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“FROM VICTIM TO VICTOR”

THE RISE OF PENTECOSTALISM IN BRAZIL - AN
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Chapter 1 – Introduction:

At the beginning of the twentieth century “the western world” was the Christian arena. This was the area with the highest number of church attendants and the base for Christian mission. Cities such as London, Vienna and Rome could be considered capitals of Christianity. However, a shift in Christian influence was obvious as the century neared its end. Today we find the highest number of Christians and church attendants in the “Majority World” (substituting the earlier phrase the “Third World”).¹ Examples of the main centres of Christianity could now include Seoul, Lagos and Rio de Janeiro. What are the reasons behind this development?

In the same period, during the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement has grown from a faint beginning in a “stable” in a poor area of Los Angeles to a great force taking root in different cultures around the world.² Several scholars now consider Pentecostalism to be the third force in Christianity³ - Catholicism together with Orthodoxy being the first force and Protestantism the second force.⁴ In the year 2000, Pentecostalism⁵ along with the Charismatic movement included approximately 524 million people!⁶

This increase in numbers is remarkable and has taken place mainly within the “Majority World” countries, being an important reason for the demographic shift in Christianity from the “North” (North America and Europe) to the “South” (Latin America, Africa and Asia).⁷ Latin-America, in particular, is one of the leading examples when it comes to Pentecostal church growth in the 20th century. Moreover, since the 1960s, the Pentecostal movement in Latin America has reached an explosive growth rate. Christianity Today cites *The Atlas of World Christianity* which estimates that the number of Pentecostal Christians across South America has grown 500 percent between 1960 and 1980. Since then the growth rate has slowed slightly; nevertheless the Atlas states that South America today has “the strongest

¹ Escobar 2002: 84 (Escobar refers to Walter Hollenweger and Andrew Walls. See for example Walls 1999: 384)

² Anderson 2004: 14

³ Henry Van Dusen was the first to use this term when he surprised the religious world already in 1955 by proclaiming a new “Third Force in Christianity” in a major article in *Life Magazine* - Synan 1997: 280.

⁴ For example Professor Tormod Engelsviken at MF Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo used this distinction in a lecture 28 January 2009.

⁵ See chapter 1.6 – Pentecostalism

⁶ According to Barrett, Kurian and Johnson 2001, Volume 1: 4 This number has of course been disputed, estimates varying from 250 million – 700 million. See for example Anderson 2004 p. 9-15. The point here is not to argue for the exact number, but to illustrate the size and growth of Pentecostalism.

⁷ Chesnut 2003: 8 / Shaull & Cesar 2000: 9 / Escobar 2002: 84 / <http://pewforum.org/world-affairs/countries/?CountryID=29>, 4 May 2009

Christian community in the world."⁸

As the figures in the Western world (especially in Europe) show a decline for Christianity, the church growth in Latin-America continues. The current population of Latin America is 546 million.⁹ In 1900, Evangelicals¹⁰ numbered about 700 000, or 1% of the population. By 2000 they had multiplied to 55 million or more than 10% of the population of Latin-America, with an annual growth rate of 4%.¹¹ The latest figure from 2010 claims 91 million Evangelicals!¹² Different statistics say that Pentecostals in Latin America constitute between 75-90 % of the Evangelicals.¹³ But you find "Pentecostals" not only among the Protestants, also within Catholicism there is an increasing number of Charismatics. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) has developed into the largest Catholic lay movement in Latin America, by far outnumbering the Catholic Base Christian Communities (CEBs) that started from liberation theology as a "preferential option for the poor".¹⁴ Thus, when counting both Pentecostals and Charismatics¹⁵ in Latin America, the number reaches 110 million.¹⁶

Brazil is with its 190.7 million¹⁷ inhabitants the most populated country in Latin America and a leading example when it comes to Pentecostal growth. Just to illustrate, let me quote from Christianity Today: "*There are 40 churches opening in Rio every week,*" says Roberto Inacio, director of an Assemblies of God Bible institute in Rio.¹⁸ Even if this is an exaggeration, the real number is five new churches per week, it illustrates the self confidence and "aggressive" attitude of Brazilian Pentecostalism.¹⁹

In the year 2001, the group of Pentecostals and Charismatics number 39.5 million people in Brazil making up 23.2% of the population, according to Johnston and Mandryk in their

⁸ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/december4/10.70.html>, 10 February 2009

⁹ Mandryk 2010: 47

¹⁰ In Latin America the term Evangelicals or *evangelicós* equals the term Protestants.

¹¹ Johnstone and Mandryk 2000: 34

¹² Mandryk 2010: 48

¹³ Escobar 2002: 89 / Chesnut 1997: 3

¹⁴ Chesnut 2003: 100. A study in the mid 1990s revealed that in Brazil, the CCR had twice as many members as the CEBs (Chesnut 2003: 5). For an overview on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal see R. Andrew Chesnuts *Competitive Spirits* (2003) chapter 4 "A preferential Option for the Spirit" pp.64-101.

¹⁵ Charismatic Catholics included

¹⁶ Mandryk 2010: 48

¹⁷ According to *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) 2010 census:

<http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2010/default.shtm>, 20 August 2011

¹⁸ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/december4/10.70.html>, 10 February 2009

¹⁹ There are five new evangelical churches (including Neo-Pentecostal ones) opening every week in Greater Rio de Janeiro according to a research conducted by the Institute for the Study of Religion (ISER) – Shaull & Cesar 2000: 4 / Chesnut 1997: 3

Operation World.²⁰ In the 2010 edition of Operation World this number has been revised to 60.9 million or 31.2% of the entire population!²¹ (This high number though is based upon the Pentecostals' own claims, and a source of error is a considerable amount of doubly affiliated Pentecostals. Mandryk estimates 5.6 million double counted Pentecostals.²²) The general tendency, however, is clear: the number of Pentecostals is very high and still growing!

Before the 1990s, this enormous worldwide growth of Pentecostalism was more or less an unknown and neglected phenomenon in academic circles (Willems, Lalive and Wagner being some important exceptions²³). In the 1990s some influential studies put this theme on the front agenda.²⁴ Here I will just briefly mention some of the most influential ones:

- Harvey Cox's *Fire From Heaven – The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty First Century*²⁵ opened in 1995 to the public, what was barely known even in the academic world.
- David Martin with his 1993 book *Tongues of Fire – The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*²⁶ made a groundbreaking study opening eyes both of general readers

²⁰ It should be noted again that this also includes a great bloc of Charismatics within the Catholic Church. Pentecostals alone numbered 13.5 million people in Brazil in 2001. This figure includes the classical Pentecostals and new independent churches with Pentecostal expressions (Neo-Pentecostals), but not Charismatics within the older Protestant denominations. The Pentecostal bloc was growing at a rate of 5.3%. As a comparison the annual growth of the population was 1.32%. (Johnstone & Mandryk 2001: 119-120)

The 2010 edition of Operation World (Mandryk 2010: 163) states that the number for Pentecostals alone is 40.7 million or 20.9% of the population. If I subtract their estimate of 5.7 million double counted Pentecostals, the number is still very high (35 million) and unparalleled by most other earlier statistics like the Brazilian governmental IBGE. However the *PEW Forum on Religion and Public Life* made a survey on Pentecostalism in Brazil in 2006 that supports a number in this upper limit. The survey was conducted in urban spheres and the results showed that 14.3% (one in seven) of the respondents claimed membership in a Pentecostal denomination. An additional 30% identified as Charismatic. The PEW Forum concludes that roughly half of the urban population are “renewalists” (Pentecostals and Charismatics). Eight of ten Protestants interviewed were either Pentecostal or Charismatic, and roughly half of the Catholics identified as Charismatic.
<http://pewforum.org/world-affairs/countries/?CountryID=29>, 4 May 2009.

²¹ Mandryk 2010: 163

²² Mandryk 2010: 163

²³ Willems, Emilio: *Followers of the New Faith*. Nashville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967. Lalive d'Epinay, Christian: *Haven of the Masses*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1969. Wagner, Peter: *Look out! The Pentecostals are coming*. Creation House, 1973

²⁴ Cleary 1999: 131-133

²⁵ Cox, Harvey: *Fire from Heaven – The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1995

²⁶ Martin, David: *Tongues of Fire – The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990

and people in the Evangelical and Catholic communities, creating numerous responses. (Later he has also written *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*²⁷.)

- A study by David Stoll from 1990 should also be mentioned: *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth*²⁸.

Some researchers are now describing this world wide rise of Pentecostalism as a religious phenomenon lacking parallels in the modern world. It is not a surprise that this has called the attention of researchers. Even though several studies about the Pentecostal growth already have been done and more are coming, a phenomenon of this size calls for continued attention. Brazil is, with one of the strongest Pentecostal populations in the world and some of the largest Pentecostal denominations a prime example of this worldwide phenomenon. This is one of the reasons for my interest in the subject, Pentecostal growth in Brazil.

1.1 – Adventures in Brazil – the Field Work

Being personally fascinated by the worldwide Pentecostal growth from my adolescence and on, I have had a strong motivation to learn more about this phenomenon. I am grateful for the opportunity that the writing of my master thesis here gave me. Among several places of relevance to my subject, in for example Asia, Africa and South America, Brazil stood out the most, as one of the prime examples of accelerated Pentecostal growth.

An objection to my choice could be that I did not master the Portuguese language fluently. However, through an intensive language course during my first month in Brazil, I was able to learn the basics and to reach an acceptable level of understanding. For the more in depth interviews I have made frequent use of interpreters.

I stayed in Brazil for three months during the spring of 2009 and found my base in *a cidade maravilhosa* – the marvellous city – Rio de Janeiro. Before I travelled I did some background research that gave me an overview of the field of Brazilian Pentecostalism. It definitely was an adventurous journey to visit the various churches, and I usually did not know how my excursions would end. Travelling with local buses, moving around in places most tourists never enter, I had to be prepared for everything from robbery to shoot outs (something which actually happened once). However, I was well received and got a large base of contacts. Seizing opportunities spontaneously and pursuing contacts, I even ended up by night in churches and streets inside the *favelas* (the famous Brazilian shanty towns) of Rio de

²⁷ Martin, David: *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002

²⁸ Stoll, David: *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990

Janeiro patrolled by armed gang members, as well as in Manaus, and on the Amazon river in the “personal” yacht of the governor of the state of Amazonas. On two isolated occasions, I was invited to different theological schools to lecture.

My procedure was to go to a church, attend their service, speak and socialise with people and in this way also get in contact with informants that could be interviewed. This proved an easy task in the friendly Brazilian culture. The fact that I myself come from a Pentecostal background was not a disadvantage in this respect.

1.2 – Contemporary Research

One would expect the sudden Pentecostal boom in Latin America to be of a certain interest within the Christian academic world. Yet “few” of its researchers are theologians and church historians.²⁹ The Catholic scholars (in Latin America) neglected for years what happened in their backyard. The “small and wild sects” were not taken seriously, but instead ignored.³⁰ When the Pentecostal churches boomed in the 1980s³¹ and started to take positions in society, the Catholic Church had to react. The pope warned against these “rapacious wolves” shattering the sheep.³² Thus the Catholic academic response has been marginal and with a few exceptions the Protestant scholars were ignorant of it all. Instead sociologists, and researchers within other fields, focusing on Latin America found this unexpected phenomenon, contradicting the predominant theories of secularisation, of great interest.³³ The scholars today who produce the most insightful and appreciative studies are mainly social scientists.³⁴

In chapter three I will present and categorise some of the dominant and prevailing sociological theories that have been suggested, as well as some theological theories and explanations. Certain Brazilian academics have also entered the debate³⁵ with distinct views and will be taken into account.

²⁹ McClymond 2007: 275

³⁰ Escobar 2002: 88

³¹ Chesnut 2003: 93

³² Pope John Paul II at the Fourth General Conference of Latin America Bishops in Santo Domingo in 1992 (Escobar 2002: 31, 90 / Chesnut 2003: 93)

³³ McClymond 2007: 275 / Shaul & Cesar 2000: 12

³⁴ Michael J. McClymond who has reviewed a wide range of literature on the topic confirms this. He refers to a number of recent works like Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (2001), Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil: the Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* (1997), Cleary and Stewart-Gambino, *Power, Politics, and Pentecostals in Latin America* (1998), Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish* (2002) - McClymond 2007: 275.

Some important exceptions, I should note, are the professor of religion Harvey Cox (1995), and the joint study conducted by the theologian Richard Shaul and the sociologist Waldo Cesar (2002), which try to combine both sociological and theological perspectives.

³⁵ See Steigenga & Cleary 2007: 6

1.3 – Questions of Research

As explained above, the *growth* of the Pentecostal churches in Brazil is what has caught my attention, and will therefore be the object of study in this thesis. The main question of research, as also indicated in the title is thus:

What are the reasons for Pentecostal growth in Brazil?

This question of research is somewhat ambitious but will be approached through two separate paths:

(1) Through theories promoted by different scholars and researchers – and (2) Through empirical data obtained through observations and qualitative interviews.

A number of theories have been forwarded to explain this growth, many of them, as pointed out, are sociological theories. Most sociologists believe Pentecostal churches help people adapt to a changing world. They just differ about how this adaptation takes place.³⁶ Some of these sociological notions and debates going on concerning what circumstances are beneficial for the growth of Pentecostalism are absolutely pointing to major factors of this phenomenon and are thus fruitful. But do they catch the true essence of the Pentecostal growth?

Do we have to look for theories of other kinds to explain it more fully, for example of a theological or religious kind? These are questions I will discuss in this thesis based upon my empirical data.

My main contribution to the field of research will thus be the empirical data and a discussion of my findings here with existing theories.

To be more specific, the question of research can be specified through these sub-questions:

- What are the dominant and prevailing theories on Pentecostal growth?³⁷
- To what extent are these theories compatible with my data?
- What are the *supply side factors* that best explain the growth?
- How important are factors of theological or religious nature, and do we need theories of such a kind, or even new theories, to understand the Pentecostal growth better?

³⁶ Cox 1995: 172

³⁷ Since there is a limited number of research conducted exclusively in Brazil, we also have to apply theories that covers Latin America in general. Due to historical, cultural, religious, socio-economical and geographical similarities, general research in Latin America can also be applied more specifically to Brazil.

1.4 – Academic Context

This work falls under the discipline of missiology and practical theology or descriptive theology, which can be said to be related to sociology. The strength of sociology is normally the social context of a phenomenon. My advantage, as a theologian, can be the *emic* perspectives and the understanding of the *supply sides* within Pentecostalism – what this movement really offers. A theologian may better understand theological and phenomenological aspects on the inside and what religious implications they have for the people and the individual. My aim is to do a critical analysis of existing theories based upon my own material, and point to some perhaps new and supplementing explanations in this regard. However, the danger of losing awareness of the *demand side* must also be pointed out.

As a person growing up in the classical Pentecostal movement in Norway I hope to be able to contribute with some perspectives from within the movement itself. Coming from Norway might help me to have enough distance to be able to do a critical observation. My Pentecostal background, by the way, gave me a special access to some of the Pentecostal Churches I visited, especially the congregations of *Assembleia de Deus*.

1.5 – Method

When deciding how the research question should be pursued and what tools to use there are some crossroads. The first is the choice between a quantitative or qualitative approach. The outcomes of the quantitative research on Pentecostalism vary to some degree from recent qualitative studies.³⁸ Quantitative research may actually miss the reality of the individuals. The sum of everything can result in broad generalizations that do not fit the actual individuals. Instead, qualitative research may be the tool best fit to grasp the personal stories and the reasons for the conversions of individuals. All the individuals in sum make up the whole picture of Pentecostal growth. I have chosen a qualitative approach in this thesis.

Qualitative research, however, also has its obvious limitations. It does not legitimate broad and comprehensive theories much beyond its own material. Still, a qualitative work can point out aspects of the broader picture, and provide support or objection to different theories. A qualitative study is a small sample of the big picture. This sample, and perhaps more samples, can be compared with larger theories that are based on quantitative research, and strengthen or

³⁸ While quantitative approaches have tended to focus on the social background, more recent qualitative studies reveal other aspects. See for example chapter 3: the quantitative approach of Lalive d' Epinay versus the more qualitative approach of Chesnut (though Chesnut also underlines his findings with quantitative data).

weaken those theories. I will attempt to do so by my qualitative fieldwork in Brazil and by discussing the findings of my material with some of the major theories on Latin American Pentecostal growth. Do my findings support or weaken the existing theories? Do my informants and observations fit some theories better than others? Or do we need other and new theories to explain the growth?

The qualitative research will take the form of a multiple case study. A case study is the study of a case of an individual person, a group, an organisation or church, in its own right and taking its context into account.³⁹ It also gives the researcher the opportunity to employ different methods that are relevant to different aspects of the phenomena under investigation.⁴⁰ This study will also involve several such individual cases by means of ethnographic methods like participant observation and semi-structured interviews.⁴¹

A crucial concept within this study is conversion. Pentecostal growth can occur through various sources, the main types being: Natural growth through birth rate, through transfers of members from one church to another, and through conversion. Although Brazilian Pentecostalism grows both through the birth rate as well as through transfers of members from other churches, conversion is likely the major cause. The Pentecostal growth has by far surpassed the general population growth.⁴² However, it should be noted, most of the new members in Pentecostal churches come from the Catholic Church.⁴³ This could lead to an understanding of the growth as transfers of members rather than conversions. However, this group consists mainly of nominal Catholics⁴⁴, who themselves usually refer to their experience as a conversion. Therefore, such a growth should be reckoned as growth through conversions and not by a transfer of members. For this reason, cases of conversion will be a main focus. I will therefore study several cases of conversion of individuals to Pentecostalism, and the context where conversion takes place, the churches.

