



Overview of brazilian theology

J. Scott Horrel e Ziel Machado

Faculdade Luterana de Teologia

Junho de 1997

OVERVIEW OF BRAZILIAN THEOLOGY

J. Scott Horrell with Ziel Machado*

INTRODUCTION: THE RELIGIOUS SETTING

In the swiftly evolving world of the 1990s, North Atlantic theologians have largely continued to stereotype Latin American theology as liberationist. With the diversity found among the twenty or more Ibero-American countries that sweep from Mexico and the Hispanic Caribbean to Argentina and Chile, icons such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, José Míguez-Bonino and Leonardo Boff have sometimes been less than representative of large segments of Latin American Christendom.

By its sheer size and population, Portuguese-speaking Brazil continues as a primary leader in Latin America theology. In the liberation theology era, beginning with CELAM II (Medellín, 1968), Brazil was home to Dom Helder Câmara, Paulo Freire, Richard Shaull, Rubem Alves, Hugo Assmann, José Comblim, Carlos Mesters, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, Frei Betto and various others (when not in political exile). By the late 1980's, however, as was evident at the *Encontro dos Teólogos da Libertação* (1989) in São Paulo, liberation theology showed signs of tiredness and lack of direction.¹ Pressured by the Vatican on the one side and Evangelicalism on another, the liberation movement was forced to admit that its goal of an equitable society was — insofar as Brazil — further away from fulfillment than ever. Since the mid-1970s, the economic gulf between the rich and the poor had, in fact, widened.

*J. Scott Horrell, Th.D, is Graduate Chairman of Systematic Theology at the Faculdade Teológica Batista de São Paulo (FTBSP) and former Editor of *Vox Scripturae*. Ziel Machado has been General Secretary of Aliança Bíblica Universitária do Brasil (ABUB) since 1985; he is member of the Fraternidade Teológica Latino-Americana — Brazil and is concluding graduate studies in the Science of Religion at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP).

¹See *Teologia da Libertação: Novos Desafios*, ed. Faustino Luiz Couto Teixeira (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1991). The book is in question-and-answer format with a list of virtual "Who's Who" in liberation theology present at the conference. Of the 33 interviewed, ten were born in North Atlantic countries, 22 received their doctorates there, and the majority were over 50 years of age (Gutiérrez' 60th was celebrated). The tone was more humble, mature and self-critical than in earlier publications. Several participants complimented the evangelical emphasis on Scripture, spirituality and lay participation, while others continued a de-doctrinized, humanitarian faith that "life is worth living" (Assmann, 76).

Just months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff had returned from a tour in the Soviet Union recounting the glories of communism. As the dismal socio-economic realities behind the Iron Curtain, together with the poverty of Cuba, increasingly came to public attention, leftist politicians and liberation theologians lost face. Nor did it seem that they had anywhere to go. While the social disparities had not improved in Brazil, it was clear to all that the ideological foundations of liberationism desperately needed rethinking.

Spirituality and mysticism have never been far from Brazil's cultural center. Whether medieval Catholic mysticism, European spiritism (Allan Kardec, Pietro Ubaldo), Afro-Brazilian syncretism (Candomblé, Macumba, Umbanda) or Amerindian tribal religions, Brazil has for centuries been a caldron of religious belief and expression. Ironically, Brazil is both the largest Roman Catholic and the largest spiritist country in the world. Often the interplay between the two has been more than casual. *Many* officially Roman Catholic families (some would say *most*) are also involved also in spiritist practices — a truth demonstrated by those as diverse as the former President of the Republic Fernando Collor, to the maid next door.

With an estimated 25 million affiliates, Brazil also has the third largest evangelical population in the world.² In general, while Evangelicalism has seen major gains among the poor and working classes, it is spiritism that has largely won the day with upper classes, offering mystical power without dogma or ethical obligation. Nevertheless, as a consequence of its dynamic growth, Evangelicalism is becoming increasingly visible on all levels of society, political and economic hierarchies not excluded.

With all of this, after decades of Marxism and skepticism, Brazilian academic studies also are turning back toward spirituality; indeed, all along, atheism was often only a thin layer over a more fundamental mysticism. Recent intellectual congresses in Vitória and Porto Alegre have been marked both by mass disassociation from communism and by the participation of various

²Numeric figures concerning Evangelicals vary widely. Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (5th ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan/OM Publishing, 1993), 62, 128ff, gives figures that would total about 31 million in 1997. Other figures have estimated as high as 40 million. On the other hand, the 1991 census, according to the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE), shows an evangelical growth from 6,62% in 1980 to 8,56% (12.5 million members) in 1991, which might be projected to 16 million Evangelicals today. Somewhere between the two, evangelical sociologist Paul Freston estimates about 25 million Brazilian Evangelicals. Cf. Paul Freston, "Entre o Pentecostalismo e o Declínio do Denominacionalismo: O Futuro das Igrejas Históricas no Brasil," in *Na Força do Espírito. Os Pentecostais na América-Latina: Um Desafio às Igrejas Históricas*, eds. Benjamim F. Gutiérrez and Leonildo Silveira Campos, trans. from Spanish by Júlio Paulo Tavares Zabatiero (São Paulo: AIPRAL/Instituto Ecumênico de Pós-Graduação em Ciências da Religião [Rudge Ramos SP], 1996) 257-276. Brazil ranks third in numbers of Evangelicals, after the People's Republic of China and the United States.

religious thinkers. Member of the elite 40-member Brazilian Academy of Letters, Poet Carlos Nejar, for example, is openly evangelical. Radical leftist leaders of the past, such as journalist Jorge Pinheiro, have converted to the Christian faith and openly dialogue with other intellectuals disillusioned from years of atheism and social activism. As academic interest has turned toward religion — and sometimes toward classical Christian faith — the socio-religious scholarship of evangelical thinkers such as Paul Freston, Robinson Cavalcanti, Sérgio Gouvea Franco, Joanildo Burity, Israel Belo de Azevedo and Leonildo Silveira Campos has become increasingly respected.

But if some are attracted to Christian faith, others find religion little more than a subjective fascination. At one conference in 1996, the comment was made, "We want religiosity but not God." As the avant-garde thinker (and founder of the *Universidade de Brasília*) Darci Ribeiro put it, "I was an atheist, but now I am not so sure. I do not have the faith that I would like to have, but I have profound respect for religion."³

The mosaic of religion in Brazil, therefore, is complex.⁴ With the flood of best-selling books by mystics Paulo Coelho and Monica Buonfiglio, spirituality is back in vogue. Mixtures of spiritism, New Age, angelology and oriental and indigenous religions enjoy increasing popularity but little serious devotion. On the other hand, with loss of credibility on several sides, traditional Roman Catholicism has not brought its wandering sheep back into the fold and continues to lose adherents. In the midst of this, Evangelicalism — and particularly charismatic and pentecostal Evangelicalism — is a growing curiosity, both respected for its transformed lives and scandalized by its manipulative leadership.

With this general religious overview in mind, the present study attempts to survey and to clarify the evolving elements of Brazilian Christendom, especially in their theological development since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The initial section deals with Roman Catholicism, first in its conservative and charismatic aspects and, then, among its progressive elements, marked by ecumenism and the ongoing theology of liberation. The second major section deals with Brazilian Protestantism, beginning with the progressives (ecumenists), secondly the historical (or traditional) Evangelicals and, finally, the charismatic and pentecostal movements.

³Darci Ribeiro, "Frases Inesquecíveis," *Zero Hora* (February 18, 1997) 6: "Eu era ateu, agora sou à-toa ..." Before dying (2/1997), Ribeiro requested that Leonardo Boff profer the last words at his burial.

⁴See Giorgio Paleari, *Religiões do Povo: Um Estudo sobre a Inculturação* (São Paulo: AM Edições, 1990); Various, *Religiosidade Popular e Misticismo no Brasil* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1984); and Tácito da Gama Leite Filho and Ursula Regina da Gama Leite, *Seitas do Nosso Tempo*, 6 vols. (Rio de Janeiro: JUERP, 1991).

BRAZILIAN ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The Re-Emergence of Traditional Catholicism

With the new conservatism of Roman Catholicism⁵ in Latin America, very evident in Brazil, the Church is trying to regain some of its losses with its own former faithful. Beginning with CELAM III (*Conselho Episcopal Latino-Americano* in Puebla 1979), John Paul II has managed slowly to turn Latin American Catholicism — at that point some 70 percent liberationist — back toward mainstream Catholicism. Starting with Puebla, declarations by the Pope and various Vatican commissions began to hedge in “renegade” liberationism on every side with fairly strong statements reaffirming classical Christology, and defining limitations regarding the hermeneutic of Scripture, relationship to Marxism and government, and the doctrinal and authoritative primacy of Rome. Without abandoning its social engagement, in general, Brazilian Catholicism is returning to a more spiritual and moderately traditional message. Different from the openness of the 1980’s, the present posture regarding Evangelicals follows CELAM IV’s (Santo Domingo, 1991) harder line against especially Pentecostals.⁶ Today, although this is not an even pattern (see Ecumenism below), there seems to be, on the part of conservative Roman Catholic leadership, less interest in ecumenical friendliness or dialogue. Even the sophisticated, once progressive Catholic publisher Vozes appears less inclined toward jointly published works with the Lutheran *Sinodal* (IECLB) and the *Imprensa Metodista* than in years past.

