps. 3 and 4.

11. John Burdick, "The Progressive Catholic Church in Latin America: Giving Voice or Listening to Voices," *Latin American Research Review* 29 (Spring 1994), pp. 184-196.

12. Willems, *Followers of the New Faith*.

13. Burdick, "The Progressive Catholic Church."

14. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

15. For a fuller discussion of differences between church and sect *crentes*, see Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, pp. 93-102; and "The *Crentes* of Campo Alegre and the Religious Construction of Brazilian Politics," in Garrard-Burnett and Stoll, *Rethinking Protestantism*, pp. 45-65.

16. See Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, chap. 4, for a more detailed account of a distinctive sect-*crente* religious culture. As we shall see, further fieldwork in Campo Alegre has led me

to supplement this account of difference in quality of citizenship arising out of variation in religious culture with an account of different ways of living a largely shared religious culture. Variation in what I call type of conversion also affects quality of citizenship.

17. Freston, "Brother Votes for Brother," p. 70.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

19. Severino's conversion story is related in greater detail in Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, pp. 61-67.

20. Mariz, "Religion and Poverty," pp. 64-65.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

22. In another version of this chapter ("Pentecostalism, Conversions, and Politics in Brazil," *Religion* 25 [1995], pp. 135-145) written for the journal *Religion*, I show how this continuing socially inclusive type of conversion is informed not only by the case of Severino but also by the writing of two Christian theologians, Jim Wallis and Bernard Lonergan.

23. See Freston, "Brother Votes for Brother," for a full account of these developments.

24. Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion* (Tring, Herts.: Lion Publishing, 1981), p. 28.