My primary methods will be (1) semi-structured interviews and (2) participant observation. Qualitative research is predominantly process orientated and flexible in its approach to

³⁹ Robson 2002:178 / Tangen 2009: 11 (Originally from Yin 2003: 47-52)

⁴⁰ Tangen 2009: 11 (Originally from Yin 2003: 47-52)

⁴¹ Robson 2002:180

⁴² In 2001 the annual growth of the population was 1.32% while the group of Pentecostals was growing at a rate of 5.3%. (Johnstone & Mandryk 2001: 119-120) In 2010 the growth rate for Pentecostals was 1,7% and for Charismatics 1,9% (Mandryk 2010: 163) The growth rate for the general population is estimated to be 1,134% in 2011 according to the CIA World Factbook. (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2002.html>, 28 January 2012)

⁴³ Steigenga & Cleary 2007: 12

⁴⁴ Steigenga & Cleary 2007: 11

method, theory and data. Theoretical analysis is an integrated part of the research process. Thus the fieldwork becomes an interplay between reflection, method and data.⁴⁵

The *etic* approach is the outsider's perspective, using terms that can be applied to other cultures. The *emic* approach is a description that comes from a person within the culture. Through my interviews I have got *emic* descriptions of my informant's conversions, churches and views. These *emic* descriptions I will analyse and compare with *etic* approaches to Pentecostal growth in Latin America.

Thus, both *etic* explanations and *emic* views and descriptions will be presented and discussed.

Both the question of research and the choice of method are implied in the title *The Rise of Pentecostalism in Brazil – An Empirical Study of Reasons for Growth*.

1.6 – Pentecostalism

Before giving a presentation of my sample some major points need to be clarified, for example the crucial term Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is usually divided into three major streams, phases or historical periods, based upon its development during the last century:⁴⁶

1. Classical Pentecostalism: This stream of “old school” Pentecostalism being more or less in direct line with the Azusa Street Revival beginning in 1906.
2. The Charismatic movement (originally referred to as the new Pentecostalism or Neo-Pentecostalism⁴⁷): This is a movement starting in the 1950s and 1960s⁴⁸ within the more established denominations, first among Protestants and then among Catholics (especially since 1967).⁴⁹
3. The last stream of Pentecostalism (originally included in the term Charismatic⁵⁰) is a broad genre of new independent churches and movements (some which may have parted from their original denominations), beginning in the 1970s. Though different terms have been used, I will choose the term *Neo-Pentecostalism*, which

⁴⁵ Tangen 2009: 16 (originally from Hammersley and Atkins 1987: 169)

⁴⁶ See Anderson 2004: 13, 144, 156. Walter Hollenweger, who has been called the founding father of academic research on Pentecostalism, uses this division (Anderson 2004: 13 – Anderson refers to Hollenweger 1997: 1)

⁴⁷ In order not to be confused with the older Pentecostals, the Catholics abandoned the term “Pentecostal” by 1974 in favour of the more neutral term “charismatic”. (Synan 1997: 250)

⁴⁸ A key moment in the development of the Charismatic movement took place April 3, 1960 when the respected Episcopalian minister Dennis Bennett shocked his congregation of St. Mark's in Van Nuys, California by telling about his experience of speaking in other tongues. (Synan 1997: 228-230)

⁴⁹ Synan 1997: 220

⁵⁰ Anderson 2004: 144

in the Brazilian context is the term used exclusively to refer to these churches.⁵¹ Several movements with differing theological emphases are found in this category, ranging from the Faith Movement to Vineyard. The expressions and way of worship are of a Pentecostal manner. Pentecostal-like independent and indigenous churches in the “Majority World” are normally also included in this category.⁵²

As has been pointed out by the Pentecostal scholar Allan Anderson, there is a certain ambiguity concerning the words Pentecostal and Charismatic. It is now generally accepted that the expression *the Charismatic Movement* in its original usage referred to the practice of spiritual gifts and the baptism in the Spirit in the older, “historic” or “mainline” churches since the 1960s. As the non-denominational Charismatic churches developed some decades later, the term was broadened to refer to all movements outside classical Pentecostalism where spiritual gifts are exercised. Now, however, it is often impossible to distinguish between Pentecostals and Charismatics, and there are often as many theological and liturgical differences between classical Pentecostals themselves as there are between them and Charismatic churches.⁵³ Terms like Neo-Pentecostals and Neo-Charismatics have been used to refer to these later churches.⁵⁴ Peter Wagner introduced the term “third wave” in an attempt to distinguish a new third wave of evangelicals, who would receive and exercise the gifts of the Spirit, from the label Pentecostal and Charismatic and their idea of a second blessing distinct from conversion. (Wagner identified particularly this “third wave” with John Wimber.⁵⁵)

Pentecostalism thus is a broad term, and a possible point of discourse in itself. During the first part of the 20th century, in classical Pentecostalism, the experience and doctrine of *Spirit baptism* was the main distinctive of this new movement (understood as subsequent to and distinct from conversion, with speaking in tongues as the initial sign)⁵⁶. But with the rapid spread of Pentecostalism, both into mainstream denominations of different theological traditions and through new independent and indigenous movements, scholars are not all that unanimous anymore about what should be pointed out as its main distinctive. The Pentecostal

⁵¹ To avoid confusion: The term Neo-Pentecostalism is used in different ways. It is used about the Charismatic renewal, and more recently about the newer independent Charismatic churches. As explained, I use the term in the last sense, in line with the Brazilian terminology.

⁵² Anderson 2004: 158-159

⁵³ Anderson 2004: 144

⁵⁴ Anderson 2004: 144

⁵⁵ Synan 1997: 271-274, Anderson 2004: 158-159

⁵⁶ Wyckoff 1995: 431, 437-438

Theologian Steven Land highlights the empowerment following *Spirit baptism*, leading to “a passion for the kingdom” shown through the emphasis and efforts of mission.⁵⁷ Harvard scholar Harvey Cox rather points to the variations within Pentecostalism and describes it as “a cafeteria with various dishes”.⁵⁸ Another expert on Pentecostalism, Walter Hollenweger says “*What unites the Pentecostal churches is not a doctrine but a religious experience.*”⁵⁹ These are examples of statements aiming to catch the central point of Pentecostalism. However, some scholars seem to downplay the central place of biblical doctrine within Pentecostalism. But, religious experience, though an essential feature, is to be judged on a biblical basis. There is an interplay between religious experience and biblical doctrine, where experience can shed new light upon biblical texts and vice versa, but the biblical doctrine has the last word, at least in the main streams of Pentecostalism. Steven Land highlights three sides of the faith: Orthodoxy (right praise-confession), orthopathy (right affections) and orthopraxis (right praxis). All the sides are needed for the faith to be “complete”.⁶⁰

Before I turn to some definitions, I will first describe Pentecostalism in my own words: Pentecostalism is a movement of religious experience and emotionalism which practises spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, healings and exorcisms, prophecies, with the person of Jesus as the main focus, and the Bible as the fundament, source and key interpreter.

Allan Anderson finds the term Pentecostal “*appropriate for describing globally all churches and movements that emphasize the working of the gifts of the Spirit, both on phenomenological and on theological grounds.*”⁶¹ According to Anderson, Pentecostalism shows a special ability to incarnate the gospel in different cultural forms.⁶² David Barrett, who has worked out comprehensive statistics on the worldwide Pentecostal movement, uses the term “Renewal in the Holy Spirit” to include all types of Pentecostals and Charismatics from all denominations.⁶³ The Catholic theologian and sociologist Fr. Kilian McDonnell has a theological definition: “*Those Christians who stress the power and presence of the Holy Spirit*

⁵⁷ Land, Steven J: *Pentecostal Spirituality – A Passion for the Kingdom*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993

⁵⁸ At a conference in Costa Rica, 1997 – (notes from lecture with Øyvind G. Andersen at MF, the spring of 2008)

⁵⁹ Macchia 2006: 34 (Macchia refers to Hollenweger 1996: 7)

⁶⁰ Land 1993: 41

⁶¹ Anderson 2004: 13

⁶² Anderson 2004: 14

⁶³ Synan 1997: 282 (Synan refers to Barrett’s survey titled “The 20th Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal in the Holy Spirit with Its Goal of World Evangelization,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1988)

and the gifts of the Spirit directed toward the proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”⁶⁴

The definition of Pentecostalism in this thesis is therefore a broad one, and includes the terms Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostal.

1.6.1 – Classical- or Neo-Pentecostalism?

All three streams of Pentecostalism show impressing numerical growth, but still the third stream is particularly significant in the global statistics.⁶⁵ The first and third stream of Pentecostalism referred to as Classical- and Neo- Pentecostalism have later merged into a complex picture. There has been a mutual influence between the classical- and the Neo-Pentecostal groups, making these borders blurry. Classical Pentecostal churches have taken teachings and practices from the Neo-Pentecostal camp, and vice versa. There is a mutual interaction with a flow of books, tapes and other resources, even accelerated by the internet during the last decade. Thus today you will find historically classical Pentecostal churches with more Neo-Pentecostal emphases than many Neo-Pentecostal churches and vice versa.

In Brazil there is a common understanding of the difference between Pentecostal (classic) and Neo-Pentecostal. The mainline denominations accuse the Neo-Pentecostal churches for preaching a shallow prosperity orientated gospel. The older Pentecostal churches are treated with growing respect, even though many older Pentecostal churches may have a similar “prosperity” emphasis. As already explained, I find it fruitful to use these terms since they correspond with the use within the Brazilian context.

1.7 – Delimitation and Selection

The second stream of Pentecostalism, the Charismatic movement, has two branches, the Evangelical or Protestant and the Catholic. Whereas the Charismatic Evangelicals participate to a certain extent in the interaction flow between the other Pentecostal groupings, the Charismatic Catholic group is a more isolated case. Because of the Catholic dominance in Brazil, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is the largest group of the second Pentecostal stream here.

This thesis will concentrate on classical Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal will thus not be dealt with in my thesis. To access this field would for me draw too much effort and resources from the study of the other Pentecostal streams. The

⁶⁴ Synan 1997: 282 (Synan refers to McDonnell, Killian and Arnold Bittlinger: *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an Ecumenical Problem*. No pagination, year or publisher given)

⁶⁵ Anderson 2004:13

classical stream, the Neo-Pentecostal stream, though having different emphases, would be easier for me to process in the same sample. Nor will I have the capacity to deal with the Charismatic Renewal within the evangelical denominations.

Local churches defined in the two categories, classical Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism, have been the ground where I have collected material in my ethnographic work. These churches are:

Classical Pentecostalism:

- *Assembleia de Deus* (Assembly of God) was chosen among the classical Pentecostal denominations, being the second largest denomination in Brazil after the Catholic Church, and the largest national Pentecostal denomination in the world.⁶⁶

The local churches have been:

- *Assembléia de Deus Missão Apostólica da Fé* (Assembly of God Apostolic Faith Mission) in São Cristovão, Rio de Janeiro, and
- *Igreja Evangélica Assembleiá de Deus no Amazonas* in Manaus.

Neo-Pentecostalism:

- *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, henceforth IURD) has been an interesting point of entry to the Neo-Pentecostal sphere. This Brazilian initiated “church” is, though highly controversial, today the church in Brazil with the highest growth rate⁶⁷, having expanded across the Brazilian borders to about 100 countries⁶⁸!

The local churches from IURD being a part of my ethnographic study have been:

- *Catedral Mundial da Fé* (the Worldwide Cathedral of Faith) IURD Del Castilho, Rio de Janeiro, and
- IURD Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro

⁶⁶ Synan 1997: 135

⁶⁷ I recently found that there probably is another church expanding even faster than *Igreja Universal*. *Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus* (The Worldwide Church of the Power of God) initiated by the healing evangelist Valdemiro Santiago has in ten years founded centers and churches in more than 500 cities in Brazil and Latin America (<http://holofote.net/2008/10/14/maior-fenomeno-brasileiro-da-actualidade-igreja-mundial-do-poder-de-deus-presidida-pelo-apostolo-valdomiro-e-tem-mais-a-igreja-adquiriu-junto-a-rede-bandeirantes-os-direitos-para-gerir-e-transmitir/>, 27 August 2009)

⁶⁸ Furre 2006: 39

The Neo-Pentecostal church *Nova Vida* was also given some attention. The two most influential Neo-Pentecostal churches in Brazil, IURD and *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* (the International Church of the Grace of God, henceforth IIGD), both originated from Nova Vida. The local church chosen from *Nova Vida* was:

- *Igreja de Nova Vida da Tijuca* in Rio de Janeiro (New Life Church of Tijuca).

I will look at the churches mentioned above more in depth in the main part of my research, as well as in the chapter dealing with the history and background of Pentecostalism in Brazil.

Why not focus primarily, and scrutinise in depth, on only one of these large denominations? An argument for choosing more than one is that all these denominations do grow, even if they differ in strategy and form. If I would base this ethnography solely on one of these denominations I may miss what really is the impetus for growth, and be caught up by strategies and practices which are actually secondary. By limiting my sample to a few Pentecostal denominations, I will be able to do a more profound study which at the same time has a broader significance.

The churches of my sample, especially AD and IURD, are among the most important churches within Brazilian Pentecostalism. Therefore, it can be maintained that the findings here also say something about Brazilian Pentecostalism in general.

Let me present more details of my material:

- Ten recorded semi-structured interviews with converts, pastors and members of the above mentioned local churches. My informants have been made anonymous.⁶⁹
- Numerous (more than 25) visits are paid to these churches – with observations and field notes.
- Informal information gained through conversations, chats and by observing attitudes and actions during time spent together with Brazilian Pentecostals.

⁶⁹ Except for two high-profiled pastors who contributed with knowledge about their respective churches, my informants are made anonymous.

Several times I received important information and interesting testimonies off record. This material I will use to supplement the other material.

- Observations through television, news articles, pamphlets, flyers and attitudes expressed by outsiders also constitute a part of the entire picture.

1.7.1 – Semi-structured Interviews

I was looking for two categories of informants, each with their distinct contribution: (1) new converts with their personal stories and view points (2) pastors with information and knowledge of their local churches. Some of my informants fall into both of these categories. The selection of informants was a more or less random process. When visiting churches I met people, who again introduced me to others. Informants were chosen among these people. Later on I realized that all my informants could be considered to be committed members of their respective churches. Most of them are men between twenty and forty years old. A weakness is that I just have one woman among the formally interviewed informants. This has to be taken into consideration when the material is analysed.

1.7.2 – Participant Observation

Participant observation first and foremost means attending *cultos* or services in the churches of my sample. As stated, I made numerous visits to these churches: Sunday services, weekday services, special campaigns, youth meetings, social gatherings and even mission outreaches. The mode of research during my visits varied from being more of an observer to more of a participant. Visits in some of these huge temples could be done completely unnoticed and anonymously in the large crowd, at other times my attendance was welcomed and declared from the platform, I was even called to the stage on some occasions to give a personal greeting.

1.7.3 – Informal Information

I was socially active both before and after services, conversing with people and asking questions. Valuable information was gained through these informal chats and conversations. These conversations were not taped, but I made notes afterwards of important material. I also spoke with Pentecostals in settings not related to church activities.

1.7.4 – Presentation

There is basically two ways of presenting qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and observations: 1) A thematic presentation, presenting and analysing in a continuous and integrated way. 2) Dividing the presentation and analyses in two different parts, an emic and an etic part. I have chosen the last solution, to present my material on its own emic terms,

before analysing it from an etic perspective. I find that my material contains stories and glimpses that give strong impressions, bringing the reader close to the Pentecostal field, if the material is dealt with in a too much fragmented manner this proximity may disappear.

Because of the limited space I will not be able to present all the ten semi-structured interviews and observations in depth, but have to present a limited sample of this material. I have selected material which, according to my understanding, is highlighting important traits and common aspects of Brazilian Pentecostalism in general. The material presented is based upon numerous church visits, observations, conversations and meetings with Brazilian Pentecostals, as well as literature on the topic. Therefore, I maintain, there is a solid basis for making the selection of the data, while also admitting that the “world in study” is approached from my point of view.

1.8 – Epistemology and Basic Theoretical Questions

Scientific research cannot be separated from questions raised by the philosophy of science. Research will be affected by the researcher’s own position on this very basic level. Different terms are used to describe various views within this field. One set of such terms is realism versus anti-realism.