Without the controversies and heroes of the 1970’s and 1980’s, not much done by the Roman Catholic Church makes the news. Most well-known liberation theologians have either retired or assumed a lower profile. Eighty-eight year old Don Helder Câmara has for years given himself to solitude, prayer and mass. Leonardo Boff quit the priesthood in 1992 and activist Cardinal Archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns retired in early 1997. Supporting the socialist unions against the military regime in the 1970s, pro-liberationist Arns once oversaw greater São Paulo, the largest diocese in the world with some 14 million adherents and 7,000 priests. In 1989, John Paul II divided the region into five dioceses, surrounding Arns with conservatives.⁷ At this writing, Rome has not

⁵See Pedro Ribeiro de Oliveira, “Prefacio,” in Ivo Pedro Oro, *O Outro É o Demônio: Uma Análise Sociológica do Fundamentalismo* (São Paulo: Paulus, 1996) 9-16, to better understand the re-ascension of traditional Catholicism in Brazil.

⁶Note the terms “Fundamentalismo,” “Seitas,” “Ecumenismo” and “Fanatismo,” in Fernando Bastos Avila, *Pequena Enciclopédia de Doutrina Social da Igreja* (São Paulo: Loyola 1993).

⁷Even yet the central São Paulo diocese estimates 8 million people in its flock, with 771 priests, 2,400 nuns, 650 churches, 200 elementary schools and 13 universities. Prior to the

named a replacement for Archbishop Arns and there is grave concern on the part of many churchmen that the São Paulo diocese will be given to a strongly pro-Rome conservative, similar to Cardinal Eugênio Sales, Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro.

Over all, the secular media informs the public of the Pope's trips and precarious health, but little Catholicism at home, in a positive sense, is deemed newsworthy. The *Conselho Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil* (CNBB, National Council of Brazilian Bishops) is perceived by many as *status quo* and far less combative than in the previous two decades. A notable exception is the Church's recent outcry against the deplorable conditions of Brazilian prisons. In February 1997, Cardinal Arns returned from retirement to petition the government for massive prison reform. More remarkably, Arn's statement was supported by John Paul II's own specific address (in Portuguese) to the Brazilian government and public. Negative press, however, has taken a toll on the image of Catholicism in Brazil — particularly in terms of the moral integrity of those in the priesthood, as various documentaries have exposed the sexual immorality of priests.⁸ Nevertheless, the number of those enrolled in religious orders is growing slightly, with about 15,310 priests and 7,000 seminarians in Brazil today.⁹ In the public media, therefore, excepting an occasional event like the prison reform declaration, "no news" is generally good news for traditional Roman Catholicism.

Charismatic Catholicism

Much of the tension between Catholicism and Evangelicalism derives from the massive exodus from the Roman Church to both traditional and especially pentecostal groups.¹⁰ Today, the Assemblies of God alone claim twelve million members in Brazil. Collectively, other groups too have grown by the millions, such as the Foursquare Church, *Brasil para Cristo*, *Deus É Amor*, dozens of independent and "community" churches, and particularly Edir Macedo's *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* [Universal Church of the Kingdom of God]. On a 1995 televised program of the *Igreja Universal*, one pastor kicked a statue of the patroness saint of Brazil, thereby evoking national outrage. Although there were apologies, the act exemplified the aggressive and often hostile posture of certain pentecostal groups against Catholicism. Perhaps to be expected, the backlash to

division, the diocese included 14 million adherents and 7,000 priests. Cf. Mara Luquet, "Baluarte Abalado," *Veja* (September 11, 1996) 80-83.

⁸See cover story, "Os Padres e o Pecado," *Isto É* (December 11, 1996) 140-144.

⁹Eduardo Junqueira, "A Vida do Lado de Lá," *Veja* (April 30, 1997) 54.

¹⁰See Wilson Gomes, "O Estranho Caso das Novas Seitas Populares no Brasil da Crise," in *Nem Anjos nem Demônios: Interpretações Sociológicas do Pentecostalismo*, ed. Avelino Grassi (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1994) 225-270, where Gomes argues that the Catholic Church really never had the people, thus it cannot lose what it never really possessed.

this kind of activity was the negative stance of CELAM IV (Santo Domingo, 1991) and John Paul II's retaliation against the so-called "evangelical sects."¹¹

While the broader number of practicing Roman Catholics continues to fall, the Bible-study and charismatic renewal movements within the Church (particularly the middle class) seem to be at least holding their own, if not gaining momentum.¹² Increasingly specific literature, choruses and even bumper stickers — identified in the past as evangelical — mark the lifestyles of Roman Catholic believers, just as their evangelical counterparts. Evangelical success appears to have, in part, prodded various innovations among charismatic Catholics. One such attempt is the television *novela* (miniseries) "Irmã Catarina," starring charismatic believer Myrian Rios (a known actress of the country).¹³ Another is the tele-evangelism program of Padre Alberto. Claiming to be a ministry entirely sustained by the offerings of viewers, Padre Alberto's "*Encontro com Cristo*" appears designed to parallel pentecostal tele-evangelists while directing people back into the Catholic Church. The language is characterized by terms like "Brothers" and "Hallelujah!," but it is pointed at warning against evangelical excesses (theology of prosperity, faith healers, *etc.*) and the error of leaving the Mother Church. Nevertheless, while differences remain, from a classical evangelical perspective, it is the charismatic renewal movement within the Roman Catholic Church that most engenders life and hope into what has been perceived by many (accurately or not) as dry religious hierarchy.

Many Evangelicals in Latin America view the Roman Catholic Church as the enemy of the Gospel, the Great Harlot, who has persecuted, sometimes severely, true believers down through time, and certainly in Ibero-American history.¹⁴ Indeed, on the one hand, Latin American Evangelicals have suffered discrimination, humiliation and even martyrdom by both the Roman Catholic church and the culture dominated by it. Theologically, from an evangelical position, Romanism has undermined the authority of the Bible with its own traditions, usurped the glory of Christ by its veneration of Mary, obscured the

¹¹See Ari Pedro Ouro, *Avanço Pentecostal e Reação Católica* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1996) and Florenço Galindo, *O Fenômeno das Seitas Fundamentalistas*, trans. from Spanish by José Maria de Almeida (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1995). Oro, 97-119, relates three specific counter-measures to pentecostal expansion: (1) return to devotion in the Church; (2) incentive to appropriate mass communication; and (3) support of the charismatic renewal movement in the Catholic Church.

¹²David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982) 186, placed the number of "evangelical Catholics" at 11.4 million, projecting 24.5 million by the year 2000. Our evidence in the mid-1990's does not support this growth projection.

¹³See Celso Fonseca, "Bênção Eletrônica," *Isto É* (February 21, 1996) 78-80.

¹⁴See Aníbal Pereira dos Reis, *A Mãe das Prostituições* (São Paulo: Caminho de Damasco, 1980). Ex-priest Aníbal Reis, with three doctorates from Catholic universities, reflects the anger and sense of betrayal that many converted from Catholicism feel toward the Roman Church.

Gospel of salvation by faith with a list of sacraments and good works, and replaced the priesthood of every believer with a bureaucratic hierarchy of cardinals, bishops and padres.

But this is only one side of the coin. Many Latin American Evangelicals are unaware that much of their own heritage and doctrinal formation derives very much from early Catholicism's creedal (and biblical) affirmations of the doctrine of the Trinity, the hypostatic union of Christ, the canon of Scripture, *etc.* Many would be surprised to learn that Wycliff, Huss, Luther, Calvin and other pillars of the Protestant movement actually came to faith within the Catholic Church. And few have paused to acknowledge that the worldview and religious understandings ingrained by Catholicism into the Ibero-American culture are exactly what have been the conceptual foundation for so many millions responding to the Gospel and converting to Evangelicalism. As a simple example, in virtually all of Latin American culture, thanks primarily to Catholicism, Sunday continues to be perceived as "a day of rest." It is typically guarded from commerce more than in any other culture of the world — far more than among the protestant cultures of North America and Europe. And if any group serves to remind Evangelicals of the good in their Roman Catholic heritage, it is the Catholic charismatic movement, with its return to Bible study and prayer.

Progressive Catholicism

Progressive Catholicism may be divided into two major theological emphases: (1) the thrust toward ecumenism and interreligious cooperation, and (2) the continuation of liberation theology.