Alister McGrath presents a theoretical position between *scientific realism* and *social constructivism*, called *critical realism*. McGrath describes *scientific realism* as an empirical notion, which insists that it interacts with reality itself. There is in an actual encounter with reality.⁷⁰ *Social constructivism (or postmodern anti-realism)*, in its strict sense, holds that the human mind freely constructs its ideas without any reference to an alleged external world. Therefore, we do not access the real world but rather social constructs.⁷¹ Critical realism, however, contends that there is a reality that can be apprehended, but it also affirms that the “knower” is involved in the process of knowing. The knowledge does not necessarily have a one-to-one correspondence to reality. *Critical realism* also raises the possibility of the use of *constructions* as suitably adapted means for representing what is encountered. Constructions can be analogies, models or constructs that are useful in allowing a greater degree of understanding of a complex system, but they should not be without contact to the factual world.⁷²

⁷⁰ McGrath 2004: 127

⁷¹ McGrath 2004: 135-136, 141

⁷² McGrath 2004: 141-142

Explaining critical realism, Paul G. Hiebert compares human knowledge with *maps and models* rather than one-to-one *photographs*.⁷³ Maps must be selective. “*We do not reject a map as false simply because every detail of reality is not included and accurately presented.*”⁷⁴ Still the map can convey accurate information about its *limited* content. According to critical realism, there are limited possibilities of interpretation when analysing information. Different observers may interpret the content differently. However, only those interpretations that include all facts can be accepted as probable. Further research revealing more facts may alter or change the interpretation of the *map*.⁷⁵

When it comes to qualitative research and the method of semi-structured interviews David Silverman in *Interpreting Qualitative Data - Third Edition* (2006) summarises three views.

- 1) *Positivism* contends the possibility of getting hold of facts about the world or “*accounts whose sense derives from their correspondence to factual reality*”.⁷⁶
- 2) *Emotionalism* is more concerned about gathering authentic accounts of subjective experience.⁷⁷
- 3) *Constructionism* does not believe facts about “the world being studied” are accessible through qualitative interviews. Instead what is available for study is the constructed reality created through human language.⁷⁸

Dealing with ethnography, Silverman uses the term *naturalism* about ethnography that believes the researcher can come with an open mind, theoretically free and get hold of pure reality without distorting the field being studied.⁷⁹ Thus, Silverman’s term *naturalism* describes what obviously can be called a positivistic approach.

Critical realism better describes my position concerning these basic theoretical questions. Any ethnographer or researcher comes to a fieldwork with some orienting ideas, theories and tools – and are thus not theoretically unbiased, no matter how unstructured and inductive his approach might be.⁸⁰ We have adopted certain glasses that guide us to look at things in certain ways.

⁷³ Hiebert 1999: 76

⁷⁴ Hiebert 1999: 77

⁷⁵ Hiebert 1999: 78

⁷⁶ Silverman 2006: 119

⁷⁷ Silverman 2006: 123

⁷⁸ Silverman 2006: 128

⁷⁹ Silverman 2006: 98

⁸⁰ Silverman 2006: 98

But at the same time, I will argue, my informants can give me knowledge about their life stories, and henceforth Brazilian Pentecostalism. My informants speak from within their paradigm, and I interpret their descriptions through my paradigm. Therefore, awareness is needed of this process of gaining knowledge, when data is gathered, as well as when it is interpreted. There is a reality that can be apprehended, but the “knower” is also involved in the process of knowing.

Observational research, data collection, hypothesis construction and theory building are not three separated things but are interwoven.⁸¹

1.9 – Outline

The thesis will have the following outline. The next chapter (chapter 2) will be an historical survey, while the third chapter (chapter 3) will provide us with an overview of different theories and stances concerning Pentecostal growth.

In chapter 4, I will present the Pentecostal churches or denominations that were a part of my study. This chapter will give a background and frame for the following interviews and observations. In chapter 5, I present my main material. Four informants and a few observations will be presented in an emic manner, as cases exemplifying Pentecostal growth. The following chapter (chapter 6) gives an etic analysis of each of these interviews and observations where each case is discussed in light of the prevailing theories.

Chapter 7 continues the etic discussion in a more general way, before the summary and conclusion in chapter 8.

Chapter 2 – History and Background

Before presenting theories about the Pentecostal growth in Brazil, we need to get an overview and understanding of its history, religious field and context. No sociological development unfolds in a vacuum, but is an integrated part of its context.

This chapter will give a brief presentation of the field in which Brazilian Pentecostalism today is emerging, as well as an outline of the different stages of its rise.

⁸¹ Silverman 2006: 97-98

2.1 – “The Mission Field”

The Christian religion came to Latin America with the *conquistadors* in the 16th century. Pope Alexander VI granted King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain the right of dominion over all the new lands discovered by Columbus a hundred leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, through the bull *Inter caetera*. In exchange, the monarch of Spain should undertake responsibility for Christianizing any people living in those lands.⁸² Portugal, already an established maritime power, was not pleased with this division, and threatened war if Spain insisted on implementing the Papal bull. The negotiations that followed resulted in the treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, which moved the line of demarcation to the west and allowed the Portuguese King to claim newly discovered lands east of the line.⁸³ The treaty was sanctioned by Pope Julius II, who granted the Spanish crown the right, through the *patronato real* in 1508, to nominate all ecclesiastical posts in America.⁸⁴

With every ship sailing from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), from 1516 and onwards, it was expected that at least one priest should be brought. Still it should prove to be a hard task to evangelize the population of the new continent.⁸⁵ The mission efforts went hand in hand with the conquest of the new lands. The Spaniards were sincere in their mission and understood themselves as being entrusted with the defence of the Catholic faith. They had fought the Muslims, Jews and the heretics – thus as the new world, discovered by Christopher Columbus was explored, invaded and exploited – the Spaniards were convinced that this was a sacred trust given to them to bring their religion to the people in these lands.⁸⁶

The “Indians” (as they wrongly have been named) were often forced to church and to be baptised. Millions were baptised, they were only required to know the Lord’s Prayer.⁸⁷ Unavoidably, ancient rituals were mixed with customs of the Catholic Church and saints of the church were identified with the natives’ own gods. Similarly, when the African slaves later arrived in Brazil and Latin America, their world view, gods and traditions arrived with them. The Catholic Church merely baptised them to Christ with little regard to the actual change of their beliefs.⁸⁸ The task of evangelizing the slaves and teaching them the Catholic faith was usually left in the hands of their owners who were legally mandated to this

⁸² González & González 2008: 28

⁸³ González & González 2008: 28

⁸⁴ González & González 2008: 28

⁸⁵ González & González 2008: 6

⁸⁶ González & González 2008: 2-3

⁸⁷ González & González 2008: 6

⁸⁸ Itioka 2002: 105

responsibility, but usually paid little attention to the matter.⁸⁹ In this way, African religion was merged with Catholicism. For example, the Virgin Mary was identified with the Yoruba deity Iemanjá (traditional religion from West Africa)⁹⁰, the spirit of the waters, and the Catholic saint, St. George, often portrayed upon a horse fighting a dragon, became Ogun, the god of justice and violence.⁹¹ Many, both of original and African descent, also resisted Christianity and, usually in secret, continued practicing their old religions.⁹²

In Brazil it was first and foremost the Jesuits who accomplished the mission of evangelism. They arrived relatively late in Brazil, in 1548, at the request of the king of Portugal, who wanted the order to protect and evangelize the native population.⁹³ The approach of the Portuguese settlers had been to exploit and enslave the Indians. The Jesuits took a stand for the Indians, something which provoked the colonial elite and the slave raiders. One example illustrating this is Father António Vieira. During a sermon in Lent, 1653, he attacked the settlers declaring: “All of you are in mortal sin; all of you live in a state of condemnation [for living of the blood of enslaved Indians]; and all of you are going directly to Hell.”⁹⁴ Father Vieira later had to sail back to Portugal for his own safety. The Jesuits, as well as other missionaries, were suppressed and expelled. The majority of the Catholic Church in Brazil, except for occasionally an individual priest, did not oppose the slavery, at least not the slavery of the black.⁹⁵ The clergy in Brazil was operating more independently than in the Spanish territories elsewhere in Latin America. In Spanish Latin America the mission was a part of the political task and thus received finances. The church in Brazil had to sustain itself and did so by using black slave labour in their development of extensive cattle and sugar estates. The income generated was necessary to support the church’s missions, schools and other activities. Little missionary effort was directed at the blacks because the church considered them their property and part of a white patriarchal system.⁹⁶

The European colonizers brought medieval Catholicism. The black slaves brought their African beliefs. The Indians had their spirits and entities. Thus Latin American Catholicism in

⁸⁹ González & González 2008: 6

⁹⁰ Yoruba refers to the Yoruba people, an ethnic group in West Africa, predominantly in Nigeria as well as their traditional religion of different divinities or entities and states of existence. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba> - November 2009)

⁹¹ Itioka 2002: 105

⁹² González & González 2008: 7

⁹³ González & González 2008: 51-52

⁹⁴ González & González 2008: 52

⁹⁵ González & González 2008: 127

⁹⁶ González & González 2008: 127

its *popular* form became something consisting of various elements, accepting dogmas and rites of the church, but actually assigning them a secondary role.⁹⁷

In this Portuguese melting pot something particular Brazilian arose: A merge of African diaspora religions and European spiritism. The Afro-Brazilian religions or cults were among others Candomblé or Xango.⁹⁸ (A better known Latin American/Caribbean counterpart would be Haitian Voodoo.) These are sometimes labelled possession cults because of their ceremonies involving trancelike states and direct interaction with spirits. In Brazil, ideas and practices from these cults merged with thoughts introduced at the end of the 19th century by the French spiritist Allan Kardec. According to him, God had created the universe and then abandoned it, leaving it at the mercy of the law of evolution. People are essentially spirits contained in a body, and these spirits continually evolve until they arrive at the level of Christ, who is the chief of planet earth. Because humans are full of sins and errors, they often fail and therefore transmigrate and are reincarnated.⁹⁹

The melting of the Afro-Brazilian religions, Catholicism and Kardecism developed into a particular Brazilian syncretism called Umbanda:¹⁰⁰

And here was the essence of religious and racial syncretism: Negro and white worshippers together, practicing a more evolved form of African ritual, under the influence of Europe's Kardecism, under the influence of an Indian spirit guide, and under the name of Our Lady of Piety! Yet, the spirit "appointed" by the Caboclo as "the great master," the spiritual leader of all, is none other than – Jesus Christ, whom he calls by the African equivalent, Oxalá.¹⁰¹

The influence of Umbanda has been strong, and some scholars have even called it the national religion of Brazil.¹⁰² It is estimated that in 1974 about 30 million of a population of 120 million were practitioners of Umbanda.¹⁰³ Since then, the position of Umbanda seems to have been reversed. In the last demographic census of 2000 (IGBE) less than 0.3% claimed Umbanda as their religion (a twenty percent drop compared to the 1991 census). The group of

⁹⁷ González & González 2008: 7

⁹⁸ A more extensive presentations of the Afro-Brazilian religions can be found in

⁹⁹ Itioka 2002: 105-106

¹⁰⁰ Itioka 2002: 105-106

¹⁰¹ Quote from Pedro McGregor in Itioka 2002: 106

¹⁰² Among others Renato Ortiz, professor of sociology at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo (Itioka 2002: 105)

¹⁰³ Brown, Diana De G.; Mario Bick, "Religion, Class, and Context: Continuities and Discontinuities in Brazilian Umbanda" in *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 14, No. 1, *Frontiers of Christian Evangelism*. (Feb., 1987), pp. 73-93 (Source found through <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umbanda>, 23.11.2009)

Afro-Brazilian religions and spiritism adds up to just 1.7% in the same census.¹⁰⁴ But the number has to be considered an underestimate due to the historical motives leading people to be adherents of both Afro-Brazilian religions and Catholicism. Many (if not most) who define themselves Catholic still participate in rituals and ceremonies of other cults as well. The fusion of Catholicism and other religious practices at first (in the 16th century) caused strong objections from the Catholic Church, sometimes to the point of torture and execution. But eventually, the church became reconciled with much of the popular beliefs and practices, arguing that these were means of evangelization and that the natives slowly would learn a purer form of Christianity. Today the practices of the masses often are referred to as *popular religion*.¹⁰⁵ The Church in general has become convinced that most of this *popular religion* does not contradict the Catholic faith but rather is an expression of it. Thus its practices are mainly allowed or accepted.

A shift took place after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that in several ways impacted the religious scene of Brazil. For example Vatican II insisted on the centrality of Christ for the Christian Religion, and as a consequence, for example, saints that had never existed, like St. Christopher, should be expunged from the list of saints.¹⁰⁶ Some priests felt the time had come to purge the church, the saints and their images were placed in less conspicuous places and attempts were made to educate the laity. Instead, the people were alienated, as people still sought out the saints. As it seemed impossible for the church to simply ban such devotional practices, a consensus was upheld that such popular religiosity was not to be condemned, but rather affirmed, as an expression of the faith of the people.¹⁰⁷

When Protestant missionaries arrived, mostly in the 19th century, they condemned all these practices and beliefs as “paganism” and criticized the Catholic Church for promoting this syncretism. Yet, the older European Protestant churches adopted the Catholic claim that the region of Latin America was already evangelized and belonged to the Christian world. In Edinburgh, in 1910, where a large missionary conference was held under the slogan “The Evangelization of the World in Our Generation” with all the older and prestigious Protestant denominations and missions present, no representatives from Latin America were invited. The organizers were bound to the position that Latin America was not a mission field.¹⁰⁸ But as we

¹⁰⁴ Goncalvas da Silva 2007: 2

¹⁰⁵ González & González 2008: 7

¹⁰⁶ González & González 2008: 267

¹⁰⁷ González & González 2008: 267-268

¹⁰⁸ Escobar 2002: 24

will see, this was just about to change with the rise of a new evangelical movement, which would dramatically change the religious landscape of the 20th century.

2.2 – The Birth of a New Movement

Los Angeles 1906: The African American preacher, William J. Seymour, brought the teachings which he learned in Charles Parham’s Bible school the year before, that tongues is the sign of Spirit Baptism. Because of his teachings, Seymour was first expelled from the Holiness Church which had invited him to preach, but he continued in a house in Bonnie Brae Street. Prayer services continued for several days until the night of April 9, 1906, when Seymour and seven others fell to the floor in a religious ecstasy, speaking in tongues.¹⁰⁹ News of the events spread and curious people started to gather. Even crowds of spectators gathered in the streets to see what was happening. A week later, the house was so full that the revival meetings had to be moved to an old and dirty building, partly used as a livery stable at 312 Azusa Street. Crowds gathered in hundreds and later thousands as the black preacher William J. Seymour ministered.¹¹⁰ The building was filled with people praying and rejoicing loudly as people “fell under the power” and started to speak in tongues. Visitors claimed they could feel “a supernatural atmosphere” within several blocks of the mission.¹¹¹ Blacks and whites as well as other ethnic groups worshipped together, something which was unheard of in the strict segregated society. Rumours of these “wild scenes” spread causing more and more people to come. “Whites and Blacks Mix in a Religious Frenzy” the local newspaper reported.¹¹² Or, as one participant exclaimed: “The colour line was washed away in the blood.” No robed choir, no hymnals, no order of service, but there was an abundance of religious enthusiasm and “there was a complete absence of racial discrimination”, Church Historian Vinson Synan concludes.¹¹³ Visitors from all over the continent and even internationally came to see and to be baptized in the Spirit. The Azusa Street revival marks a starting point for the Pentecostal movement.

The revivalists from Azusa Street were not bound to the position of Edinburgh 1910 or of the Catholic Church. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit had to be shared. Before any Pentecostal church was founded missionaries sailed off for distant continents. It took less than 5 years for Pentecostalism to arrive in Brazil. Two Swedish missionaries and one Italian, both with links

¹⁰⁹ Synan 1997: 96

¹¹⁰ Synan 1998: 98

¹¹¹ Synan 1997: 99

¹¹² Anderson 2004: 40

¹¹³ Synan 1997: 99

to the Pentecostal Revival in Chicago (which became the main centre after Los Angeles), were to be the mediators of this movement. As pointed out, Brazil is today one of the countries in the world with the highest number of Pentecostals.

2.3 – “A Prophetic Beginning”

2.3.1 – *Assembleia de Deus*

The 19th of November, 1910 the two Swedish American immigrants Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren arrived in Belém do Pará in the tropical Northern part of Brazil eager to share the Pentecostal message but without speaking any Portuguese. ¹¹⁴

The two Swedes - Berg labouring as a foundryman and Vingren pastoring a small Baptist Church in South Bend, Indiana¹¹⁵ - had met each other and both been baptized in the Holy Spirit in Chicago where the “Pentecostal revival” was fronted by William Durham. In a prayer meeting both received prophecies about doing mission work in a place called Pará, a place none of them had heard of. This is how the event is recalled by Emilio Conde who was one of the first to write the history of Assembly of God in Brazil:

*Sometime later, Daniel Berg went to visit Pastor Gunnar Vingren in the city of South Bend. On that occasion in a prayer meeting, God spoke through a prophetic message to the hearts of Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren that they should depart to preach the Gospel and the blessings of the Pentecostal awakening. The place mentioned in the prophecy was Pará. No one present had heard of such a place. After the prayer meeting, the two young men went to a library to consult a map that would show them the location of Pará. Thus they discovered that it was a state in the North of Brazil.*¹¹⁶

Enough cash was then collected for a third-class fare on a steamer from New York to Belém. Arriving in Belém do Pará in 1910, without knowing any Portuguese, they were taken care of and hosted by the local Baptist church. There they learned the language, contributed in the services and began prayer meetings. The small prayer circles were tolerated even though the Pentecostal message of baptism in the Holy Spirit contradicted the Baptist doctrine. This lasted until May, 1911 when members of the Baptist Church started to be baptized in the Spirit and spoke in tongues. In June, Berg and Vingren together with their followers were expelled from the Baptist church and Vingren then became the pastor of this new group

¹¹⁴ Chesnut 1997: 26

¹¹⁵ Chesnut 1997: 26

¹¹⁶ Emilio Conde quoted in Chesnut 1997: 26

consisting of 18 people. The church was first called the Apostolic Faith Mission, but was registered in 1918 as *Assembléia de Deus*.¹¹⁷

They grew rapidly, especially through their practice of praying for healing. Belém is with its equatorial heat and high humidity a fertile ground for a wide range of diseases. Early twentieth-century Belém was plagued with malaria, yellow fever, cholera, tuberculosis, meningitis and even leprosy. Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren spent much of their time making house calls on the sick. With limited access to health care facilities, and neglected by the Catholic Church, many ill Belemenses and their families came to the *Assembléia de Deus* as a last resort.¹¹⁸ In an article from 1919, titled “The Lord is Our Doctor” Daniel Berg wrote:

*I can testify that in my trips to the islands of Lower Amazonia I have seen multitudes of believers cured merely by the efficacy of prayer”*¹¹⁹

Healing of the sick played an essential part of the “Pentecostal gospel” from the very beginning in Brazil.

During the first year, 1911, only 13 baptisms were recorded. In 1914 the number had jumped to 190. After two decades of evangelization in Belém, by 1930, the new denomination had 3 temples and a thousand worshippers. From Belém Brazilian Pentecostals began evangelizing the Amazon region. Today this region is one of the strongest regions of *Assembléia de Deus* (AD) and the growth has accelerated more than ever. The *Assembléia de Deus* church in Belém today with all its *filhas* (daughter churches - see chapter 4.1.2) counts roughly 80 000 baptized people.¹²⁰ As we will see later, the AD church (IEADAM – *Igreja Evangélica Assembléia de Deus no Amazonas*) in Manaus and the state of Amazonas sees an explosive growth and is probably the largest Pentecostal church in Brazil counting about 390 000 affiliates (see below for a note on this term).¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Anderson 2004: 71

¹¹⁸ Chesnut 1997: 26

¹¹⁹ The article was actually the second article in the premier edition of *Assembleia de Deus*' first journal, the *Boa Semente* (Good Seed) – *Boa Semente* 1/18/19 rendered in Chesnut 1997: 28 and 176

¹²⁰ These numbers are according to Jonatás Câmara from a conversation 20 May 2009, himself the President Pastor of IEADAM (*Igreja Evangélica Assembléia de Deus no Amazonas*). His brother Samuel Câmara, the former President Pastor of IEADAM, is now leading the AD church in Belém. During the 12 years of Samuel Câmara in the Belém church, the church has grown from about 30 000 to 80 000 – something which corresponds quite well with Chesnut's numbers in *Born Again in Brazil* (1997). When Chesnut did his research in Belém in 1993 the church had about 40 000 affiliates (Chesnut 1997: 41).

¹²¹ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro 28 April 2009

Assembleia de Deus (AD) was not just a regional church phenomenon. Already from the beginning of the 1920's Berg and Vingren made increasingly frequent trips to the emerging metropolises of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.¹²² The year 1930 marks a decisive transition as the ties to Sweden were loosened and the leadership handed over to native Brazilians. The Swedish Pentecostal leader Lewi Pethrus had become convinced that this nationalization should be done during a 22 days voyage together with Gunnar Vingren to Brazil via Bremerhafen. The Brazilians wept unrestrained as the proposal to hand over everything, even churches and schools, was presented, Pethrus recalls. They had been prepared to take a fight with the Swedish leadership, something that now simply fell to the ground.¹²³ The AD headquarters were moved to Rio de Janeiro, and *Assembleia de Deus* was from now on a national church.¹²⁴ After 1930, AD saw an accelerated growth¹²⁵, and as an independent movement, with no support of finance or personnel from Sweden¹²⁶, the USA or anywhere else, the movement literally spread to every state in Brazil.¹²⁷ Today you find AD churches in almost any city or village. There is a saying in Brazil nowadays: "If you can't find an *Assembleia* Church in your town, it's too small to even be called a village." *Assembleia de Deus* in Brazil is today the largest protestant church in Latin America.

The numbers given, however, may vary a lot and I will not attempt to argue for the accurate number. The last demographic census by the Brazilian state institute *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) from the year 2000 shows a number of 8.4 million affiliates for AD (about 5 % of the total population).¹²⁸ This is a higher number than Anderson who conservatively holds "over 4 million". Other estimates are claiming even higher figures. The Gonzalez' state 14.4 million *members* by the beginning of the twenty first century¹²⁹, while Operation World in the 2010 edition gives an estimate of up to 15.6 million members and 20.8 million affiliates!¹³⁰ Operation World bases their figures on claims from the respective denominations (within Pentecostalism as well as within Catholicism and other Protestant denominations), but admits "*impossibly high figures*". A source of error is that many

¹²² Chesnut 1997: 29

¹²³ Lundgren 1973: 136-137

¹²⁴ Anderson 2004: 71-72

¹²⁵ Chesnut 1997: 30

¹²⁶ Although some Swedish missionaries decided to stay, and the pastor president remained Swedish until 1950. (Anderson 2004: 71-72)

¹²⁷ Anderson 2004: 71-72 / González & González 2008: 282

¹²⁸ http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/populacao/religiao_Censo2000.pdf , 24 November 2009

¹²⁹ González & González 2008: 283

¹³⁰ Mandryk 2010: 163

Pentecostals as well as Catholics may be doubly counted. Operation World therefore tries to compensate for this.¹³¹ The results from the IBGE 2010 census have not yet been presented.

A brief comment concerning different terms in use needs to be given. *Members* should mean those who are old enough to have made a deliberate decision to become a confirmed member of a congregation (usually baptized), and should refer only to those on the rolls of church membership.¹³² Membership is not necessarily the most adequate term to use. Rolls of church membership may be outdated, for example many who have changed denomination or local church may be counted both places. Others may have left the church but are still counted. Many churches also have much larger crowds of actual followers and participants than names registered on their church rolls. *Affiliates* will include all participants in the faith community: members and their children, non-member adherents, returning visitors and other participants.¹³³ I find *affiliates* to be a more suitable concept in the Brazilian context due to swift changes in the religious landscape. These definitions of *members* and *affiliates* correspond with the use of Operation World.

2.3.2 - *Congregação Cristá*¹³⁴

The second front in the history of Brazilian Pentecostalism emerged around the metropolis of São Paulo. As in the Pará story, there are even here links to Chicago in the USA. Luigi Francescon, an Italian who worked with William Durham in Chicago, started to preach to Italian communities in the USA and in Argentina in 1909, after receiving a specific prophesy from Durham. In 1910 he came to São Paulo and began to work among the Italian community there, numbering more than 1 million at that time. As his co-religionists in Belém, he was expelled from the Italian Presbyterian Church after preaching the baptism in the Spirit, and as a result the *Congregacioni Christiani* (Italian) was started. This was the first Pentecostal church in Brazil. Today the church is called by its Portuguese name *Congregação Cristá* (CC) and is counting 2,5 million affiliates according to the IBGE census (2000), making it the second largest Pentecostal denomination in Brazil.¹³⁵ It may, however, been surpassed by another Pentecostal denomination - the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.

¹³¹ Mandryk 2010: 163

¹³² Mandryk 2010: p. xxx

¹³³ Mandryk 2010: p. xxx

¹³⁴ Anderson 2004: 70

¹³⁵ Anderson 2004: 70

2.4 – The Second Phase

Until 1952 the AD and CC were the only significant Pentecostal denominations in Brazil, something that would change dramatically from the 1950s. It is estimated that about twenty to thirty new Brazilian Pentecostal denominations arose during the 1950s.¹³⁶ The most important being *Igreja Evangélica Pentecostal 'Brasil para Cristo'* (BPC, Brazil for Christ Evangelical Pentecostal Church), *Igreja Pentecostal Deus É Amor* (DEA, God is Love Pentecostal Church) and *Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular* (IEQ, Foursquare Gospel Church), which I will present by chronologically order in the following section.

2.4.1 – *Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular*

Before the 1950's the Pentecostal churches in Brazil almost exclusively recruited new members through pre-existing family and neighbourhood networks. No one had attempted to win thousands of new converts at once by staging massive public crusades until the National Evangelization Crusade in 1953, which led to the founding of *Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular* (IEQ) in Brazil two years later.¹³⁷ The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel was founded in Los Angeles (in 1922) by the Canadian evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Aimee was a pioneer in using radio and integrated “Hollywood showmanship” into her campaigns, deemphasizing the ascetic codes of conduct of classical Pentecostalism. People rushed to her tent meetings where the “full” or “foursquare gospel” was shared: Jesus as the Saviour, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, Healer and Coming King! Her services were essentially sessions of collective faith healing.¹³⁸

IEQ came to Brazil when the Hollywood Western actor, Harold Williams, became a missionary. Williams launched a non-denominational crusade in São Paulo called National Evangelization Crusade. His friend Raymond Boatright, also a former actor, played gospel hymns with his el-guitar, drawing large crowds and got wide press coverage. Many Pentecostal leaders supported the campaign. The cornerstone of the campaign was the collective healing sessions. The campaign ended with some disagreements, and Williams then founded IEQ in 1954.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Anderson 2004: 72

¹³⁷ Chesnut 1997: 34-35 / Anderson 2004: 72

¹³⁸ Chesnut 1997: 34-35 / Anderson 2004: 72

¹³⁹ Chesnut 1997: 34-35

The church now has more members in Brazil than in the USA (about 1.3 million), and significantly more than one third of its pastors are women.¹⁴⁰

2.4.2 - *Brasil para Cristo*

In 1955, *Brasil para Cristo* (BPC) was the first major Pentecostal church to be started by a Brazilian, Manoel de Mello, a former AD evangelist and member of Williams tent campaign. *Brasil Para Cristo* developed the strategies of mass evangelism even further, and brought healing campaigns to rented stadiums, theaters, auditoriums and gymnasiums. Crowds numbering about one hundred thousand pressed together in São Paulo to hear the gospel.¹⁴¹ His meetings got well known for miraculous healings. Manoel de Mello a popular northeasterner, made use of the popular country music from his area. BPC also used the radio as an effective tool. The morning radio programs were successful.¹⁴² Because of his popularity and hundreds of thousands of believers, the politicians became aware of him. For the first time Pentecostalism was brought into the political arena in Brazil. In a political bargain, BPC and Mello got an attractive piece of city property to build a church – but the newly built temple was razed to the ground by a demolition crew (it is thought on government orders). But the apparently major setback did not stop Manoel de Mello.¹⁴³ A new temple was raised, maybe the biggest church building in the continent, with a possibility to host crowds up to 30 000 on occasions.¹⁴⁴ Mello was also able to get his assistant Levy Tavares to be elected a federal deputy.¹⁴⁵

2.4.3 - *Deus É Amor*

Deus É Amor is another Brazilian movement founded in São Paulo in 1962 – by the 26 year old David Miranda, brother-in-law of Manoel de Mello. *Deus É Amor* brings together elements of classical and modern Pentecostalism and can be said to be a foretaste of the Neo-Pentecostalism appearing in the late 70s. They have strict moral codes of dressing and behaviour, similar to what had been usual in the older Pentecostal denominations. The distinctive aspect of DEA was the focus on healing and liberation. David Miranda elevated faith healing to the point that some researchers tend to classify DEA as an “agency of divine

¹⁴⁰ Anderson 2004: 72

¹⁴¹ Chesnut 1997: 37

¹⁴² Chesnut 1997: 37

¹⁴³ Chesnut 1997: 37

¹⁴⁴ Anderson 2004:72

¹⁴⁵ The Brazilian Parliament is called National Congress and consists of The Federal Senate (81 senators) and The Chamber of Deputies (at the moment 513 federal deputies). (<http://www2.camara.gov.br/english>, 19 August 2011)

healing” rather than a church.¹⁴⁶ Differing from the customs of classical Pentecostalism, exorcisms was highlighted and became one of the main attractions at the DEA services. Evil spirits of Umbanda such as Tranca Rua were unveiled and then driven out, of individual persons as well as collectively.¹⁴⁷ Since the ritual of exorcism is known both within Catholicism and the African-Brazilian religions of Candomblé and Umbanda, but hidden in Protestantism, some scholars conclude that Pentecostalism borrowed or integrated elements from other religions, thus continuing the syncretistic tradition in Brazil.¹⁴⁸

2.5 - “The Third Wave”

The third phase in the rise of Pentecostalism in Brazil begins after 1975, something which corresponds well with the development of global Pentecostalism. This rise of more independent churches is labelled Neo-Pentecostalism. The theological emphasis may vary. In Brazil this wave consists largely of “faith-churches”. The prime focus of the message here is to live a victorious Christian life in all aspects of life – health, finances, family and so on. This can be achieved through exercising your personal faith and confessing the promises of the word of God. Often there is also an emphasis on finances – “give and you will receive” is an important spiritual principle. In these churches classical Pentecostalism’s hostile view of cultural expressions is modified.

2.5.1 - *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*

The main promoter and pioneer of Neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil is the emerging *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (IURD - Universal Church of the Kingdom of God).

Edir Macedo, a former employee at the Rio de Janeiro state lottery, became the leading apostle for Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism. Macedo was raised as a Catholic, but like many Brazilians he had encounters with Afro-Brazilian cults in his youth by attending Umbanda terreiros. He “accepted” Jesus in the Pentecostal church *Nova Vida* (New Life) which was lead by Robert McAlister. In 1977 he left his job and *Nova Vida* to found his own church the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* together with Romildo R. Soares. They soon split up and IURD continued under the exclusive command of Edir Macedo.¹⁴⁹ R.R. Soares on the other hand started his own church, *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* (The International Church of the Grace of God), which also has reached a decent size and visibility in the

¹⁴⁶ Chesnut 1997: 38

¹⁴⁷ Chesnut 1997: 38

¹⁴⁸ For example Chesnut 1997: 38

¹⁴⁹ Chesnut 1997: 45

Brazilian society. (Sometimes you can see Soares preaching on several of the TV-stations available in Rio de Janeiro at the same time.)

IURD uses a wide range of creative means to win new converts. It buys up cinemas in the centres of the bigger cities and transforms them into churches, open twenty-four hours a day. Every day they have three services (earlier they had four) and counsellors are available at all times. In the night, after the service, troops of missionaries, usually young people, go out into the streets and to the *favelas* to recruit street children, drug dealers, prostitutes and criminals and offer them new life.¹⁵⁰ Many of these missionaries shared the same kind of life before they were converted.

In 1990 IURD bought the Rede Record TV network paying 45 million US dollars.¹⁵¹ This led to a heavy fight with the powerful media conglomerate Globo which had close to a market monopoly. There were several trials and numerous allegations, and Edir Macedo was even taken into custody. IURD and *Rede TV* prevailed and today this network is the second largest in Brazil - together with Globo they will by the way broadcast the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Thus IURD has planted itself in the midst of the entertainment sphere. In addition, IURD owns about 30 radio stations, a weekly newspaper *Folha Universal* with a circulation of 2.6 million copies,¹⁵² and various entrepreneurial businesses. They also construct giant and glittering temples like the “Cathedral of Faith” seating 11 000 worshippers in Rio de Janeiro.¹⁵³ Recently IURD announced that they are going to build a copy in real size of Solomon’s Temple in São Paulo, something which is expected to cost about 200 million USD¹⁵⁴.

The war on the Afro-Brazilian cults has been Igreja Universals primary task of evangelization. The spirits and gods of these cults are understood as real, but the cults are regarded as from the devil and their spirits are demons. *Libertação* – liberation, or literally the exorcism of these demons may be regarded as the key ritual of IURD. These evil spirits cause ill health, distress, poverty and all sorts of maligns and problems. The public services of

¹⁵⁰ Martin, Bernice 1998: 140

¹⁵¹ Anderson 2004: 73

¹⁵² For example *Folha Universal De 24 a 30 de maio de 2009 N 894* claimed 2 563 250 copies.

¹⁵³ Anderson 2004: 73 and <http://noticias.gospelprime.com.br/catedral-mundial-da-fe-da-iurd-completa-10-anos-neste-sabado/>, 26 December 2011

¹⁵⁴ Articles about *Templo de Salomão* and estimation of costs:

<http://www.adonainews.com.br/2010/08/replica-do-templo-de-salomao-no-brasil-e-vista-como-uma-goizacao.html>, 26 December 2011 and <http://noticias.gospelprime.com.br/prefeito-de-sao-paulo-visita-obras-do-templo-de-salomao-iurd/>, 26 December 2011

libertação with highly dramatic scenes, sometimes even broadcasted on national television, have given IURD a wide reputation.

The church offers miracles, including the miracle of prosperity to those who believe. If you need a miracle, you are recommended to attend the weekly services addressing your case, and give your offerings on that service as a seed – for example Monday is the day for financial problems, Tuesday – healing from illness, Thursday - family and marriage, and Friday - liberation.

IURD in Brazil counted 2.1 million people in the 2001 IGBE census¹⁵⁵, a number which today according to Operation World has passed 3.5 million members.¹⁵⁶ Many more are attending their daily services. Operation World counts 7 million affiliates¹⁵⁷. There is a tendency though that many visitors circulate, leading some observers to label it an “agency of miracles” instead of a church. IURD has according to their web page expanded to about 170 countries worldwide (according to Berge Furre there are established churches in more than 80 countries¹⁵⁸). They have been particularly successful in Portugal, South Africa, Argentina, and among the Hispanics in the USA.¹⁵⁹

2.5.2 - *Nova Vida*

Igreja de Nova Vida (Church of New Life) is not a large church according to Brazilian standards¹⁶⁰. Still, it has had major influence on Brazilian Pentecostalism with its training of the prominent figures Edir Macedo and Romildo R. Soares who today are leading two of the most influential Neo-Pentecostal churches.