1. Ecumenism. While the posture of traditional Roman Catholicism has cooled toward ecumenical dialogue with traditional Evangelicals and Pentecostals, nevertheless a larger agenda has been in place since Vatican II. Particularly with members of the *Conselho Latino-Americano de Igrejas* (CLAI/WCC), inter-ecclesial consultations, conferences and programs continue to proliferate. With the admission that those outside the Roman Church are not lost but simply errant brethren, not only has inter-Christian partnership grown but so has inter-faith cooperation. *Reconciliação*, for example, is an inter-religious journal with articles from other major religions. The journal is sponsored by the Brazilian Catholic Council for Inter-faith Dialogue. In São Paulo, various Roman Catholic sponsored events have brought together Buddhists, Spiritists, Jews and Christians — not the least of which was the birthday celebration and honorary doctorate personally given to the Dalai Lama by Archbishop Arns.

2. Liberation Theology. One rarely hears of liberationism *per se* any more, although the framework of liberation theology tends still to be the guiding paradigm in theological and related disciplines in major universities and

seminaries. The impact of capitalism, especially since Fernando Henrique Cardoso's *Plano Real* (begun in July 1994), has been extraordinary. Brazil's new economy has clearly helped almost everyone. The average wage for a maid or gardener, which was just \$US 10-15 just four years ago, is now \$US 30-40 a day. The tonnage of foodstuffs sold in supermarkets rose 86% between January of 1994 and September of 1996.¹⁵ After high inflation at the beginning of the *Plano Real*, prices are in large part stable with inflation measured at 0-3% a month. While politics continues to be marked by corruption and self-monumentation — this to the detriment of basic needs of education, health and adequate law enforcement — most Brazilians appear pleased with their increased buying power. In spite of poorer regions of the interior, and in spite of the slums that fill the seams and gullies of the cities, *Veja* magazine refers to the three years of the *Plano Real* as a financial “miracle” in Brazil.¹⁶ So what does liberation theology have to say in a blossoming economy?¹⁷ Most would say, “Not much.” For now, the capitalists appear to have been largely right: a free market has at least some “trickle-down effects” upon all of society.

Nonetheless, liberationism in its social consciousness and defense of the underprivileged has continued to have a tremendously broad influence on society.¹⁸ In the 1980s, the number of *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* (CEBs) in Brazil reached an estimated 80,000¹⁹ yet, in the most recent surveys of the mid-1990s, the number of CEBs remains at a remarkable 70,000.²⁰ Tens of thousands

¹⁵Antenor Nascimento, “Dinheiro no Bolso do Pobre,” *Veja* (December 18, 1996) 53; see pp. 48-55 (cover story title: “O Novo Milagre Brasileiro: Com o Aumento da Renda, o Pobre Virou Consumidor e o Fosso Social Diminuiu”).

¹⁶*Op. cit.*, noting that the *per capita* income has risen for all classes of Brazilians in the last ten years, the most dramatic changes occurring in the two and a half years since the *Plano Real* went into effect.

¹⁷See Franz J. Hinkelammert, *Crítica da Razão Utopica* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1984) and Hinkelammert, *As Armas Ideológicas da Morte* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1983); Jung Mo Sung, *Deus numa Economia sem Coração. Pobreza e Neoliberalismo: Um Desafio para Evangelização* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1992); Sung, *A Idolatria do Capital e a Morte dos Pobres* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1989); Sung, *Teologia e Economia: Repensando a Teologia da Libertação e da Utopias* (Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1994); and Hugo Assmann, *Crítica Lógica da Exclusão: Ensaios sobre Economia e Teologia* (São Paulo: Paulus, 1994).

¹⁸See João Batista Libânio and Alberto Antoniazze, *Vinte Anos de Teologia na América Latina e no Brasil* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1994); and Antônio Flávio Pierucci e Reinaldo Prandi, *A Realidade Social das Religiões no Brasil: Religião, Sociedade e Política* (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec/USP, 1996) 23-105.

¹⁹Scott Maenwaring, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-1985* (Palo Alto CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986) 126; and Alfred Stepan, *Democratizing Brazil: Problems of Transition and Consolidation* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989) 143.

²⁰Pedro Ribeiro de Oliveira, “Catholicismo de Massa no Brasil: Um Desafio para os CEBs,” in *CEBs: Vida e Esperança nas Massas [Texto-Base para o Encontro Intereclesial, São Luís MA — 15-19 de Julho de 1997]*, eds. Benedito Spinosa e Gilmar Corazza (São Paulo:

of CEBs continue today with their biblical studies and community projects. In Roman Catholic universities and seminaries, because most were raised on liberation thought, priests, professors and pastoral workers continue to stress the priority of the poor. If militant liberationism *per se* has died, still there are rearticulations of the movement through women's liberation, black liberation, the homeless movement (*Sem Terra*), ecology and humanitarianism — all needed and helpful contributions to Brazilian society. Whereas today the "homeless" movement perhaps has less direct ties with the hierarchy of the Church than in the 1980s, nevertheless the spirituality of the *Sem Terra* continues predominantly Roman Catholic and many pastoral agents continue side-by-side with the *Sem Terra* leadership in the struggle for agricultural reform and the possibility of simply having a place to live.

Leonardo Boff has been virtually the symbol of liberation theology in Brazil, one the most creative, prolific and all-encompassing theologians of Latin American. In his recent work *Brasa sob Cinzas: Histórias do anti-cotidiano* [Live Coal on Ashes: Uncommon Stories of Common Life],²¹ Boff relates his present thinking through cameos of life, a mixture of real occurrences and his own poetic invention.

The first six short stories have to do with women — always favorable, always closer to God than their male counterparts. Frequently God is referred to as God-Mother, Pacha Mama, the forgiving, affective side of God. Chapter two is entitled, "Se fosse santo teria pecado" [If I were a saint I would have sinned]. Boff relates an apparently real-life situation where a baby from the favela died (Boff had baptized him in the morning, the infant died just hours later). After the burial, the mother invited Boff to her abject dwelling. Alone, the mother spoke to him: "I have only known ugly, sick, skinny men ... You are well-fed, handsome, strong and attractive. Allow me this joy. Make love with me."²² She lifted her skirts and exposed herself. Boff hesitated and finally stammered that he was a *religioso*. He could not. Later meditating at home, he was filled with "immense shame," concluding that sexual intimacy with the woman would have affirmed her humanity and given dignity to her person. So the title of the chapter.

Secondly, Boff describes at length his "love-affair" (his terminology) with trees, how he seduces them and hugs them for hours. He has increasingly used the term "non-dualism" in describing a loss of personal consciousness in the nirvana of cosmic unity. Remembering that his first published work was a

Salesiana Dom Bosco, 1996) 25. Ribeiro's data is based on mid-1990s research by ISER and CERIS. The entire collection of essays is most helpful regarding CEB's

²¹Leonardo Boff, *Brasa sob Cinzas: Estórias do Anti-Cotidiano* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1996).

²²*Ibid.*, 21.

defense of Teilhard de Chardin's theology,²³ one does not find surprising Boff's references to the evolution of biogenesis-noogenesis-Christogenesis. He goes on to define the meaning of resurrection as becoming one with the entire universe, just as the resurrected Christ penetrates and is a part of all things.²⁴

Thirdly, he emphasizes universalism. Boff argues against a theology of incarnation based on God's atonement for sin, but rather insists that it was because God loved mankind so much that he wished to join the human race, with its joy and suffering, and to show us the way to fullness of life. He posits that Christ had already visited the Incas and other indigenous groups of Latin America well before Cabral, based on tenuous evidences of various crosses and records of pioneer discoveries from the 16th and 17th centuries. Yet his theme ties together well with CELAM IV's emphasis on the pre-evangelism of Latin America through indigenous and popular religions. His last chapter, translated "Grace, Destiny and the Train," is a parable of how all humanity is on God's train carrying them to himself. The good with the evil.²⁵ Gone is any rhetoric of a Latin-American theology. At the same time, the appreciation of Brazilian life and its vibrant humanity is very evident, sometimes in romanticized proportions.

It is true that Boff does not represent anyone but himself in his work — although themes of sexuality, ecology and globalization are evident in other writers as well. Among many progressive Catholics, Boff has lost credibility and is perceived as having gone too far. Many liberationists continue sincere, presumably faithful to their earlier convictions. Some of the most respected liberationists today include José Comblim, João Batista Libânio, Hugo Assmann, Gilberto Gorgulho — all sixty-five or older — and the some what younger Clodovis Boff (Leonardo's brother) and Jung Mo Sung. But one thing is transparent in Brazil. Liberation theology has lost its center. Its powerful ideologies of the sixties, seventies and eighties have not evolved in as a creative, dynamic force for 1990s. Perhaps liberationism's greatest legacy is its heightening of social consciousness, not only within the Roman Catholic Church nor even among Evangelicals, but in virtually all of Brazilian society.

In summary, the Brazilian Roman Catholic Church, while always diverse in its expression, has become organizationally more faithful to Rome than in the past thirty years. Catholicism continues, by far, the dominant confession of the Brazilian populace. Yet even with the Church having largely returned to a

²³L. Boff, *O Evangelho do Cristo Cósmico. A Realidade de um Mito, o Mito de uma Realidade* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1971).