The Canadian missionary Robert McAlister, born in 1931 in a classical Pentecostal family, was invited to join the American evangelist Lester Summeral in an evangelistic campaign in Maracanãzinho, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 1958. McAlister came back to Brazil in 1959 to live as a missionary, as he experienced this to be God’s calling. The church *Nova Vida* began with a radio program called *a Voz de Nova Vida* (the Voice of New Life) that was broadcasted on *Rádio Copacabana*. As the audience of listeners and the response grew, McAlister saw the

¹⁵⁵ http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/populacao/religiao_Censo2000.pdf, 20 August 2011

¹⁵⁶ Mandryk 2010: 163

¹⁵⁷ Mandryk 2010: 163

¹⁵⁸ Furre 2006: 39

¹⁵⁹ Anderson 2004: 74

¹⁶⁰ About 92 000 belong to *Igreja Nova Vida* according to the IBGE’s 2000 Demographic Census (<http://www.sidra.ibge.gov.br/bda/tabela/protabl.asp?c=2094&z=cd&o=13&i=P>, 21 December 2011)

need of opening a church. The first church service was held May 13th, 1961 in a packed auditorium. Several hundred conversions were registered already in the first service.¹⁶¹

A message that was emphasized already from the beginning, through the radio transmissions, was divine healing. The response (during the first year they received around 12 000 letters) led McAlister to publish the book *Perguntas e Respostas sobre a Cura Divina* (Questions and answers on Divine Healing), a book which sold out the first month.¹⁶²

Through his ministry Robert McAlister also came in touch with victims of the Afro-Brazilian cults. He had first thought that these cults were no more than “folklore”. Later, after curing a woman whose leg had been paralyzed ever since she kicked a *despacho* (ritual offering), he realized that these “superstitions” were real and harmful.¹⁶³ In 1968 he published the book *Mãe-de-santo* (Mother of Saint) facing this special Brazilian issue:

*From then on, I began to have direct contact with the victims of Candomblé and Umbanda, who told me the terrible drama involved in submitting oneself to the influences of the exus and orixás. In this way I passed from a certain incredulity to an awareness that these narratives were not merely the result of imagination, and despite their superstitious roots, their effects were very real.*¹⁶⁴

*I believe that Brazil must free itself from this evil that already dominates – according to some authorities – more than a third of the population, who bow down before saint-fathers and mothers and obey the laws and orders of the orixás. I dedicate this book, therefore, to the victims of the diabolic power of Candomblé and Umbanda.*¹⁶⁵

According to Goncalves da Silva, examining McAlister’s book, the central themes set out are:

1. Identification of the divinities from the Afro-Brazilian pantheon with the devil
2. Spiritual release through the (greater) power of the living blood of Jesus (in opposition to the “dry” or “fetid” blood of the initiation or the offerings)
3. As a consequence of spiritual release, conversion.
4. Conclusion: There is a very real spiritual battle for the souls of the Brazilian people.

¹⁶¹ <http://www.invb.com.br/igreja.php#>, 21 December 2011

¹⁶² <http://www.invb.com.br/igreja.php#>, 21 December 2011

¹⁶³ Goncalvas da Silva 2007: 3

¹⁶⁴ English translation of a passage from McAlister, Robert: *Mãe-de-santo*. 4th ed. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Carisma, 1983 (1968) (Goncalvas da Silva 2007: 3)

¹⁶⁵ English translation of a passage from McAlister, Robert: *Mãe-de-santo*. 4th ed. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Carisma, 1983 (1968) (Goncalvas da Silva 2007: 4)

Through the book the invitation to spiritual release is made on a national level. This invitation the disciple of McAlister, Edir Macedo, who have written his own bestseller and hard hitting book opposing the cults *Orixás, caboclos & guias. Deuses ou demônios?* (Orixás, caboclos & guias. Gods or demons?), brought to new heights.¹⁶⁶

2.5.3 – Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus

I will just briefly mention one of the recent Pentecostal phenomena occurring in Brazil, *Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus*. (IMPD, The Worldwide Church of the Power of God).¹⁶⁷ Reports claim up to 15 000 people crowd together daily at one of the services in an old factory in São Paulo now called the “Temple of Miracles”. The people come to receive or observe a miracle and hear the founder of the church, the black Waldemiro Santiago, preach. Testimonies of healing from cancer, AIDS, deafness, myopia, families being restored, children leaving drugs and jobs that just came out of the blue are heard from the platform accompanied by strong emotions. In just ten years, with effective use of television, IMPD has opened more than 500 temples (churches) all over Brazil and is present in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay, Spain, Portugal, Mozambique and Japan. According to themselves 20 new churches are opened every week.¹⁶⁸

Waldemiro Santiago was a former minister at *Igreja Universal*, but seems to have moderated some of its practices in IMPD. An observation¹⁶⁹ claims that IMPD merges the elements from the different stages of the Brazilian Pentecostal revival with a renewed emphasis on healing.

2.6 – Three Stages and New Churches

Working historically we could point out three major stages of Pentecostalism in Brazil, each having different emphases. The mark of the revival in the early 20th century can be said to be spirit baptism with speaking in tongues, but healing could as well be included. The second wave from the 1950^{ths} was featured by large crusades and divine healing for the masses. From the 70^{ths} and the 80^{ths} the emphasis has been liberation and prosperity. Now, independent churches and denominations are popping up everywhere, with different emphases. Some observers see a possible competition for souls as new ambitious Neo-Pentecostal churches

¹⁶⁶ Goncalvas da Silva 2007: 3-4

¹⁶⁷ <http://holofote.net/2008/10/14/maior-fenomeno-brasileiro-da-atualidade-igreja-mundial-do-poder-de-deus-presidida-pelo-apostolo-valdomiro-e-tem-mais-a-igreja-adquiriu-junto-a-rede-bandeirantes-os-direitos-para-gerir-e-transmitir/>, 27 August 2009

¹⁶⁸ <http://holofote.net/2009/04/18/igreja-mundial-do-poder-de-deus-crescimento-expoe-a-disputa-por-fieis-no-neopentecostalismo-brasileiro/>, 27 August 2009

¹⁶⁹ <http://holofote.net/2009/04/18/igreja-mundial-do-poder-de-deus-crescimento-expoe-a-disputa-por-fieis-no-neopentecostalismo-brasileiro/>, 27 August 2009

enter the “market”. While some of the older Pentecostal churches have started to mature and focus more on theology, new ones rise to carry the vibrancy of the Spirit.

This was a brief historical outline both of the religious landscape and its context, as well as of the main stages in the rise of Pentecostalism in Brazil. Before presenting explanatory theories for this growth, we may remark that the Pentecostal “revival” makes no signs of slowing down, but continues in an ever accelerated pace both within the older denominations and within new movements. This development will not make the subject of this thesis less relevant.

Chapter 3 – Theories of Pentecostal Growth

In this chapter I will present different theories suggested by scholars on the topic of Pentecostal growth in Brazil and Latin America. As stated, with a few exceptions this was nearly a neglected theme in academic circles for a long period. Academic interest focused previously on progressive Catholicism but has in recent years shifted more and more to the *evangelicós*¹⁷⁰, which primarily means the Pentecostals¹⁷¹. There are an increasing number of scholars doing research on Pentecostalism in Latin America and the Caribbean. They include sociologists, theologians, scholars of religion and anthropologists. The outcomes of these studies vary and do not always agree. I will therefore outline some of the main theories and categorise them.

3.1 – Differing Routes of Explanation

There are no objections to the fact that the Pentecostal churches in Brazil are booming. The growth that has taken place is an undisputed phenomenon among scholars. The actual pace of the growing rate and the percentage of the population belonging to Pentecostal churches, whether we talk about 12% or 20%¹⁷², is not a crucial point in the debate. Most scholars agree that since the mid-90ths there have been more worshippers any given Sunday in the Pentecostal *cultos* than in the Catholic masses.¹⁷³ Brazil now has the second largest

¹⁷⁰ *Evangelicós* is in Latin America used as an equivalent to Protestants.

¹⁷¹ Freston 2004: 221

¹⁷² In these examples of figures (from IBGE 2000 and Mandryk 2010: 163) I do not include Charismatic Catholics.

¹⁷³ Chesnut 1997: 3 / Cox 1995: 175

community in the world of practicing Protestants after the US, primarily of its fastest growing sector, the Pentecostals.¹⁷⁴ This is remarkable, considering Brazil being the country in the world with the highest number of Catholics. The visible signs of the Pentecostal revival are found in the streets and *bairros* (neighbourhoods) where new churches, sometimes even gigantic temples, are popping up all over the country. For example when brought around in Manaus, Amazonas, in May 2009, I counted at least 12 construction sites where new *templos* were being raised by one of the Pentecostal churches in the city, *Igreja Evangélica Assembléia de Deus no Amazonas* (IEADAM).¹⁷⁵ A religious census in 1992 initiated by the World Council of Churches showed that in the previous three years approximately 700 new Pentecostal churches had opened in Rio, which means in average five per week, or one new church founded every work day.¹⁷⁶ In the same period two hundred and forty new spiritist temples had also started, mostly of the *Umbanda* variety. But just one new Roman Catholic parish had been founded, despite the population growth.¹⁷⁷ The signs can be seen even before you leave the house. It is just to turn on the television or the radio to tune in on one of the many Pentecostal broadcasters that distribute the *boas novas* – good news - as some of the stations even are called.

The scholars thus discuss the causes of the growth, not whether there is growth or not. The unexpected Latin American Pentecostal boom, one would believe to be of certain concern within the Christian academic world. However, the scholars who have been attracted and who produce the most insightful and appreciative studies tend to be social scientists.¹⁷⁸ Fewer are theologians and church historians.

Insiders and outsiders to various phenomena often have different explanations to what is going on. The Pentecostals of Brazil may be sceptical if different researchers and sociologists

¹⁷⁴ Freston 2004: 221 (China does probably also surpass Brazil, but accurate numbers from China are hard to prove because of governmental issues)

¹⁷⁵ Observation made on a guided “church tour” through the city of Manaus, Amazonas, 16 May 2009.

¹⁷⁶ Chesnut 1997: 3 (Fernandes 1992: 19)

¹⁷⁷ Cox 1995: 167

¹⁷⁸ Some examples are R. Andrew Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil: the Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* (1997), David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish* (2002) and Bernice Martin "From pre- to postmodernism in Latin America: the case of Pentecostalism" in *Religion, modernity and postmodernity* (1998). Michael J. McClymond, who has reviewed a wide range of literature on the topic, gives a useful overview over studies on Pentecostalism in his fine article “We’re Not in Kansas Anymore: The Roots and Routes of World Pentecostalism”, 2007: 275. He also refers to a number of recent works like Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (2001), Cleary and Stewart-Gambino, *Power, Politics, and Pentecostals in Latin America* (1998).

try to explain away what they themselves see as a mighty work of God. This is not the only example of explanations taking different directions. As we will see, the scholars as well disagree with each other.

Even though sociologists have put forth their own theories, that may differ from the self understanding of the Pentecostals themselves, that does not mean that the sociologists are ignorant of what the Pentecostals themselves think. The researcher think that he or she is able to withdraw from the immediate context and look at the society and the big picture, and thus see reasons behind the reasons that the Pentecostals are claiming. Still, he or she may be well aware of what the *crente* (believer) would say.

When reading various presentations of theories, certain patterns can be found. I will therefore categorise some of the theories which have been suggested into three groups: *Deprivation theories*, *Social change theories* and *Spiritual power theories*. In addition I will mention a distinctive and recent approach which has developed among a group of Brazilian academics.¹⁷⁹

3.2 - Deprivation Theories

The early studies on Pentecostalism tended to be dominated by deprivation theories. These theories focus more on the *demand side* when it comes to religious change, that is to say there is a lack in life which needs a remedy. For these scholars conversion to Protestantism/Pentecostalism represents a response to varying external structures and processes. This could be the drastic changes associated with modernisation for example urbanisation and loss of traditional community.¹⁸⁰ The leading *deprivationists* Christian Lalive d'Épinay and Emilio Willems, who are among the early academics studying Pentecostalism, explain the growth of Pentecostalism in terms of the social disorientation of the rural-to-urban migrant.

The Harvard University professor Harvey Cox recorded an incident when meeting Lalive in Chile, where Lalive actually turned his thumb down when asked about Emilio Willems' theory.¹⁸¹ Even though their theories differ in their emphasis, they are both basically *deprivationistic*.

¹⁷⁹ This group would include for example Patricia Birman, Clara Mafra and Reginaldo Prandi. (Frigerio 2007: pp 11-51)

¹⁸⁰ Steigenga and Cleary 2007: 16

¹⁸¹ Cox 1995: 174

3.2.1 – Followers of the New Faith

Emilio Willems was one of the first scholars to try to understand this sudden expansion of what previously had been considered a small, marginal movement in Latin-America. His book *Followers of the New Faith*¹⁸² from 1967 suggests that the social dislocations that were then – and still are – produced an unbearable sense of *anomie* – moral meaninglessness or a “state of being without effective rules for living”.¹⁸³ Protestantism – he did not distinguish between Pentecostals and the other classical Protestant denominations as Baptists and Presbyterians – provided a comprehensive solution for their members with their new sense of coherence and strict set of rules. The social dislocations coming through the accelerated capitalist development, manifested in unbridled industrialisation and urbanisation undermined the traditional “rules for living” in rural areas, initiating mass migration to the cities – something which produced extreme poverty, shantytowns, violence and an unbearable sense of *anomie*. In the metropolis the Pentecostal congregations counteracted this *anomie* by creating for the disoriented urban migrant a powerful new identity as a *crente*.¹⁸⁴ Also by expecting the new believer or *crente* to go out as a missionary and win other converts the Pentecostals broke the monopoly that the Catholic Church and its priests had held for so long as purveyors of salvation. This empowering of ordinary people living in a highly religious culture, but feeling weak and devoid of any authority, are clues to understand the rise of Pentecostalism in Latin America, according to Willems.¹⁸⁵ With the new strict set of rules to live by – Pentecostalism strictly forbids drunkenness and infidelity – the Pentecostal congregations produced people with a reputation for sobriety, punctuality and honesty – something which made them attractive as employees. Pentecostalism together with the other protestant churches was not only counteracting the *anomie*, but without really knowing it created something which the continent of Latin America always had lacked, a middle class. In this way they were contributing, though perhaps inadvertently, to the process of modernisation.¹⁸⁶

3.2.2 – Haven of the Masses

Christian Lalive d’Epinay was one of the first scholars to confront Willems even though he has several common emphasizes. His book *Haven of the Masses*¹⁸⁷ in 1969 is a study of Chilean Pentecostals. He found that the vast majority of Pentecostal converts in Chile were

¹⁸² Willems, Emilio: *Followers of the New Faith*. Nashville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967

¹⁸³ The sociologists of religion Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge uses this definition. (Chesnut 1997: 4)

¹⁸⁴ Chesnut 1997: 175

¹⁸⁵ Cox 1995: 171

¹⁸⁶ Cox 1995: 172

¹⁸⁷ Lalive d’Epinay: *Haven of the Masses*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1969

unemployed recent migrants from the countryside. For Lalive d'Épinay, as for Willems, the clue to understand the growth of Pentecostalism is the migration of rural folks to the cities.

Lalive emphasized the continuity, not the break between the rural village and the city church. Pentecostalism, he argued, recreated the familiar patriarchal social structure of the *hacienda* (village farm). In pre-modern Latin America you had the concept of patron and client – *terrateniente* - the land owner – and the workers. Even if the workers were poor and enslaved, they received something in exchange for their labour. There was no question of democracy, but they had a place to live and at least some food to eat. In addition, they got protection and security from the patron. In the process of change to modernity these structures were broken up. People then rushed to the cities in hope for work and a better place, but were caught in the shantytowns and struggle for daily survival. For Lalive d'Épinay Pentecostalism was not a move towards modernity but instead a design to shelter the frightened masses from the assaults of modernity.¹⁸⁸ The pastors in the polished shoes and clean shirts with their authoritarian style are, according to d'Épinay, just the substitutes of the *terratenientes*.

The growth of Pentecostalism, according to D'Épinay, did not represent the collapse of Catholicism but its “transplantation” into to the urban sphere.¹⁸⁹ D'Épinay even argued that this was not a new rise of Protestantism but rather the newest variant of popular Catholicism, thus differing quite a bit from Willems. Neither were the Pentecostals modernisers, rather they were vainly trying to reconstitute a lost past - the pastors had taken the role of the patrons. The Pentecostal congregations were not contexts where modern attitudes could be learned but a new sphere where the old folk beliefs in miracles and supernatural intervention could be nourished. Ultimately they would not succeed, and the rapid Pentecostal growth would slow down and stop.¹⁹⁰ The unfolding of history has proved Lalive d'Épinay wrong. Instead of slowing down, the growing pace has increased.

3.2.3 - Political Oppression and Conspiracy

David Stoll¹⁹¹ who is another famous researcher of Latin American Pentecostalism, points to political oppression as the primary impetus causing the evangelic growth.¹⁹² Some Latin American researchers even have a conspiracy approach to the Pentecostal growth! They believe Pentecostalism has been externally imposed by the CIA and the US in order to

¹⁸⁸ Cox 1995: 174

¹⁸⁹ Cox 1995: 174

¹⁹⁰ Cox 1995: 174

¹⁹¹ Stoll, David: *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth*. Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1990

¹⁹² Chesnut 1997: 4

destabilize the Latin-American region!¹⁹³ Though there has been some contact between North American Missions and Brazilian Pentecostalism, the Foursquare Church is an example of this, the churches making most impact and booming in membership are the indigenous.¹⁹⁴ Usually the growth accelerated after the missionaries gave autonomy to the national leaders, for example this was the case for both AD and IEQ.¹⁹⁵ The great majority of the Pentecostal pastors in every Latin American country are native born.¹⁹⁶ In comparison about 50% of the Catholic priests are foreigners. Thus we can state that Pentecostalism in Brazil clearly is an indigenous movement.¹⁹⁷

The sociological studies do tell something about the world surrounding Pentecostalism and may undoubtedly give us factors of the whole picture. But do they catch the true essence of the Pentecostal growth? What about the new Pentecostal churches, which do not have the same strict codes of conduct as the classical ones, growing even at a higher rate? The circumstances and surroundings preparing the ground for the growth of Pentecostalism are factors that have to be taken into account. Some researchers believe that popular Catholicism prepares people for the Pentecostal experience.¹⁹⁸ This may be true, but these studies do not tell us why people mainly choose to become Pentecostal Christians and not something else? What is specifically significant with Pentecostalism? This brings us to the *supply side*. What does Pentecostalism offer? Why do not people choose Catholicism or the Afro-Brazilian religions to the same extent? And what are the internal factors keeping this movement growing?

3.3 – Social Change Theories

Most sociologists believe that Pentecostal churches help people adapt to a changing world. But, as mentioned, they differ about just how this adaptation takes place and what it means.¹⁹⁹ As we just have seen, some scholars posit religious conversion to Pentecostalism as a comforting replication of old norms and values. Recent observers, however, rather point to Pentecostalism as an attractive option because the new set of norms has affinities with individualism and capitalist values.²⁰⁰ Pentecostalism is an-up-to-date religion.

¹⁹³ Cox 1995: 176

¹⁹⁴ Chesnut 1997: 36

¹⁹⁵ Lundgren 1973: 137 / Chesnut 1997: 30, 36

¹⁹⁶ Chesnut 2003: 57

¹⁹⁷ Chesnut 2003: 57

¹⁹⁸ Cox 1995: 172-174 (Cox is referring to Lalive 1969)

¹⁹⁹ Cox 1995: 172

²⁰⁰ Steigenga and Cleary 2007: 16

3.3.1 – From Pre- to Post Modernity

Bernice Martin deals with what she sees as insufficient theories of deprivation in her article “From Pre- to Post Modernity in Latin-America: the Case of Pentecostalism”²⁰¹:

*The new Protestantism [Pentecostalism] is thus intensively relevant to this-worldly concerns and not merely another-worldly hope or sectarian “religion of the oppressed”. Indeed, it is often precisely what makes the practical difference between riding the wave of social change and being swamped by it.*²⁰²

She points to positive changes in the lives of Pentecostal converts and argues that Pentecostalism is a major positive force for social change, and not a clinging to an outdated past for marginalized people.

The period from the 60’s has in Latin America been a time of transition from pre-modernity to post-modernity. Bernice Martin chooses to view this period as an “*era of effective new opportunities and of emerging new forms of selfhood.*”²⁰³ This era has opened up new and fresh opportunities. But alongside the novel potentialities which are created, social changes at this accelerated pace also create new ills. The traditionally guaranteed networks, like the extended family and the *patron client* system cannot any longer be expected to come to rescue in times of need. The new vicissitudes intensify poverty and the pain of marginalisation.²⁰⁴ A general increase in the affluence of large sectors of the community triggers an exponential rise in expectations. This is altered by the utopia of mass media which is far beyond the possibilities of reality. Even though a more differentiated middle class did emerge between the income extremes in the growth period of the 1960s and 1970s, the absolute numbers of the poor did not decline and the gap between the rich and the poor did not narrow.²⁰⁵ In this world one of the creative ways of dealing with the new forms of life has been Pentecostalism. The Protestant movement is the most numerically significant and culturally effective among the voluntary institutions trying to create order within the chaos of the ghetto. The visible and numerous independent store-front churches in the ghetto are clear signs of this.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Martin, Bernice, "From pre- to postmodernism in Latin America: the case of pentecostalism" in *Religion, modernity and postmodernity*. Heelas, Paul, (ed.) Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, pp. 102-146

²⁰² Martin, Bernice 1998: 110

²⁰³ Martin, Bernice 1998: 116

²⁰⁴ Martin, Bernice 1998: 116

²⁰⁵ Martin, Bernice 1998: 116-117

²⁰⁶ Martin, Bernice 1998: 118

Pentecostalism grows because it offers two valuable things. To many, including some of those who gain worldly success, it offers an anchor in the face of dizzying new possibilities. To many more it offers hope and solutions to problems arising out of structural conditions which it is beyond the power of individuals to alter.²⁰⁷

Bernice Martin sees this breakdown of the pre-modern ways of living as a creation of new opportunities where new self-dependency and a new individualisation is about to be discovered. Differing from the theorists of deprivation, Martin sees Pentecostalism as an effective and future-oriented way of living life in this new era.

Her husband, David Martin, another famous researcher of Pentecostalism in Latin-America unfolds how the Pentecostals are moving up the social ladder.²⁰⁸

We can talk about a *redemption and lift*. Lower-class people are converted and because of their improved moral life they begin to climb up the social ladder.²⁰⁹

3.3.2 – Recent Tendency

More recently, a number of authors have stepped back from these broad claims about political and economic consequences of conversion and instead focused on immediate and practical reasons for conversion.²¹⁰ This could be increased physical security and economic security in times of political suppression (Stoll)²¹¹, a strategy for coping with poverty (Mariz)²¹², healing when facing serious illness (Chesnut)²¹³ more freedom and authority in the household for women (Brusco)²¹⁴. These and more have been pointed to as pragmatic reasons bringing conversion to Pentecostalism. Cecilia Mariz notes that levels of family conflict drop when women join Pentecostal Churches.²¹⁵ Some researchers also make a point of the paradox between a conservative Biblical view on the relationship between man and woman and how Pentecostalism still brings women into more responsibility. Pentecostalism has also proved

²⁰⁷ Martin, Bernice 1998: 126

²⁰⁸ Martin, David: *Tongues of Fire – The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990

²⁰⁹ Wagner 1986: 68-69

²¹⁰ Steigenga and Cleary 2007: 16

²¹¹ Stoll, David: *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990

²¹² Mariz, Cecilia: *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994

²¹³ Chesnut, R. Andrew: *Born Again in Brazil – The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty*. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 1997

²¹⁴ Brusco, Elizabeth, “The Reformation of Machismo: Asceticism and Masculinity among Colombian Evangelicals” in *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America*. Garrard-Burnett, Virginia and David Stoll (ed.), Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993

²¹⁵ Steigenga and Cleary 2007: 17 (Referring to Mariz 1994: 97)

itself a powerful remedy for the destructive and violent macho-culture prevailing in the slums. The man who was the “king of the street” now becomes a “master of the household”. Usually the family income and the children’s wellbeing increase when a husband becomes active in a Pentecostal congregation.²¹⁶

As the *deprivationists* see Pentecostalism as a transitional holding pattern for people who are uprooted from traditional cultures but not yet prepared for the radical individualism of modern urban life, Martin sees it as a change-making force achieving its goal successfully and producing lived results in the post-modern era.²¹⁷ To conclude: The *deprivationists* say Pentecostalism grows because people lack some basic elements of life, and Pentecostalism becomes the substitute. The *social changers* say Pentecostalism grows because it brings results and creates a better world. Basically it grows because it works.

3.4 – Spiritual Power Theories

There is even one more category of theories that should be presented. Philip Jenkins in his book *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (2007)²¹⁸ argues that university scholars in Europe and North America are ill-prepared to understand a movement which is strongest among the poorest people of the world and has supernatural experiences such as visions, prophecies, healings and exorcisms as basic elements.²¹⁹ Sociologists certainly have captured pieces of relevance in the picture of Pentecostal growth. But as time and social context do change, and the growth of Pentecostalism rather than slowing down is speeding up – we may ask if social conditions, being historically contingent, are really the true essence of Pentecostal growth. Could there be factors of a different nature? This brings us to the next kind of theories.

3.4.1 – Fire From Heaven

Harvey Cox, *Victor Thomas Professor of Religion at Harvard University*, wrote the book *The Secular City* in 1965 where he concludes that the time of religion is over and secularization is the prevailing force. Then, in 1995, he turns 180 degrees with his new book: *Fire From Heaven – The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. In the preface of the book he affirms that the global Pentecostal revival has proved their thesis wrong. It is secularity and not spirituality that is heading for extinction.

²¹⁶ McClymond 2007: 278

²¹⁷ Cox 1995: 172

²¹⁸ Jenkins, Philip: *The Next Christendom – the Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007

²¹⁹ McClymond 2007: 276

Harvey Cox suggests that Pentecostalism by its very nature – the emphasis of the Spirit – require a whole new approach to the study of religion.²²⁰

Cox believes Pentecostalism is just one, but a particular dramatic, example of a wider religious revival. Both scientific modernity and traditional religion have clashed over the privilege of being the ultimate source of meaning and value and failed. People are still willing to rely on science for the limited things it has proven it can do, but they do not believe it can answer their deepest questions.²²¹ Pentecostalism, Harvey Cox believes, has uncovered and brought forth a primal spirituality that, though hidden and suppressed at times, always has been there deep inside the human soul. This spirituality has much in common with different folk religions like for example shamanism. This spirituality is more intuitive and immediate than analytic and literal. A fruitful metaphor can be jazz music. The improvisational and experimental aspect taking different shapes as it unfolds. The Pentecostals are the forerunners of this new (but really old) movement of the spirit. Cox distinguishes between two sides within Pentecostalism. He holds that there is a struggle between a fundamentalist side that has to do with doctrinal purity and the authoritative voice of their tradition and an experiential side trying to reach past current distortions to the sources of faith. Which of the sides will prevail? Cox is hoping for the experiential but the Pentecostal definition of experience has to be clearer. Pentecostalism should not downgrade itself to the New Age form of self centring. He warns Pentecostalism not to have too much in keeping with the contemporary celebration of feelings and the endless search for new sources of arousal and exhilaration.²²² Experience is not the Source, it is the means by which the Source is known. For the early Pentecostals the special encounter with the Holy Spirit was a sign of the coming kingdom of God as had been taught and demonstrated by Jesus. They should go out and expand this kingdom of justice and compassion. The new Pentecostals of today must not forget this.

3.4.2 – Born again in Brazil

One of the later studies done on Pentecostalism in Latin America is the excellent ethnography *Born Again in Brazil – The Pentecostal Boom and Pathogens of Poverty* (1997)²²³. R. Andrew Chesnut resided for one full year with Pentecostals in Belem do Para to conduct what may be

²²⁰ Cox 1995: 181

²²¹ Cox 1995: 299

²²² Cox 1995: 313

²²³ Chesnut, R. Andrew: *Born Again in Brazil – The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty*. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 1997

the finest ethnography done on Pentecostalism in Latin America or any region.²²⁴ Later he has also written the book *Competitive Spirits – Latin America’s New Religious Economy* (2003)²²⁵

It may be to stretch Chesnut too far when placing him in the category of *Spiritual Power theories*. His theories for the most part could be understood as *social change*. Still some of his conclusions make me present him in this section.

Chesnut argues that the Pentecostal boom is not a result of political oppression or the suffering of *anomie*. Rather the informants of Chesnut seek immediate solutions to their health problems stemming from poverty. Illness is one of the most common and life-threatening manifestations of poverty in Latin America. In Belem, Brazil, where Chesnut resided for one year, insufficient caloric intake, unsanitary living conditions, and tropical heat create a fertile breeding ground for the gastrointestinal and infectious diseases that plague the poor throughout the third world. The concept of illness is by Chesnut expanded beyond its physical basis to also include social illnesses often caused by poverty, for example alcoholism, abuse and unemployment. In this world Pentecostalism offers the powerful remedy of faith healing. It both claims the ability of instant healing and gives people lasting changes and results. This is something which is not offered by its “religious competitors” to the same extent whether that is other denominations or religions/cults.²²⁶ In Chesnut’s massive material of 4000 conversion testimonies recorded between 1962 and 1993, approximately 80% of the testimonies relate to illness and faith healing as the cause for conversion!²²⁷ Also 86 % of Chesnut’s own 90 informants claimed that Jesus had healed them of some kind of ailment.²²⁸ Chesnut does not suggest a spiritual power behind the healings, but rather tries to explain them in terms of improved living conditions following conversion to Pentecostalism. He indicates, though, that there may be mechanisms in prayer not yet identified. However, he states that for the millions of Pentecostals *cura divina* – divine healing – is a subjective reality regardless of the opinions of sceptics and non-believers.²²⁹ Thus I find a place for the theory of Chesnut somewhere between the categories *Social Change* and *Spiritual Power*. I have found Chesnut especially insightful and believe he is shedding new light upon the topic.

²²⁴ McClymond 2007: 277

²²⁵ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits – Latin America’s New Religious Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc, 2003.

²²⁶ Chesnut 1997: 5-6

²²⁷ Chesnut 1997: 8

²²⁸ Chesnut 1997: 9, 80

²²⁹ Chesnut 1997: 87

In *Competitive Spirits* (2003) R. Andrew Chesnut adapts a market model to view the religious economy of Latin America. He shows that the religions thriving in Latin America are the *pneumacentric* religions: Pentecostalism, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the African Diaspora Religions. Analysing their products, marketing, sales representatives and organizational structures, Chesnut finds that the consumers demand is for spirit-centred worship and supernatural healing.²³⁰ The *pneumacentric* religions are most successful because they possess these appealing products.²³¹ The most successful among the *pneumacentrics* is Pentecostalism.²³²

3.4.3 – Spiritual Power and Church Growth

If Chesnut does not directly suggest any spiritual power as a cause for growth, our next researcher boldly does. Working as a missionary in Bolivia, getting firsthand knowledge on what was emerging C. Peter Wagner was one of the pioneers in announcing the Pentecostal rise in Latin-America with his book *Look Out! The Pentecostals Are Coming* in 1973.²³³

In *Spiritual Power and Church Growth* (1986)²³⁴, a work within a theological frame, Wagner introduces us to a world of extraordinary phenomena like healings, spiritual confrontations and massive church growth with various personal stories from the Pentecostal field. The prevalence of spiritism and *witchcraft* throughout Latin America is surprisingly strong. Demons, angels, evil spirits and witches are not mere fairy tales for the vast majority of the population.²³⁵ If sickness, poverty, marital problems or bad luck strike, the first instinct of many Latin Americans is to consult a witch. Different kinds of *witchcraft* appeal to people at the different social layers. This experienced power cannot be broken just with logical arguments, Wagner says, but can only be broken by greater power.²³⁶

“*Power evangelism*” is thus the most effective tool to spread the gospel. This is what Jesus really sent the twelve disciples to do: *As you go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons* (Matt. 10:7-8)²³⁷

²³⁰ Chesnut 2003: 150

²³¹ Chesnut 2003: 6

²³² Chesnut 2003: 39-40

²³³ Wagner, Peter: *Look out! The Pentecostals are coming*. Creation House, 1973

²³⁴ Wagner, Peter: *Spiritual Power and Church Growth. Lessons From the Amazing Growth of Pentecostal Churches in Latin America*. Lake Mary: Creation House, 1986

²³⁵ Wagner 1986: 37

²³⁶ Wagner 1986: 41

²³⁷ Wagner 1986: 40

One of the most important elements here is prayer for the sick. Wagner refers to a survey where Lalive found that more Pentecostal pastors in Chile had been the instruments for divine healing (98%) than those who had spoken in tongues (57%).²³⁸ The conclusion is that healing is a widespread phenomenon, even more widespread than speaking in tongues. Exorcism of demons is particularly important in the Brazilian context. Wagner refers to a work by Harmon Johnson entitled: *Authority Over the Spirits: Brazilian Spiritism and Evangelical Church Growth* (1969)²³⁹, with the conclusion that this could be one of the most important keys to Pentecostal church growth in Brazil.²⁴⁰

For Wagner the first and most essential dynamic underlying the Pentecostal growth is the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one causing healings and spiritual victories.

*It is only the direct work of the Holy Spirit which can ultimately transfer a person from the power of Satan to the power of God and cause a sinner to be born again.*²⁴¹

This is true for all church growth, not just the Pentecostal. But why then does Pentecostalism grow at such a higher pace than the traditional denominations? Wagner lists four dimensions of faith at which Christians can function: Saving faith, sanctifying faith, possibility-thinking faith and *fourth-dimension faith*. The *fourth-dimension* faith is the kind of faith which releases the power of God for supernatural signs and wonders.²⁴² How do you enter this *fourth-dimension* faith? The Pentecostals would say: through being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Wagner, however, believes all Christians can function in this dimension, because the Holy Spirit is given through salvation, but according to observation more Pentecostals than non-Pentecostals expect and experience this. They see the power of God working through them in healing the sick and casting out demons because they give the Holy Spirit free reign to move, trusting and obeying him. Wagner further states that those who minister at the fourth level of faith have a massive advantage in winning the masses of Latin America.