²⁴See L. Boff, *Ecologia, Mundialização, Espiritualidade: A Emergência de um Novo Paradigma* [Ecology, World Consciousness, Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Paradigm] (São Paulo: Ática, 1996), where he develops the theme more formally.

²⁵Again, see L. Boff, *Nova Era: A Civilização Planetária* [New Age: A Planetary Civilization] (São Paulo: Ática, 1994). Neither of these works approaches the engaging prose of *Brasa sob Cinzas*, published by one the largest secular publishers in Brazil.

traditional posture, only about seven percent of its members attend mass once a week or more — that is, only one in every 14.3.²⁶ On the other hand, while the charismatic Catholics remain a small minority, their spiritual vitality is some of the most noticeable, both to the secular media and to onlooking Evangelicals. Progressive Catholicism can be seen in ecumenicism and in ongoing, but largely spent, liberation theology. While continuing its concern for the poor and discriminated minorities, liberationism's insistence upon a Latin American or a Brazilian theology has given way to a new appreciation for globalization in theology, in inter-faith cooperation, and in social, economic and ecological endeavors.

EVANGÉLICOS IN BRAZIL

The growth of Brazilian Protestantism is well-documented and its presence in society is increasingly visible.²⁷ In much of Brazil, one is more likely to see a Baptist, Presbyterian or Assembly of God church building than a Roman Catholic. On late night television in São Paulo, programs by R. R. Soares' *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus*, Edir Macedo's *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* and Estevam and Sônia Hernandez' *Renascer* have strong presence, often dominating the viewers' options. The same is true in Rio de Janeiro (with Silas Malafaia's program and Miguel Ângelo's *Missão Apostólica da Graça de Deus*) and in other cities as well. Equally impressive, Rev. Caio Fábio's VINDE evangelistic association recently initiated a cable television station with exclusively evangelical programming. As Nelson Fanini's Baptist ministry in the 1970s, VINDE since the mid-80s has been a pioneer in television ministries, satellite broadcasts and mainstream publications.²⁸ Today there are about 60

²⁶In the comparative survey *Novo Nascimento: Os Evangelicos em Casa, na Igreja e na Política* (Rio de Janeiro: ISER, 1996), 85% of the professing Evangelicals declared that they attended services at least once a week; 18% of professing Roman Catholics did the same. Again, 94% of the Evangelicals claim to frequent church at least once a month, versus 40% of those of Roman Catholic allegiance.

²⁷See A. Corten, *Os Pobres e o Espírito Santo: O Pentecostalismo no Brasil*, trans. from French by Mariana Nunel Ribeiro Echalar (Petropolis: Vozes, 1996); Cláudio de Oliveira Ribeiro, "Pentecostalismo: Um Fenômeno Religioso de Massas," in CEB's: *Vida e Esperança nas Massas* 54-67; Paul Freston, "Popular Protestants in Brazilian Politics: A Novel Turn in Sect-State Relations," *Social Compass* 41:4 (1994) 537-570; Grassi, ed., *Nem Anjos Nem Demônios*; ISER, *Novo Nascimento* (1996); and *Censo Institucional Evangélico (CIN 1992)* (Rio de Janeiro: ISER, 1992). Journals such as *Religião e Sociedade* have given increasing attention to historical and especially to pentecostal Evangelicals.

²⁸During the 1970s and 80s, the dubbed programs of Rex Humbard and Jimmy Swaggart were broadcast nationwide, proving considerably more popular than national religious programs. In the 1990's that is clearly not the case, with the only significant foreign presence in

evangelical publishers in Brazil, 45 of them members of the Brazilian Association of Christian Publishers (ABEC). Bible institutes, Christian training centers and theological seminaries have likewise proliferated in recent years to numbers that may well exceed 600. The 1996 March for Jesus in the city of São Paulo had over two million participants, double the participation in the entire United States.²⁹ In every category, the statistics are quite overwhelming, particularly in relation to figures from the 1960s and 70s. Yet before elaborating more fully, some definitions are in order.

Definitions

Protestante is not a term often used in Brazil and in Latin America. Rather the words *evangélico* and *evangelismo* (or more recently *evangelicalismo*) are more common. However, in Portuguese (like Spanish), the term *evangélico* carries various meanings not always easy to define. In a very broad sense within the Latin American context, the word denotes all descendants of the Reformation, virtually all Protestants from Lutherans to Pentecostals. My older Brazilian-German neighbor in Porto Alegre once said to me (JSH): "I am an *evangélico* like you. But I don't know if I believe in God." In the most generous sense, then, *evangélico* is synonymous with *Protestant*, or simply *non-Catholic*.

On the other hand, while tremendously broad, the more common use of the term *evangélico* would not include my agnostic neighbor, nor groups that openly deny the deity of Christ or the doctrine of the Trinity. Sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons are normally considered outside the parameters of Protestantism. Nevertheless, in this general sense, while rejecting classical "sects," the *confissão evangélica* does include some liberal Protestants who interpret the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity as merely functional and not ontological (or essential) realities. From yet another angle, the United Pentecostals and other "Jesus Only" groups (though very small in Brazil) are often considered *evangélicos* because of their pentecostal experience, in spite of their negation of the doctrine of the Trinity. That is, they appear to belong to the evangelical experience, but they do not belong to basic evangelical theology and are doctrinally outside the faith as historically defined. Thus, *evangélico* in this second sense denotes protestant, defined within a larger framework of historical Christian faith.

In a third, English-language sense, *evangélico* defines a sub-group within greater Protestantism, typically those who would ascribe to the World Evangelical Fellowship and the *Associação Evangélica do Brasil's* declaration of faith. With this definition, the *evangélico* is an *evangelical* (*Port.*) — a recent term in the

evangelical television being the Christian pop and rock video clips no TV Gospel aired late-night by *Renascença*.

²⁹"Milhões Caminham para Jesus em Todo o Mundo," *Rápidas* (June 1996) 7.

religious language of Brazil denoting conservative and pentecostal Protestants. This third definition has increasingly become the primary definition in the Brazilian public. With this definition, the *evangélico* is one who professes biblical authority, the Triune Godhead, the deity of Christ, the lostness of man, the substitutionary death of Christ, salvation by grace and by faith alone, the regeneration and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the physical return of Christ and divine judgment concerning the individual's eternal destiny. While these may be his doctrines (obscure or not), the average Evangelical in practice probably defines himself not so much in terms of belief but rather by the born-again experience. Although not consciously outside evangelical theology, the Brazilian Evangelical in this third sense would center on personal relationship to God as the heart of his Evangelicalism.

Our overview will not use the first definition of *evangélico*, *i.e.*, as little other than non-Catholic. For the second meaning of the word — *i.e.*, as Christian within the heritage of Reformation faith — we will use the term "protestant," focusing particularly on its progressive, ecumenical (WCC) constituency. And for the third definition of *evangélico*, *i.e.*, as a protestant sub-grouping that would fall within the doctrinal framework of the World Evangelical Fellowship, we will use the English "Evangelical." The following survey begins with the recent developments in progressive Protestantism and then explores the Evangelical movement in its "progressive," historical (or traditional) and charismatic-pentecostal elements.

Progressive Protestantism

Whereas primitive liberation theology had many of its roots in Protestantism,³⁰ in Brazil spokesman Richard Shaull had early left town and the famous Rubem Alves had already abandoned liberationism for poetry and pedagogy by the mid-1970s. With lesser voices largely in the shadow of more articulate Catholic theologians), Brazilian protestant liberationism continued more activist than innovative through the 1980s. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the waning of liberation theology, progressive Protestants — like their Roman Catholic counterparts — have been pressured to re-consider their direction. Liberation theology in most ecumenical circles, nonetheless, continues as a fundamental presupposition. The liberation paradigm, in general, continues to dominate teaching at major theological institutions — and one would not want to de-emphasize this fairly structural reality. Topics such as the liberation of the poor (*Sem Terra*), of ethnic minorities (Negroes and Indians) and of women (moderate feminism) are mainstay. Theologically the progressive Protestantism ranges from moderately classical to liberal theology.

³⁰Cf. Samuel Escobar, *La fe evangélica y las teologías de la liberación* (El Paso: Casa Bautista, 1987).

Ecumenism likewise remains a strong thrust of protestantism. On the broadest inter-religious level are events such as the Second Assembly of the People of God in Colombia (October 1996). The Assembly's concluding document declared that it served to "awaken the conscience of many men and women toward a new vision of the people of God, of inter-religious dialogue and the mission of all religions in the service of life."³¹ As the World Council of Churches considers a "radical" restructuring to increase cooperation with Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and other non-WCC affiliated churches, so its affiliate, the *Conselho Latino-Americano de Igrejas* (CLAI) is generating dialogue and cooperation on various levels throughout Latin-America (Brazilian Walter Altmann is current CLAI president). On a national level, CLAI-Brazil and the *Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs* (CONIC) recently joined forces to actively pursue dialogue with both the Brazilian Catholic Church (CNBB) and traditional sectors of Evangelicalism.³² Protestant centers of ecumenical dialogue include the *Instituto Ecumênico de Pós-Graduação* led by Milton Schwantes in Rudge Ramos (São Paulo) and the respected Lutheran (IECLB/Sinodal) Seminary in São Leopoldo RS, home to Altmann and others. The emphases of liberationism and ecumenism perpetuate what has been a major trend for several decades in progressive protestantism, although (as noted before) the mainline Catholic Church since CELAM IV (1991) has cooled toward both.