Another condition creating a fertile soil for growth is the structural and social one. Wagner refers to the works of Willems and Lalive when it comes to this. The lower classes seem more receptive to the Pentecostal message. Wagner uses one of Jesus' parables in explaining this. It was not the sower, nor the method, nor the seed or the climate that generated the different

²³⁸ Wagner 1986: 118

²³⁹ Johnson, Harmon A.: *Authority Over the Spirits: Brazilian Spiritism and Evangelical Church Growth*. Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1969, unpublished M.A. thesis

²⁴⁰ Wagner 1986: 126

²⁴¹ Wagner 1986: 31

²⁴² Wagner 1986: 34

results in the parable about sowing the word. The variable factor was the soil. The Pentecostals of Brazil and Latin America have sown the word where it is more receptive and are joyfully reaping the massive results.

Some other characteristics of the movement are: The Pentecostals are taking the gospel close to the people when they are going out into the streets and squares, converting people or visiting neighbours. Another aspect is that the Pentecostals rapidly start new churches, for example after evangelistic campaigns. In Pentecostal churches it is not just the pastor and clergy who minister, but every member is supposed to be an active minister. Every member of the “Christian body” is equipped with a spiritual gift. Wagner observes that Pentecostal Churches have more active religious followers than other Christian denominations. The Pentecostal churches are also more cultural relevant when it comes to music and expression of emotions – going to church does not need to be a boring thing, it can be fun.

3.4.4 - Power Encounters

John Wimber²⁴³ uses the term *power encounter* as a theological concept in his book *Power Evangelism – Signs and Wonders Today* (1985).²⁴⁴ Wimber understands *power encounters* as a battle of kingdoms – the clashing of the kingdom of God with the kingdom of Satan.²⁴⁵ Quoting Peter Wagner, Wimber explains “*that a power encounter is a visible, practical demonstration that Jesus Christ is more powerful than the false gods or spirits worshipped or feared by a people group.*”²⁴⁶ This can be, but is not limited to, exorcisms of demons. *Power encounters* often occur in mission contexts where Christianity enters new territory and challenges the reigning spiritualities.

3.5 - “The Brazilian School”

Another way of viewing this explosive growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil has developed among some of the region’s own academics. There are a number of Brazilian academics with a degree of common emphasis in such an order that we can talk about a Brazilian view or school.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ John Wimber is the founding pastor of the Charismatic movement The Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

²⁴⁴ Wimber 1985: 28

²⁴⁵ Wimber 1985: 29 – Wimber refers to this definition originally used by missionary Alan Tippett in *People Movements in Southern Polynesia*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1971.

²⁴⁶ Wimber 1985: 29

²⁴⁷ Some of these voices are: Patricia Birman (Birman 2007: pp 115-132), Clara Mafra (Frigerio 2007: 37 – Frigerio refers to Mafra 2000: pp. 57-85), Pierre Sanchis (Frigerio 2007: 37-38 – Frigerio refers to Sanchis in *Comunicações do ISER* 1994: pp. 5-11, Sanchis in *Nem anjos nem demônios: interpretações sociológicas do pentecostalismo* 1994: pp. 34-63, Sanchis in *Religião e Globalização* 1997: pp.103-115 and Sanchis in *Fieis e*

In Brazil almost a quarter of the adult population has switched to a religion different from the one in which they were born, something which has led to scholarly scepticism of the very existence of conversion.²⁴⁸ There is a culture and long established pattern among practitioners of spiritism and Afro-Brazilian religions of identifying themselves as Catholic (a religious identity which may also include attending Sunday Masses and participating in other Catholic rituals). This has led certain scholars to consider dual membership a characteristic feature of the Brazilian religious experience. The use of conversion as a suitable concept for the analysis of transits from one religious group to another or for the understanding of new religious movements is not favoured within the frame in which these scholars are working.²⁴⁹ Thus the very concept of conversion is discussed by some scholars working in Brazil and Latin America.

As some Neo-Pentecostal churches culturally tend to move closer to secular society, the tension between the sacred and the profane may be reduced sufficiently enough to make the process of conversion a less than drastic change. Brazilian culture and identity also tend to be of syncretistic nature and imbued with the sacred and religious to a much higher degree than other places, something which can make transits between religious groups a natural and non-dramatic occurrence for many converts.

Three separate theses where the studies are based upon conversion in the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* are the forerunners of this school:

Patricia Birman introduces the concept of *passages* between and within religious traditions instead of clear cut conversion. Clara Mafra another Brazilian author distinguishes between *maximal* and *minimal conversions* for understanding the Brazilian case. While Reginaldo Prandi argues that religion has turned into a commodity valued according to its usefulness.

In this chapter I have presented some of the main explanatory models of Latin American Pentecostal growth. Though there are more scholars and distinctive theories which could be mentioned, I still believe that these main categories outlined above cover or exemplify most of the field.

cidadãos: Percursos de sincretismo no Brasil 2001: pp. 23-25) Lísias Nogueira Negrão (Frigerio 2007: 38-39 – Frigerio refers to Negrão 1997: pp. 63-74), Reginaldo Prandi (Frigerio 2007: 36 - Frigerio refers to Prandi 1996: pp.257-273)

²⁴⁸ Frigerio 2007: 34

²⁴⁹ Steigenga and Cleary 2007: 6

We see that explanations and theories vary. Some may be outdated, some may even be too little developed. In the next part of this thesis we will turn to the material gained through my ethnographic work.

Chapter 4 – My Field: Pentecostal Churches

My field of research consists of a few churches from this huge field of the Pentecostal movement. As explained in the introduction, interviews and observations are my primary sources of information. In addition, I am using various sources of literature to shed light on the topic. The choice of my samples is not random. I have chosen to focus on two of the most influential and successful branches within the Brazilian Pentecostal sphere, and a third one of a smaller size. More specifically, five local churches from these movements have been my field of research. Before I present my interviews and observations, I will give an introduction to these churches, where my sample was obtained.

Narrowing down, the question of research can thus be put: Why are these local churches growing to such an extent? And, the answers found here, it can be argued, will not just be limited to these local congregations, but might indicate something about Brazilian Pentecostalism at large.

The two main movements of my samples are *Assembleia de Deus* and *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*. In addition I have qualitative material from *Igreja Nova Vida*. I will begin with *Assembleia de Deus*, one of the very first Pentecostal churches that was founded in Brazil and since then has seen a steady and accelerating growth. Then I will continue with *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*, the church which today is one of the most ambitious and visible as well as a cause of constant discussions.

4.1 – Assembleia de Deus

The history of *Assembleia de Deus* has already been outlined in chapter 2.3.1. Now I will give a somewhat more detailed presentation of typical traits of AD today. I do so partly to provide a background for the interviews being presented and discussed in chapter 5 and 6, and partly to shed light on mechanisms of growth. As already stated, *Assembleia de Deus* (AD) is the largest Brazilian Pentecostal denomination, as well as the largest national Pentecostal

denomination in the world,²⁵⁰ with a number of affiliates ranging from 4 million to 20 million.²⁵¹ Through their massive “churchplanting” AD congregations today are found in almost any place or village in Brazil according to the general opinion.²⁵²

4.1.1 - “Gloria Deus” - Music and Style

“Gloria Deus” (glory to God) is a phrase you probably will hear shouted loudly if visiting an AD service.²⁵³ *Assembleia de Deus* is known for being a loud and enthusiastic church with a strong emphasis on the charismas, especially tongues, healing and prophecy. AD has earlier been a strictly conservative form of Pentecostalism. Conversion to classical Pentecostalism and AD also implied a clear break with the culture of “this world”.²⁵⁴ Most of contemporary culture - something that would include everything from carnival and cinema to football - was viewed as sinful and participation in it forbidden.²⁵⁵ In recent years what is regarded sinful within contemporary culture has been modified, for example football is today very much accepted in most places (I realised this through informal conversations with AD members)²⁵⁶. Previously there have also been norms for clothing when attending service. Men should wear pants and shirts and sometimes ties while women should wear skirts and have their hair pinned up in a knot. These former clothing customs are, however, still practiced to some extent in quite a number of churches even today, for example in the large *Assembleia de Deus* at Madureira in Rio de Janeiro.²⁵⁷ Because of this traditional dress code, faithful *assembleianos* would be easily recognized in the *favela* street and usually be regarded holy and untouchable by the criminals in most cases.²⁵⁸ Even I myself, an obvious foreigner, who normally would be regarded an attractive goal for robbers, would have the chances of getting

²⁵⁰ Synan 1997: 135

²⁵¹ The numbers vary. Allen Anderson (2004) conservatively estimates four million affiliates (a number that seems too low), but mentions that some say five to eight million (Anderson 2004: 71). The IBGE 2000 Demographic Census counted 8.42 million members of *Assembleia de Deus*. (The numbers from the 2010 Census has not yet been published.) (<http://www.sidra.ibge.gov.br/cd/cd2000cgp.asp?o=13&i=P>, 22 December 2011).

Operation World (2010) estimates about 15 million members and about 20 million affiliates. (Mandryk 2010: 163) In comparison Assemblies of God in the US has about 3 million members. (Mandryk 2010: 862)

²⁵² Anderson 2004: 71-72

²⁵³ According to my own observations

²⁵⁴ This, however, was common for classical Pentecostal denominations with the Holiness Movement as their background, wherever it appeared, for example in North America, Scandinavia, Brazil or elsewhere. (See Vinson Synon, *The Holiness Pentecostal Tradition*, 1997). *Congregação Cristã*, the other classical Pentecostal denomination has until today even stricter dress codes and modes of conduct (Anderson 2004: 70-71).

²⁵⁵ Martin, Bernice 1998: 127

²⁵⁶ On one occasion I was even invited by a group of young AD members (among them also the worship leader) to the cinema. Thus we see that the very rigid conservative form of classical Pentecostalism is changing. It should, however, also be noted that these AD members had certain standards of what they would accept to watch. They also listened more or less exclusively to Christian music (Artists with a Christian confession).

²⁵⁷ I was able to witness this firsthand when visiting *Assembleia de Deus* in Madureira.

²⁵⁸ This based upon informal talks with Brazilian Pentecostals. An example to be mentioned as an example is pastor Marcos Perreira who is treated with great respect among the criminals.

robbed significantly decreased. With the right dress code I would be regarded as a pastor or committed churchgoer, someone who should not be touched.

Today *Assembleia* has been split up in different fractions, some keeping these conservative customs more than others.²⁵⁹ Many places these conservative rules of conduct are in a process of rapid change. The two *Assembleia* churches which were the objects of my study did not have clear guidance of this kind. Still people normally dress up nicely when attending church.

The music and worship in these “renewed” fractions of AD is often very contemporary and also influenced by Australian Pentecostalism of the Hillsong form.²⁶⁰ When I stayed in Brazil in 2009 one of the most played songs on the radio, the secular radio no exception, was a strong emotional worship song by an *Assembleia* worship leader, Regis Danese. His song “*Entra na minha casa*” I even heard being played in the shopping mall. Thus Brazilian Pentecostalism is renewing itself and even winning a share of the secular culture. Another example of this is the visit of the Hillsong worship team to Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro *Sambódromo* (Sambadrome), which is the stadium used for the famous carnival, had to be rented. Just a handful bands are able to draw such huge crowds for concerts in Brazil that one would take the risk of renting *Sambódromo* which has a capacity of 90 000 people.²⁶¹

Assembleia de Deus Missão Apostólica da Fé in São Cristóvão and *Igreja Evangelica Assembleia de Deus no Amazonas* which I visited both belong to the renewed type of *Assembleia* churches where the youth are given space to seek God through their means of cultural expressions. Their choice of instruments and songs are integrated in the regular services as well as in separate youth services and youth camps.

Assembleia de Deus belongs to the classical Pentecostal tradition following the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. AD is, in contrast to Neo-Pentecostal churches like IURD and others, regarded with growing respect by the older evangelical traditions and is reckoned among the “true” *evangelicos*. During the recent years and decades AD has been influenced by the new and emerging Neo-Pentecostal churches, thus both liberation (from evil spirits) and

²⁵⁹ An understanding gained through informal talks with Brazilians from the *favelas*.

²⁶⁰ The Hillsong worship team has visited Brazil several times and AD youth are big fans them.

²⁶¹ The list of bands who have performed in *Sambodromo* will include Elton John, Coldplay, Radiohead, Bon Jovi, The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, Nirvana.

prosperity, though present from the beginning, has become a more visible focus in much AD teachings.²⁶²

4.1.2 - Structure and Strategies

The AD congregations are led by the pastor, who has the overall authority. In the larger congregations the main pastor is also called president, but could also be referred to as bishop or apostle. This means he is the “head pastor“ of the organisational structure, and the leader above all the other pastors. One of the strategies for growth getting attention in the AD churches I studied was *groups of evangelism* also called the cell vision (*visão celular*) or cell groups. This strategy was a more recent focus, about 15-20 years old in the Manaus congregation and even younger in Rio de Janeiro. Another strategy, being present from the early years, is the planting of *filhas* (daughters), meaning new daughter churches. The *filhas* are under the leadership of the “mother church” or the headquarters and the “pastor president”. “The mother church” takes care of the economy and other organizational matters, but the weekly leadership and preaching is executed by the local pastor and his helpers. When a *filha* does not have their own local pastor, the main church has evangelists and preachers who are circulating and can be provided where there is a need.

4.1.3 - “The Wonder in Amazonas” - Interview with Pastor Jonatas

I was able to make an interview with Pastor Jonatas Câmara the pastor and president of *Igreja Evangélica Assembleia de Deus no Amazonas* (IEADAM). I met him in Rio de Janeiro, where he was passing by after a meeting with other national leaders in *Assembleia de Deus*. Later I was also able to travel to Manaus, a city deep within the enormous jungle and the capital of the state of Amazonas. I got the opportunity to visit the AD church there and see parts of their work from the inside. I got the chance to observe their work at their headquarters, *Canaã* (Canaan - the base for their media work which included TV and radio broadcasts) and attend a large service there (with between 8 000 - 10 000 people²⁶³) with a special guest preacher²⁶⁴. I also attended the Sunday service at their *Templo Central*, as well as doing several interviews.

²⁶² According to my own observation

²⁶³ According to my own estimation/calculation – Participant observation in *Assembleia de Deus*, at the convention *Canaã*, Manaus, 19 May 2009

²⁶⁴ Jorge Tadeu, the founder of *Igreja Maná* (Manna Church), who came flying to Manaus in his own private jet.

Pastor Jonatas Câmara introduced me to what may be the largest single protestant church²⁶⁵ in Brazil (maybe even the largest one in the whole of Latin America as well – though I cannot verify these claims).

Pastor Jonatas Câmara explained²⁶⁶ that the church he is leading, IEADAM, is one church with multiple temples (*templos*) or congregations. The state of Amazonas has a population of about 3.5 million people, while the capital Manaus has 1.8²⁶⁷ million inhabitants. In the capital alone they have 930 congregations and about ten thousand *groups of evangelism*²⁶⁸ with approximately 180 000 affiliates²⁶⁹ (not counting the children). In the whole state²⁷⁰ they have about 3500 congregations and altogether 390 000 affiliates, something which actually is more than ten percent of the entire population of the state of Amazonas.²⁷¹ Their vision is to have a congregation (*templo*) for every 400 households in the state (the average number of people per household is 5), and to have 2500 congregations (*templos*) in Manaus alone.²⁷²

Seemingly, the numbers given are incredible high, and one could be tempted to write them off as a pastoral exaggeration. The numbers, though, find support when being compared with the IBGE 2000 demographic census²⁷³. Of the population in 2000, 7.63% in Manaus and 8.81% of the Amazonas state belonged to *Assembleia de Deus*.²⁷⁴ Since the year 2000 the rapid

²⁶⁵ This characteristic, however, depends on how a church is defined. If one counts whole church movements, there will be larger churches. AD is the largest protestant denomination in Brazil, but consists of a number of independent churches (larger and smaller). Also Neo-Pentecostal church movements like IURD, that are lead in a very hierarchical way, could be viewed as one body, however such national and even international movements has to be viewed more like denominations consisting of various local or regional congregations. The IEADAM, I understand as one church due to their administrative structure and their own understanding., though they have several thousand congregations,

²⁶⁶ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁶⁷ The official number from IBGE was 1.71 million for the city and 2.006 million for the metropolitan area (2008). The population of the entire Amazonas state is 3.48 million (2010).

²⁶⁸ *Grupos de evangelização* (groups of evangelism) was the term that pastor Jonatas Câmara used in the interview. Other times these groups are referred to as *células* or cells, for example on their web page www.ieadam.com.br/, December 2011. The term *groups of evangelism* highlights a certain aspect I believe can be important, thus I continue to use this term.

²⁶⁹ The general secretary of IEADAM, Jorge Campo, confirmed these numbers in a separate interview, while clarifying that 139 000 were baptised members and 50 000 were not yet baptised. In addition there were about 50 000 children. (Interview with the general secretary of IEADAM, Jorge Campo, in Manaus, 14 May 2009)

²⁷⁰ IEADAM has congregations in all the 62 cities in the Amazonas state. (Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009)

²⁷¹ These numbers were given to me by pastor Jonatas Câmara during the interview. The numbers were also confirmed by the general secretary of IEADAM, Jorge Campo, in an interview in Manaus, 14 May 2009.