However, several very different interests are also emerging among progressives. In certain academic circles, strains of post-modernism via Foucault, Gadamer, Habermas and others are becoming familiar fare. The tone is more philosophical and less Christian in any classical sense. Sometimes it is elitist and even capitalistic. And the focus is especially in the area of hermeneutics, with re-readings of Scripture and traditional theology regarding the nature of God, the person of Christ, the role of the Church, sexuality, non-Christian religions, *etc.*³³

While Brazil's Catholicism typically leans toward Europe, a recent protestant journal, *Revista Teologia e Cultura*, seeks to popularize process theology — a largely North-American import. The Brasilia-based journal is produced by the Center of Process Theology and the Christian Church. It claims to unite scholars, "who seek their theoretical reference point in a new interdisciplinary methodology."³⁴ While some of the contributors do not articulate

³¹"O Macroecumenismo É uma Espiritualidade," *Rápidas* (November-December 1996)

³²"Organismos Ecumênicos Coordenarão Suas Agendas," *Rápidas* (July 1996) 3.

³³Cf. Stefano Martelli, *Religião na Sociedade Pós-Moderna* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1995); and the work by evangelical Sergio Gouvea Franco, *Hermeneutica e Psicanalise na Obra de Paul Ricoeur* (São Paulo: Loyola, 1995).

³⁴Editors, "A Nova Configuração da Teologia," *Revista Teologia e Cultura* 1:1 (June 1995) 5.

process thought, editor Noé Stanley Gonçalves and Baptist seminary professor Lloyd Philip Dunaway clearly defend a process theology of God.³⁵

On the opposite pole, there is growing interest among Brazilian scholars in the history and thinking of the Reformation period — this, notably at the respected Lutheran (IECLB/Sinodal) seminary in São Leopoldo RS. At the same time, significant tensions mark the school of theology at the Faculdade Metodista in Rudge Ramos (São Paulo) between the older liberal constituency and a newer conservative element calling for a return to classical Wesleyan faith. Both schools grant doctoral degrees and respected for their libraries, São Leopoldo with over 100,000 volumes. Vice-President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (AMIR), Abival Pires da Silveira, has done much to increase cooperation especially among the Reformed traditions in Brazil. Denominations like the Independent Presbyterians and especially the Presbyterian Church of Brazil already demonstrate reaffirmation of Reformation, in large part eschewing theological liberalism (see "Historical Evangelicals" below).

Progressive Evangelicalism

In recent years there has been some rapprochement between ecumenists — i.e., those related to the *Conselho Latino-Americano de Igrejas* (CLAI), the *Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs* CONIC and *Koinonia* (CEDI) — and historical (traditional) Evangelicals who relate to the Lausanne Covenant. While much of the inter-communication has occurred by way of publications, several conferences (e.g., "Neoliberalism and Mission," April, 1996 in São Paulo) have all the more opened up dialogue (and debate) between these groups.

One reason for this rapprochement began in 1986 when groups of theologically traditional Evangelicals began to classify themselves as "progressives" in their social posture and political allegiance. Although participating in a plurality of unions (*sindicatos*) and political parties, they formed two primary organizations: the pan-political *Movimento Evangélico Progressista* (MEP) and the *Movimento Evangélico Popular Socialista* (MEPS), the latter related to the leftist *Partido Popular Socialista* (the former Communist Party). Committed to the Lausanne Covenant and often affiliated with groups like the *Fraternidade Teológica Latino Americana* (FTLA), *Aliança Bíblica Universitária* (ABU/IFES) and World Vision, these progressive Evangelicals emerged from a diversity of evangelical traditions ranging from pentecostal to Baptist to evangelical Anglican. One such representative today is Benedita da Silva, a black pentecostal woman from the slums of Rio de Janeiro, who backed by the *Partido de Trabalhadores* (PT) was elected the first Negro woman senator in the history of Brazil. Another is Valdir Steuernagel, recent president of both

³⁵Cf. Lloyd Philip Dunaway, "A Relação entre Deus e o Mundo: As Alternativas Lógicas," in *op.cit.* 27-35.

the FTLA and CLADE, who like René Padilla and Samuel Escobar has written extensively on holistic Christian mission. A third representative is Robinson Cavalcanti, fundamentalist in background and today both professor of Political Science at the Federal University in Recife and an Episcopalian priest. Yet, in spite of his affirmation of the Lausanne Covenant's declaration of biblical authority, Cavalcante in practice relativizes biblical teaching by sociological and other readings of the text. This is especially true in his work *Libertação e Sexualidade* where he argues that the church should be liberated from the repressive sexual ethics of the Bible (a product of ancient culture) and should nurture instead a sensitive Latin American sexuality.³⁶ Over all, progressive evangelical scholarship and openness has won a hearing among ecumenists, particularly at a moment when Pentecostalism is a major focus of academic study.

A second motivation for increased dialogue between certain historical Evangelicals and ecumenical Protestants is because Evangelicals in general (historical and pentecostal) have increasingly engaged in a social agenda similar to that of the progressives. That is, good works and helping the needy has become a mainline evangelical means of sharing the Gospel. A recent survey in greater Rio de Janeiro by the respected *Instituto de Estudos da Religião* (ISER) found that 20% of professing *evangélicos* said that they participated at least once a week in some form of social assistance to the needy. A full 35% said they did so at least once a month.³⁷ Even groups resistant to any form of interdenominational dialogue, such as the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*, are socially active through distribution of food and clothes, through orphanages and rehabilitation centers, etc. Indeed, the social activism of pentecostal and historical Evangelicals appears to far surpass the *per capita* involvement of church members in the ecumenical churches affiliated with CLAI-Brazil and CONIC. If nothing else, this too has evoked a certain respect for Evangelicals.

Historical (Traditional) Evangelicalism

It was noted above that in progressive protestantism certain groups have shown renewed interest in the history and thought of their Reformation origins. This is all the more true in the theologically conservative centers of Lutheran traditions, such as at the *Centro de Ensino Teológico* (CETEOL) in São Bento do

³⁶Robinson Cavalcanti, *Libertação e Sexualidade: Instinto, Cultura e Revelação* (São Paulo: Temática, 1990), argues that the Reformation did not go far enough in dealing with sexual liberation, and that Evangelicals today are yet cursed with a sexuality "based in paganism, medievalism and middle-class morals" (25). The work forcefully attacks classical Christian sexual ethics; significantly, Cavalcanti's proposal for a new paradigm of evangelical sexuality cites no Scripture.

³⁷Rubem César Fernandes, "Os Evangélicos em Casa, na Igreja e na Política," in *Pentecostes e Nova Era: Fronteiras, Passagens* [Religião e Sociedade] 17:1-2 (August 1996) 4-15; repeated in *Novo Nascimento* (ISER, 1996).

Sul, SC and the *Centro Pastoral e Missão* (CPM) of Valdir Steuernagel and Martin Weingaertner in Curitiba, PR — both related to the *Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil* (IECLB/Sinodal). Significant theological work is also being done within Missouri Synod related *Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil* (IELB), in seminaries in São Leopoldo, RS, and São Paulo, and again through journals such as *Igreja Luterana* and *Vox Concordiana*.

The return to classical evangelical theology and values is no where more clear than in the Reformed movements of Brazil. Various conferences join not only Presbyterian and Christian and Dutch Reformed confessions, but also Calvinistic Baptists and various independents groups. Although pluralistic — with theological progressives on one end and a sizable charismatic element on the other — the *Igreja Presbiteriana Independente* (PC-USA aligned) is, according to some observers, moving back toward traditional Evangelicalism. The larger, more conservative *Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil* (PCA aligned), already having battled through divisions with liberationists in the 1970s, appears increasingly theologically conservative and missiologically aggressive. The most conservative wing of the movement is united in part by the Recife-based magazine *Os Puritanos* [The Puritans] and given scholarly weight through the new theological journal *Fides Reformata* of the *Seminário Presbiteriano Rev. José Manoel da Conceição* (IPB, São Paulo), one of the most rigorous theological schools in the country. Nonetheless, both the IPB and the IPI englobe considerable diversity nor has either experienced significant growth in recent years.

Anabaptist traditions also continue to grow in Brazil. Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren are slowly growing in the southern European-populated states. More so, various Baptist denominations are growing steadily throughout most of the country, whether charismatic (*Batista Nacional*, *Filadéfia* and *Independente*) or traditional (*Convenção Batista Brasileira*, *Batista Regular*, *Biblica*, *Livre-Arbitrio* and other *Independentes*). Indeed, in ISER's survey in greater Rio de Janeiro in the early 1990s, Baptists (primarily CBB) were growing at a fully even pace with the Assemblies of God.

The largest historical evangelical body (approaching one million members), the *Convenção Batista Brasileira* (CBB), is characterized by both positive and negative aspects. As a bright spot, with increasing momentum in missionary giving and training, the CBB's missions supports some 334 workers in foreign ministries. It likewise boasts 35 primary seminaries with some 7,200 students (1996), and at least another dozen seminaries that are not affiliated with ABIBET, the CBB's educational organ. This shows healthy growth on various sides. Yet while Baptist seminaries have proliferated in recent years, they have simultaneously declined in quality. Leaders are struggling to increase investment for developing national scholars and adequate libraries. On the negative side, serious mismanagement of funds was discovered at the large CBB publishing house JUERP. The denomination has since restructured in order to have more adequate supervision of funds, particularly in relation to publications. Perhaps of

note as well is that while Baptists are generally anti-Masonic in the pew, numerous CBB pastors, like their counterparts in the Methodist and Presbyterian (IPB) churches, are members of the Masonic Lodge.³⁸ Overall, however, growth continues relatively strong.

Likewise, churches of Wesleyan heritage — Free Methodist, Wesleyan, Salvation Army, Holiness, Missionary and notably Nazarene — have proliferated in Brazil. And dozens of other traditional evangelical denominations (Christian Missionary Alliance, Evangelical Free, Church of God, Church of Christ, Grace and Plymouth Brethren, *etc.*) and faith-mission related groups (*Aliança Bíblica, Igreja Cristã Evangélica, União Evangélica Sul Americana, etc.*) are present in Brazil, almost all expanding numerically and geographically. Marginally protestant, the Seventh-Day Adventists are one of the larger non-charismatic entities in Brazil, with over a half million members and economically fueled by ownership of several corporations, educational institutions and hospitals.

While virtually all of the traditional evangelical groups trace their origins to North Atlantic countries, the majority today are directed by Brazilian leadership. By in large, the traditional evangelical groups which experience the greatest growth reflect a creative Latin-American style, somewhat charismatic in music, dress, spontaneity, preaching and community gatherings. Yet these elements of style sometimes have little to do with doctrine. Conversely, denominations that have been inflexible in terms of traditional liturgies and style, or which have retained high foreign missionary presence), are almost always more sluggish in terms of growth. In summary, while various forms of Pentecostalism are growing faster than traditional works, nevertheless many historical denominations are seeing significant expansion as well.

Evangelical literature of all kinds has also mushroomed in the past few years. With an increasing number of translations and study Bibles, in 1996, the total number of Bibles produced in Brazil was 6,078,476, some 2,572,580 by the Brazilian Bible Society alone.³⁹ The International Bible Society has invested nearly one million dollars to produce a Portuguese NIV-like translation of the Bible, to be published in 1998. *Imprensa da Fé*, printing center for various Brazilian publishers, produces 80 tons of evangelical literature a month. The largest publisher in the country, *Editores Vida* (a Zondervan affiliate), in 1996 alone, sold 556,525 books and another 281,387 Bibles. And several other publishers have multi-million dollar annual sales as well. The evangelical magazine *Raio de Luz* has a circulation of 70,000, and *Ultimato* under Elben Cesar's leadership has taken its place as the *Christianity Today* of Brazil. The

³⁸ J. Scott Horrell, *Maçonaria e Fé Cristã* (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 1995) 33-43.

³⁹ Source: Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil, May 12, 1997: Ave Maria produced 900,000, Paulus 675,000 and Loyola 594,752, Roman Catholic publishers; nearly all the rest were produced by evangelical publishers; Editora Vida produced 379,608, sales were less as seen above.

interdenominational theological journal *Vox Scripturae*, stressing traditional biblical and theological scholarship, ascended from its beginnings in 1991 to having highest circulation of protestant journals in Latin America in 1995. In a similar vein, Brazil-based authors have been producing significant studies in such areas as Trinitarian spirituality (Ricardo Barbosa), miracles (Alan Pieratt), spiritual warfare (Ricardo Gondim), evangelical aberrations (Paulo Romeiro), the cults (Jefferson Magno), creative ecclesiology and missions (various).

Para-church organizations have likewise contributed to mutual appreciation between divergent Evangelicals. Most notable is the formation of the *Associação Evangélica Brasileira* (AEvB) in 1991, presided over since its beginnings by Caio Fábio D'Araújo Filho. Together with the AEvB, Rev. Caio Fábio's own evangelistic organization VINDE has had extraordinary impact on much of the evangelicalism of the country — especially among the younger generation of leadership and among the snow-balling number of independent and community churches. With large national conferences, weekly evangelistic television programs, concerted social projects and over 50 book-publications, the charismatic Presbyterian Caio Fábio has embodied for many the Brazilian evangelical ideal. Other para-church groups include *Mocidade para Cristo* (Youth for Christ), *Atletas de Cristo* (Brazilian Athletes of Christ, led by Alex Dias Ribeiro), *SEPAL* (OC International) *Palavra da Vida* (Word of Life camps and seminaries), *Aliança Bíblica Universitária* (ABUB/InterVarsity) and *Crusada Estudantil e Profissional* (Campus Crusade). Although tensions continue to exist, especially between traditionals and Pentecostals,⁴⁰ interdenominational conferences and publications have helped redefine the Church as the Body of Christ, the universal Church, to which all true believers belong.

Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism

It has been rather ironic that it took international publications — David Martin's *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* and David Stoll's *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?*⁴¹ — to wake up Brazilian academics to the remarkable phenomenon occurring right before them. Reflective of this evangelical growth, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul between 1990 and 1992, whereas there were only three new religious centers registered by the Catholic Church and another 60 by spiritist and Afro-Brazilian groups, there were 79 new churches registered by historical Protestants and a full 125 more

⁴⁰See Leonildo Silveira Campos, "Protestantismo Histórico e Pentecostalismo no Brasil: Aproximações e Conflito," in *Na Força do Espírito* 77-120.

⁴¹David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1990); cf. also "John Marcom, Jr., 'The Fire Down South,'" *Forbes* (October 15, 1990) 56ff.

interdenominational theological journal *Vox Scripturae*, stressing traditional biblical and theological scholarship, ascended from its beginnings in 1991 to having highest circulation of protestant journals in Latin America in 1995. In a similar vein, Brazil-based authors have been producing significant studies in such areas as Trinitarian spirituality (Ricardo Barbosa), miracles (Alan Pieratt), spiritual warfare (Ricardo Gondim), evangelical aberrations (Paulo Romeiro), the cults (Jefferson Magno), creative ecclesiology and missions (various).

Para-church organizations have likewise contributed to mutual appreciation between divergent Evangelicals. Most notable is the formation of the *Associação Evangélica Brasileira* (AEvB) in 1991, presided over since its beginnings by Caio Fábio D'Araújo Filho. Together with the AEvB, Rev. Caio Fábio's own evangelistic organization VINDE has had extraordinary impact on much of the evangelicalism of the country — especially among the younger generation of leadership and among the snow-balling number of independent and community churches. With large national conferences, weekly evangelistic television programs, concerted social projects and over 50 book-publications, the charismatic Presbyterian Caio Fábio has embodied for many the Brazilian evangelical ideal. Other para-church groups include *Mocidade para Cristo* (Youth for Christ), *Atletas de Cristo* (Brazilian Athletes of Christ, led by Alex Dias Ribeiro), *SEPAL* (OC International) *Palavra da Vida* (Word of Life camps and seminaries), *Aliança Bíblica Universitária* (ABUB/InterVarsity) and *Crusada Estudantil e Profissional* (Campus Crusade). Although tensions continue to exist, especially between traditionals and Pentecostals,⁴⁰ interdenominational conferences and publications have helped redefine the Church as the Body of Christ, the universal Church, to which all true believers belong.

Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism

It has been rather ironic that it took international publications — David Martin's *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* and David Stoll's *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?*⁴¹ — to wake up Brazilian academics to the remarkable phenomenon occurring right before them. Reflective of this evangelical growth, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul between 1990 and 1992, whereas there were only three new religious centers registered by the Catholic Church and another 60 by spiritist and Afro-Brazilian groups, there were 79 new churches registered by historical Protestants and a full 125 more

⁴⁰See Leonildo Silveira Campos, "Protestantismo Histórico e Pentecostalismo no Brasil: Aproximações e Conflito," in *Na Força do Espírito* 77-120.

⁴¹David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* (Berkley: Univ. of California, 1990); cf. also "John Marcom, Jr., 'The Fire Down South,'" *Forbes* (October 15, 1990) 56ff.

registered by pentecostal groups.⁴² Elsewhere, in the poorer regions of greater Rio de Janeiro, the ratio of evangelical churches to Roman Catholic is already seven to one.⁴³ As someone put it, "The theology of liberation opted for the poor, and the poor opted for Pentecostalism." The implications of a massive shift toward Evangelicalism and especially Pentecostalism are only beginning to be explored.

Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement generally share the same experiences, but not necessarily the same history or doctrine.⁴⁴ It is helpful to review the development and differences of the two.

Pentecostalism. The pentecostal movement began in Brazil in 1911 when two Swedish-american workers, Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg, arrived and soon joined a Baptist work in Belém. With a church division over their pentecostal experience, the larger group left to form what became the first pentecostal church in Brazil (later Assemblies of God). Pentecostalism, in large part, has been defined by the experience of "baptism in the Holy Spirit," defined as a second, distinct work from regeneration and evidenced by speaking in tongues. But Pentecostalism is also distinguished by its doctrinal statements and separatist lifestyle. Theologically, owing to North American influence, the Assemblies of God have not only stressed "the second blessing" but have typically shared an Arminian soteriology and a premillennial, even dispensational eschatology.⁴⁵ In other words, although emphasizing personal experience with God, traditional Pentecostalism has taught and maintained a distinct theological framework through denominational organization. In Brazil alone, the Theological Education School of the Assembly of God (EETAD) has 16,813 extension students, supervised by 380 centers (2/1997); their new bachelor's level program (FAETAD) already counts nearly 500. Because of theological moorings, the Assemblies of God have been more resistant to innovations such as the theology of prosperity, territorial spiritual warfare, holy laughter and other "prophetically" revealed new doctrines that wave across Brazilian Evangelicalism. Indeed, such pentecostal leaders as Samuel Câmara and Ricardo Gondim have been able defenders of classical Christian faith.

Whereas the Assemblies of God are by far the largest evangelical group in Brazil with, as we have seen, its 12 million members (1997), other pentecostal

⁴²Oro, *Avanço Pentecostal e Reação Católica* 16.

⁴³Freston, "Entre o Pentecostalismo e o Declínio do Denominacionalismo" 258.

⁴⁴Studies on the two movements, often difficult to separate in sociological studies, are found in Gutiérrez and Silveira Campos, eds., *Na Força do Espírito*; Corten, *Os Pobres e o Espírito Santo*; and Maria das Dores Campos Machado, *Carismáticos e Pentecostais: Adesão Religiosa na Esfera Familiar* (Campinas: Autores Associados; São Paulo: ANPOCS, 1996).

⁴⁵See Corten, *Os Pobres e o Espírito Santo* 161-206, who discusses the anti-political posture of many of the poor and the messianic, millenarian expectations of Pentecostalism.

denominations have also found fertile soil. For example, Brazil boasts the largest Foursquare Church membership in the world, in that sense similar to the Assemblies of God. Yet it is interesting to note that the great majority of North Atlantic initiated denominations are non-pentecostal. The other large pentecostal groups have risen through the vision of individual national leaders. Although firm statistics are wanting, Edir Macedo's *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* appears presently to have some 2.5 to 3.0 million members,⁴⁶ the *Congregação Cristã* about 1.8 million, *Deus É Amor* [God Is Love] 1.6 million, and *Brasil para Cristo* about one million.⁴⁷ More recently, Edir Macedo's brother-in-law and competition, R. R. Soares and his *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* have seen rapid expansion through extensive television programming in the São Paulo area.

Brazil today has thousands of independent pentecostal churches. Because nearly every indigenous pentecostal group is built on the vision of a single forceful leader, one might say that as goes the leader so goes the movement. Without training, many look down on any form of biblical or theological study as "the work of the flesh." In the *Congregação Cristã*, believers are reminded that they are not to study the Bible, for "We have the Holy Spirit." In both *Deus É Amor* and the *Igreja Universal*, members are forbidden to study theology outside the denomination nor is biblical training available within the denomination. Given the almost entirely mystical orientation concerning the truth of God (prophecies, visions, revelations), such churches are extremely vulnerable to novel teachings and doctrinal deviation. When leaders do interpret Scripture, it is often with absolute certainty that theirs is the only true understanding. As Rio's Miguel Ângelo declared, "I have the complete revelation, possessed by neither Calvin nor Luther."⁴⁸ Conversely, many of the most simple doctrines of evangelical faith are unknown in some pentecostal churches. And even if known, the fundamentals of the faith are too often set aside for the most recent revelations. Even the evangelical creed that "salvation is by grace alone" is not

⁴⁶According to the (not always neutral) Brazilian Press, the membership of Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, once estimated as high as 4 million, has recently dropped 30% in recent analyses. Giving has dropped even more drastically, from \$US one billion in 1990 to \$US 420,000 in 1996. Gilberto Nascimento, "O Calvário do Bispo" [Cover story], *Isto É* (January 15, 1997) 76.

⁴⁷Estimates are difficult in groups related to single "apostolic" leadership, where fluidity of members between pentecostal churches is a continual factor. These are rough estimations based on Johnstone, *Operation World* (1993 ed.) 128 and other factors.

⁴⁸Jorge Antonio Barros, Interview, "Miguel Ângelo: O Predestinado Eletrônico," *VINDE* (November 1996) 8. Miguel Ângelo preaches charismatic experience together with radical predestination, complete freedom from the law together with the principle of tithing, that water baptism was only for early Jewish converts (an ultradispensational position) together with a theology of prosperity, etc. He is perhaps more orthodox than some, but exemplifies the eclectic mixtures of doctrines preached with complete certainty by many (pp. 6-10).

infrequently replaced by a salvation centered on the believer's faithfulness to his leader ("God's anointed"), on his sacrificial giving and on his zealous commitment to the church. Indeed, to the outside observer, the primary thrust of Macedo's *Igreja Universal, Brasil para Cristo* and other such churches is sacrificial giving, to the extreme, with tenuous *guarantees* of health, wealth and happiness.⁴⁹ As time goes on, disillusioned by exaggerated leaders and by unfulfilled promises (health, wealth and happiness), not a few have left such works for the stability of the Assemblies of God or traditional evangelical churches. Of course, many others have simply given up as *desviados* ("backsliders").

Yet few would deny that God has worked, and often worked powerfully, through both denominational and independent pentecostal churches. Pentecostalism is the bulwark of Brazilian Evangelicalism, both numerically — counting at least 70% of all Evangelicals — and in terms of current expansion. Hundreds of thousands appear, by their own confession, to have been regenerated out of lives of alcoholism, drugs, prostitution and *malandragem* (low moral character).

Charismatic Movement. The charismatic movement, popularized internationally by South African David Du Plessis' address to the World Council of Churches (1954), began in Brazil largely through the personal renovation of Baptist leader Eneas Tognini, once founder of the CBB's *Faculdade Teológica Batista de São Paulo*. Beginning in 1958, Tognini has had nearly 40 years of itinerant revival ministry in denominations throughout Brazil, founding in 1967 his own (charismatic!) National Baptist Convention, today with 200,000 members.

Different from Pentecostalism, however, the charismatic movement easily crosses denominational lines (as seen above in Roman Catholicism), united by similar experience more than doctrine. Popularized by para-church organizations like the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship (ADHONEP), within protestant circles the movement is most visible in denominations such as the Methodist, Independent Presbyterian and Holiness groups. It is equally visible in hundreds of independent "community" churches that span theologically from progressive protestant to traditional and again to neo-pentecostal. Tired of what is perceived as oppressive leadership and unnecessary bureaucracy, many younger leaders find independent charismatic works liberating. Away from what is perceived as

⁴⁹See Reginaldo Prandi, "Religião Paga, Conversão e Serviço," *Novos Estudos* 45 (July 1996) 65-77; also in Pierucci and Prandi, *A Realidade Social das Religiões no Brasil* 257-274. Sociologist Prandi argues that whereas Brazilian Catholicism was always public and financially non-obligatory, the new Brazilian faiths demand compulsory contributions, where "each person must pay for his religion." He suggests that this breeds a new dynamic between the church and follower in which religion is seen as a consumer service. (65)

unnecessary dogmatism or traditional church forms, they are challenged to initiate independent local congregations, often in loose affiliation with others.

In this sense, the renewal movement has served as the *avant-garde* of creative evangelism and ecclesiology in Brazil. In the 1960 and 70s, Robert McAllister's *Igreja de Nova Vida* in Rio de Janeiro spawned a plurality of movements (including the IURD), as did "Tio Cassio's" São Paulo fellowship. One of the most visible charismatic works today is (Apostle) Estevam and (Bishop) Sônia Hernandez' *Renascer* [Rebirth] and *TV Gospel* productions designed through contemporary Christian music and easy-listening messages to reach especially the youth culture of Brazil. Indeed, marketing techniques are employed by various groups to form media-friendly "imaging" and upbeat promotion of concerts, CDs and T-shirt sales. Along similar lines, other charismatic groups from Porto Alegre to Manaus have sought to "contextualize" the Gospel in ways quite different from the past. One such attempt was seen in the five different evangelical schools of samba that marched in this year's famous (or infamous) *carnaval* parades.⁵⁰ Classical Pentecostals, on the other hand, consider scandalous and naive some of these forms of inculturation. Charismatic services generally are comfortable and non-offensive for middle-class Brazilians, different from the aggressive preaching and oftentimes legalism of their pentecostal brethren — the latter associated most often with the lower classes.

But without firm doctrinal parameters, the charismatic movement runs the risk of being impelled by little more than the zeal of current leaders and the latest experiential innovations. What sometimes begins as a small wave in North America can arrive in Brazil with tidal wave force. Kenneth Hagin's theology of prosperity, Benny Hinn's slaying in the Spirit, and Toronto's Airport Vineyard's holy laughter have been central venue (perhaps excluding the latter). Charismatic television minister Valnice Milhomens, a former Brazilian Baptist missionary, teaches that believers should worship on Saturday, the true Sabbath. OC International's Neusa Itioka circulates the country with seminars on spiritual mapping, territorial spiritual warfare and unbroken generational curses upon believers. Others promote holy screaming to excise evil or all-night vigils on hilltops where the Shekinah glory of God causes the trees to glow. And prophetic revelations abound. The fact that most prophecies are not fulfilled or that others approach the heretical, seems hardly to matter.⁵¹

That charismatic leaders are sincere and zealous, few would doubt. What is at stake is not the nature of their spiritual lives nor if God does miracles today, but rather what is the foundation of Christian truth — Scripture or mystical experience? And how is spiritual experience to be evaluated? Perhaps the great

⁵⁰See Franco Iacomini, "Os Sambistas de Cristo," *Veja* (February 5, 1997) 57.

⁵¹See the exposé of Paulo Romeiro, *Evangélicos em Crise: Decadência Doutrinária na Igreja Brasileira* (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 1995). Galindo, *O Fenômeno das Seitas Fundamentalistas* 41-43, observes gnostic and Manichean themes in Brazilian Pentecostalism.

irony is that while many Catholics are turning back to the Bible, many Evangelicals are turning to medieval mysticism. Or put another way, much of the charismatic movement has jumped from a pre-modern to a post-modern worldview without ever becoming modern. Ethics and an incarnational theology are often abandoned for cosmic dualism and Positive Confession.

President of the AEvB, Caio Fábio, sets forth an instructive "Profile of the Brazilian Church," with the more radical charismatic and pentecostal groups in mind:

1. Those who know do not grow, and those who grow do not know.
2. Those who have zeal do not think, and those who think have no zeal.
3. Those who minister divine healing are usually sick in other areas, and those who are sound in other areas do not administer divine healing.
4. Those who have a democratic church form do not do anything, and those who do something ... are inflexible, dogmatic and isolated demagogues.
5. Those who practice stewardship of money do not ask for money, and those who ask for money do not administrate it well.
6. The Bible is much sold and seldom used; it sells well and is hardly read.
7. Those who grow by miracles of power often are sick in character, in psychology, in mind, in emotions, in dating, in friendships, in family, at work.
8. The church is spontaneous in expansion but simultaneously disorganized.
9. The church effectively reaches those who want to see power, but it is ineffective in reaching those who want to see the truth.
10. Some use unethical manipulation that leave families morally and economically without resources, but they construct huge temples of success.⁵²

Summarily, then, with Brazil and much of Latin America experiencing one of the most remarkable evangelical awakenings in history, it is true that much of the protestant church indeed is healthy and strong. The mushrooming of churches and ministries on every side is most extraordinary. One's response as Evangelicals is above all else gratitude to God. However, growth of numbers, resources and influence in society does not necessarily reflect that all is well. Progressive Protestantism, in seeking ecumenical and inter-faith unity, risks giving away biblical Christian faith. The Gospel of Christ cannot be reinvented in the name of human fraternity. Conversely, rigid denominationalism remains an abiding problem, whether among traditional (e.g., Baptists, Presbyterians) or pentecostal churches (e.g., Igreja Universal). While ecumenists can too easily deny the Christ of the Body, denominationalists can just as easily deny the Body

⁵²Caio Fábio D'Araújo Filho, "Perfil da Igreja Brasileira", presentation at the *Consulta sobre o Crescimento dos Evangélicos no Brasil*, June 1, 1993, São Paulo. Text is our paraphrase.

of Christ. Among especially pentecostal and charismatic Evangelicals, while there exists an abundance of evangelistic zeal, simultaneously there lacks ethical consistency and mature relationship in the family and in the workplace. Perhaps most fundamental of all, the propensity toward mysticism and direct revelation among many groups has undermined careful regard for the Word of God. And if the Bible be abandoned, then true Christian faith is lost.

CONCLUSION: WHERE FROM HERE?

The present study, after a brief panorama of the religious ambient of the nation, has attempted to survey and to clarify the evolving elements of Brazilian Christendom, especially in their theological development since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The initial section dealt with Roman Catholicism, first in its conservative and charismatic aspects and, then, among its progressive elements, marked by ecumenism and the ongoing theology of liberation. The National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) has in large part moved back toward a moderately conservative, pro-Rome, non-liberationist posture. While some ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue continues, CELAM IV's (1991) fairly anti-evangelical direction continues today — particularly in regards to more aggressive pentecostal churches. More attention has been given by the CNBB to the charismatic sector of Brazilian Catholicism, without particularly strong endorsement. While no longer dominant among Catholic leadership, "Progressive Catholicism" continues to have broad popular support in universities and in tens of thousands of CEBs. Some continue to push for inter-religious dialogue. And the non-militant tenets of the theology of liberation continue as a controlling paradigm in most universities. Nevertheless, apart from ethnic and feminist liberationism, little creative thought has driven Brazilian liberation theology forward. The novel directions Leonardo Boff and the passivity of senior liberationists indicate that the movement has for the most part lost its genius.

As one looks toward the future of Catholicism in Brazil, it seems likely that European thought will continue to define the future of the mainline Church. Much will depend of the kind of successor appointed to Pope John Paul II. Progressives and some moderate conservatives will continue to appreciate Rahner's transcendent anthropology/Christology and Teilhard's evolutionary deification of man and creation. As Jesus is the prototypical incarnation of the Logos, some may develop Leonardo Boff's suggestion that Mary is the hypostatic incarnation of the Holy Spirit — thus the Logos and the Spirit are to be seen as the masculine and feminine expressions of God.

Already fairly platitudinal in modern Catholic theology is the idea that God is at the center of every man, and that this God is incarnate today most visibly in the poor. Unlike the old nationalistic theology of liberation, however,

contextualization has given away to globalization. No doubt the tension between contextualization and globalization will continue, but for the while, globalization appears solidly in place for the future. At the same time, remembering Gutiérrez' germinal *We Drink from our Own Wells*,⁵³ the emphasis is decidedly more spiritual, with renewal of devotion and new spiritualities. It could be that with new appreciation for spirituality within Brazilian Catholicism — after two decades of being ignored — the charismatic Catholic movement might again flourish.

Whatever the future may hold, Brazilian Catholicism will continue its function as a large umbrella under which a plurality of views and experiences continue. With a less conservative prelate in the future, that pluralism will likely increase considerably.

The second major section dealt with Brazilian Protestantism, beginning with the progressives Protestants, then the historical (or traditional) Evangelicals and, finally, the charismatic and pentecostal movements.

We have seen that progressive Protestantism is marked particularly by ecumenical concerns and a continued, but tired, liberationism. While Brazilian Protestants were very influential in the formation of the theology of liberation in the 1960s, most have since stood in the shadows of Catholic thinkers. Enthusiasm for ecumenical and inter-faith cooperation sometimes has few constraints, as "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man" become final criterion of truth. All liberal ecumenism is caught in the tension between faithfulness to a basic historic Christian confession and a desire to see all mankind united as in some sense the people of God. Much of that tension relates directly to one's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Bible. With the vast pluralism among modern protestant scholars, it appears unlikely that any consensus will be reached concerning the content of Christian truth. Nor does post-modern or process theology help. While its social agenda may be sometimes commendable, when progressive protestant theology cuts loose from biblical teaching, the concept of truth becomes hopelessly adrift. It is a sign of hope, within mainline Protestantism, that some are returning to the historical foundations of Christian faith.

Evangelicalism, as defined in our overview, includes a diversity of denominational and socio-political positions united within the doctrinal framework of the World Evangelical Fellowship. Most historical Evangelicalism in Brazil relates to North Atlantic churches and movements. On the other hand, apart from the Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Church, most pentecostal and charismatic groups do not trace their origins to foreign missionary presence but rather to energetic national leadership. Both historic and pentecostal-charismatic groups are experiencing robust growth, however the greater impetus

⁵³Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll NY: Orbis and Melbourne: Dove, 1984).

lies with the Pentecostals and charismatics. Within the Assemblies of God, an increasing emphasis is found on biblical training. But, sadly, among independent pentecostal and charismatic groups, the place of the Word of God is often minimal.

Nevertheless, as traditional Evangelicalism responds to the challenges concerning faith and zeal from Pentecostalism, and as Pentecostalism responds to the challenges of biblical honesty and doctrinal fidelity from traditional Evangelicals, the two sides might find that they need one another much more than previously imagined. To this unity comes the insistent reminder by progressive Protestants of the Church's calling to be the Body of Christ in the world, to do good works and to seek justice in the land.