²⁷² Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁷³ IBGE 2000 Demographic Census (<http://www.sidra.ibge.gov.br/cd/cd2000cgp.asp?o=13&i=P>, 20 December 2011)

²⁷⁴ IBGE 2000 Demographic Census (<http://www.sidra.ibge.gov.br/cd/cd2000cgp.asp?o=13&i=P>, 20 December 2011)

(The numbers from the 2010 census are not yet published as of April 2012)

growth has continued, and thus I find the numbers reasonable. The numbers were also confirmed by the general secretary Jorge Campos in a separate interview.²⁷⁵

Further, pastor Jonatas explained that the previous year (2008) they registered 22 000 conversions only in Manaus, and baptised 13 000 new converts (10 462 according to the general secretary²⁷⁶).²⁷⁷ On one specific Saturday in December 2008 they baptised roughly 6000 people at Ponta Negro, the famous beach in Manaus by the Amazon river, as a public demonstration for the whole city.²⁷⁸

They also registered 8700 baptisms in the Holy Spirit and around 15 000 healings (testimonies which included healing from cancer, aids, leprosy, blindness, hearing problems, speech problems and people raised from wheelchairs) just in Manaus, according to pastor Jonatas Câmara.²⁷⁹

I was curious on how they were able to record these numbers. The clue was the administrative structure of the church. The church is organised in *groups of evangelism*, the pastor told me, consisting of minimum three and maximum twelve people who meet once a week.²⁸⁰

Every group has an appointed leader, a secretary and a treasurer. The leader takes care of the spiritual leadership, the secretary records the presence, counts conversions and so on, while the treasurer accounts for the offerings. They report back to the leader of their local congregation. The leader of their congregation gives reports to the pastor of the area (for every five congregations there is a pastor). The pastor of the area gives reports to the general treasurer and the general secretary. The general secretary finalises the reports, something which is done on a monthly basis.²⁸¹

The groups are also the clue to understand their massive growth. Pastor Jonatas pointed to the empowerment of all believers, when asked about why Pentecostalism grows in Brazil. It is not just the pastor or the pastors who convey the manifestations of the power of God. *Assembleia de Deus* grows because they stimulate the church to believe that every Christian should be transmitters of the power of the gospel. The growth mainly takes place through the *groups of*

²⁷⁵ Interview with the general secretary of IEADAM, Jorge Campo, in Manaus, 14 May 2009

²⁷⁶ The general secretary corrected the number of baptisms to 10 462 in 2008. (Interview with the general secretary of IEADAM, Jorge Campo, in Manaus, 14 May 2009)

²⁷⁷ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁷⁸ Interview with the general secretary of IEADAM, Jorge Campo, in Manaus, 14 May 2009

²⁷⁹ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁸⁰ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁸¹ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

evangelism. Each member of the group is challenged to invite at least one person who is not a Christian to the group each month. It is expected that in a year the group should multiply.²⁸²

The *groups of evangelism* exist for all the social levels and the church does not make any distinctions between these people. Sometimes, though, it is natural for people to meet with others sharing the same interests. Therefore doctors meet with doctors, lawyers with lawyers and judges with judges for example. Actually the IEADAM church has five *groups of evangelism* within the state court of Amazonas. The church is for all, but it is natural that groups form on different social levels. The church does not try to control this natural selection.²⁸³

As a consequence of their belief in the empowering of every member, they follow up on these “manifestations of God” through collecting the reports. Pastor Jonatas Câmara explained that the greatest manifestation of the power of God is the salvation and transformation of a life. Also important is to consolidate the faith, and to keep the people alive and burning in their first love. These are the greatest “manifestations of the power of God”, according to their view.²⁸⁴

Then, the church also focuses on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, deliverance from evil spirits, physical healing and healing of the soul and the mind of people. The healing of mind and spirit is as important as the healing of the body. Most of the healings are also recorded in the *groups of evangelism*.²⁸⁵

Pastor Jonatas also believes that the reasons of the Pentecostal growth in Brazil are rooted in its beginning. From the start the movement was characterised by prayer, evangelisation, holiness, discipleship and mission. “*The church saw the needs of the people and tried to meet these needs through the gospel. Pentecostalism teaches that every member should wake up and have this goal for their eye.*”²⁸⁶

4.1.4 - The “Mother” Church in Rio de Janeiro – Interview with Pastor Jessé

ADMAF, São Cristovão proved to be an AD church of a rich historical heritage. It was actually the second AD church in Brazil after the first one in Belem! Pentecostal pioneer Gunnar Vingren had even been the pastor together with Daniel Berg between 1924 and 1930

²⁸² Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁸³ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁸⁴ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁸⁵ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

²⁸⁶ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

in São Cristovão. From ADMAF all the other AD churches in Rio and the whole southern part of Brazil were founded.²⁸⁷ However, as the new churches grew bigger they were given autonomy. In this way for example both AD Madureira and AD Penha (today *Assembleia de Deus Vitória em Cristo*) became independent.²⁸⁸ There had also been some splits, with *filhas* departing from the headquarters in São Cristovão.²⁸⁹ In the past, therefore, ADMAF was a lot bigger with 50-60 *filhas*. Today (2009) the church consisted of 30 *filhas* with altogether 6000 members.²⁹⁰

The church was now in the process of implementing a *cell vision*, a process not being as easy as hoped for. A member told me that many people left the church and joined other churches, some years ago when the pastor decided to follow the *cell vision*.²⁹¹ Another member estimated that just 10-20 % of the church were parts of the *cell groups*. According to him there were so few because it required a great deal of commitment and was demanding too much. My informant was not yet a cell group leader, because he did not have the time available.²⁹²

Even if they had experienced such a decline, still they continue to grow, and the last ten years 10 new *filhas* had been founded. Every third month they baptise *at least* 50 people, thus more than 200 each year (among these are also converts who belong to other churches). According to pastor Jessé Mauricio Ferreira there are also a number of people coming from the Neo-Pentecostal churches to his church because they want to learn more from the Bible.²⁹³

“*Gloria Deus*” I often heard when I was visiting *Assembleia de Deus Missão Apostólica da Fé* in São Cristovão, Rio de Janeiro. The services at times tended to be highly emotional and ecstatic.

²⁸⁷ Interview with pastor Jessé Mauricio Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro, 9 April 2009 - (The titles bishop, president and pastor were all used)

²⁸⁸ Interview with pastor Jessé Mauricio Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro, 9 April 2009

²⁸⁹ At this point I found a difference between the versions of the pastor and of a lay member. The pastor said “We gave them autonomy. They were bigger and could run themselves”. The member told about some disputes over authority. When the new president closed the custom of letting the pastors have designated seats on the stage, several of them broke out with their *filhas* (congregations). “*The important people used to sit on chairs on the platform, but there is no difference between the people and the leaders, Jessé wanted to demonstrate. But many of the people that used to sit on the platform [from the time of Jessé’s father] then left the church. This is sad.*” (Interview with Ricardo in Rio de Janeiro, 11 May 2009)

²⁹⁰ Interview with pastor Jessé Mauricio Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro, 9 April 2009

²⁹¹ Interview with Ricardo in Rio de Janeiro, 11 May 2009

²⁹² Interview with Beco in Rio de Janeiro, 7 May 2009

²⁹³ Interview with pastor Jessé Mauricio Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro, 9 April 2009

When I first visited ADMAF, São Cristovão I was welcomed by a genuine warmth and love. Probably, I received some extra attention because I was a foreigner. Still, I sensed and observed a general loving and caring for one another, which I believe people will find very attractive. After attending services, a family brought me the half an hour drive to my home, on another occasion I was invited to eat with someone who bought me the pizza even if I insisted on paying.

4.2 – Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus

Assembleia de Deus is not the only Pentecostal Church growing significantly in Brazil. We will now turn to the fastest growing church in Brazil in recent time, *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*.²⁹⁴ I have given an outline of the history of this church in chapter 2.5.1.

4.2.1 – “The more they beat us, the more we grow”

“*We are like an omelet, the more they beat us, the more we grow*” is a quote by one of the leaders of *Igreja Universal* and a close associate of the apostle and founder, Edir Macedo.²⁹⁵ This has proved to be the reality. Despite harsh criticism from both outsiders and insiders of the evangelical movement, IURD has been the fastest growing Brazilian Church in recent decades.²⁹⁶ Opposed by authorities, private companies, the Catholic Church and some other evangelical churches, the growth has not slowed down. Today the IURD web page boldly confirms:

*Thirty years have passed and now the UCKG (IURD) has about 8 million of the faithful only in Brazil. It has 9600 pastors and generates 22 thousand direct jobs in more than 4,700 temples installed in 172 countries. The work continues to grow day after day.*²⁹⁷

In 2005 the IURD turnovers of the previous year was measured by the Brazilian news magazine *Veja* to a massive 3 billion BRL (1.9 billion USD²⁹⁸)! This was gained through offerings in 5000 temples in more than 80 countries, two television stations (among them the 45 million dollar purchase of TV-network Rede), 56 radio stations, one record company selling 5 million CD’s per year, a publishing house with Macedo’s 34 titles and the weekly

²⁹⁴ Furre 2006: 40

²⁹⁵ Nascimento 1995: <http://www.brazzil.com/cvrnov95.htm>, 27 December 2011

²⁹⁶ Shaul & Cesar 2000: 10-11

²⁹⁷ My Portuguese translation of <http://www.igrejauniversal.org.br/histiurd-mundo.jsp>, 16 March 2010

²⁹⁸ Converted with the course of 10 July.2011 – USD had a higher value compared to BRL in 2005.

newspaper *Folha Universal* with a circulation of 1,5 million (in 2009 that had risen to 2,6 million), and one bank among other things.²⁹⁹

This actually makes IURD one of the biggest multinational enterprises in Brazil.³⁰⁰ What is this “new” and rising phenomenon *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*?

The size and distinctiveness of IURD has caught the interest of an increasing number of observers and scholars.³⁰¹ What kind of church is it, or is it really a church in the traditional sense at all? Some observers would define it more as an agency of liberation and divine healing instead of a church in the traditional sense.³⁰² It has been accused of just being a business or a fraud which is designed to fool money from the poor and uneducated people.³⁰³ The opinions vary, but it is classified as a Neo-Pentecostal church by its observers, meaning it belongs to the group of new and independent churches and movements that arose since the 1970s.³⁰⁴ It has the structure of a private company and makes use of business management techniques to run their churches. Television and mass media is used efficiently to promote the Pentecostal message. Elements linked with Catholicism are also found in their services, primarily their use of symbols. The spiritual battle especially against the Afro-Brazilian religions and spiritism has a central role. Postmodernism is another label that has been suggested on IURD.³⁰⁵ It should be discussed, however, if this is a fitting rubric. This is a definition that may imply a charge of syncretism, for example that practices of classical and modern Pentecostalism have been mixed with elements of Umbanda and Candomble.³⁰⁶ Later in this thesis, the relation between IURD and the Afro-Brazilian religions will be discussed.³⁰⁷ The theology of IURD, though, is basically Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal, with a somewhat stronger and different emphasis³⁰⁸ on faith, healing, deliverance, prayer, tithing and sacrificing. On every IURD temple huge red letters proclaim “*Jesus Cristo é o Senhor*” (Jesus Christ is the Lord). Another vision and outspoken slogan is “*Pare de sofrer*” (stop suffering).

²⁹⁹ The Veja article from 20 July 2005 can be read here: http://veja.abril.com.br/200705/p_090.html, 13 June 2011

³⁰⁰ http://veja.abril.com.br/200705/p_090.html, 13 June 2011

³⁰¹ Berge Furre, Paul Freston, Richard Shaull and Waldo Cesar to mention just a few

³⁰² Mary Esperandio, “Spiritual Care of the Self: A New Form of Religious Experience in Globalised Post-Modernity?”, Stålsett, *Religion in a Globalised Age – Transfers & Transformations, Integration & Resistance*. 2008: pp. 53-54

Chesnut is referring to other observers taking this stand. Chesnut himself regards IURD as “much more than an agency of divine healing”. (Chesnut 1997: 45)

³⁰³ Shaull and Cesar, 2000: 11

³⁰⁴ See chapter 1.6 for a discourse of Pentecostalism and the term Neo-Pentecostal.

³⁰⁵ Chesnut 1997: 45

³⁰⁶ Chesnut 1997: 45

³⁰⁷ See chapter 6.7 and 7.4

³⁰⁸ See next chapter 4.4.4

The Church is by outsiders in Brazil reckoned as an evangelical Church, though not all evangelical churches want to be identified with it. The *Associação Evangélica Brasileira* (Brazilian Evangelical Association) previously led by Presbyterian Caio Fábio D'Araújo Filho³⁰⁹ has been accusing bishop Edir Macedo of using manipulative methods to collect money, and contends that Macedo's church has "no legitimacy to represent the diversity of the Evangelical Church." *Igreja Universal* has allied itself to a branch of the *Assembleia de Deus* to start its own evangelical organisation the *Conselho Nacional dos Pastores do Brasil* (National Council of Brazil's Pastors).³¹⁰

I visited and observed services in the largest temple of IURD, *A Catedral Mundial da Fé* (the Worldwide Cathedral of Faith), at Del Castilho in Rio de Janeiro. This is also the headquarters of IURD. In addition I visited IURD in the middleclass neighbourhood Botafogo. Since *Igreja Universal* is quite a "streamlined" movement with more or less the same pattern of style and practices, I will treat IURD as one body.³¹¹ There may, off course, be some local variations also inside Brazil, but the headquarters in Rio has to be regarded as the official and "mainstream" version of IURD.

4.2.2 - The IURD Theology

Because of IURD's controversial status, I find it natural to take a closer look at their system of beliefs and practices. Their theology and practice may certainly be of significance for their growth.

A seminary started for the training of its pastors was short-lived. The bishop Edir Macedo not long after commanded the seminary to be shut down." Why keep our pastors in a classroom when they need to be out in the streets and preach the gospel." Not surprisingly there are few theological books and material produced. The written material is limited to a couple of short books (14) from the founder Edir Macedo all published by *Gráfica Universal* which belongs to the Church.³¹² The other books found in their bookstores are of the faith-preacher Kenneth Hagin and his allies. But there is also a huge amount of un-systematized material through

³⁰⁹ In 1998 Caio Fábio D'Araújo Filho was himself involved in a scandal of hiding money on Caymen Island. The scandal was known as the "Dossie Cayman" in the Brazilian press. He also had to step down as a Presbyterian Minister because of personal matters. (http://veja.abril.com.br/171199/p_168.html, 09 July 2011)

³¹⁰ Nascimento 1995: <http://www.brazzil.com/cvrnov95.htm>, 27 December 2011

³¹¹ Berge Furre was struck more by the similarities than the differences when visiting IURD in various countries. (Furre 2008: 45)

³¹² Nascimento 1995: <http://www.brazzil.com/cvrnov95.htm>, 27 December 2011

shorter articles in the weekly newspaper *folha Universal*, blogs³¹³, and oral theology through preaching, sermons, TV and Radio.

In their statements of faith, the classical doctrines of Christianity (the belief in the Triune God manifested as Father, Son and The Holy Spirit) and evangelicalism (the Word of God as infallible and justification through faith in Jesus Christ alone) are found. However, it cannot be excluded that these balanced statements do not quite correspond to what is preached and taught orally.

Norwegian scholar Berge Furre who has studied *Igreja Universal* over several years also lists some points³¹⁴ which correspond with my observation.

- First and foremost *Igreja Universal* is a charismatic church with a strong belief in the supernatural power of faith. The gifts of the spirit are vital and present. Healings, exorcism and miracles are at the very centre of their services.³¹⁵

- The IURD worldview takes into regard Satan with his host of evil spirits who afflict human beings with illness, accidents, conflicts, and poverty. IURD offers the ritual of exorcism for people to be delivered from the captivity of demons.³¹⁶

- IURD preaches and practices a “prosperity orientated gospel”. Faith is seen as the key to conquer and overcome obstacles, illness, poverty, and to be prosperous, as well as to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.³¹⁷ The words of Jesus found in John 10:10: “... *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*”, are used as a theological base for their Neo-Pentecostal emphasis of health and wealth in their statements of faith.³¹⁸

- Money plays a central role in IURD, and as we have seen IURD has become a church with enormous economic muscles. The adherents pay tithes, and are told to pay more if they need some particular miracle or solution.³¹⁹ This has led to a criticism accusing *Igreja Universal* for introducing a modern indulgence trade.³²⁰ The understanding of the tithes and offerings is

³¹³ The blogs of two of the most prominent IURD leaders Edir Macedo and Renato Cardoso are also available in english and can be read here:

<http://www.bispomacedo.com.br/en/>

<http://www.renatocardoso.com/>

³¹⁴ Furre 2008: 37-38

³¹⁵ IURD notes a special caution on the gift of prophesy, something that can be traced back to Kenneth Hagin.

³¹⁶ Furre 2008: 38

³¹⁷ Furre 2008: 38

³¹⁸ <http://www.arcauniversal.com/iurd/emquecremos.html>, 1 June 2011

³¹⁹ Furre 2008: 38

³²⁰ Shaull & Cesar 2000: 83

maybe the most peculiar point in the IURD theology (compared to other Christian traditions). The IURD's public statement of faith declares in statement 11 (just after baptism and communion):

The tithes and offerings are as sacred and as holy as the Word of God. Tithing signifies fidelity, and the offerings, the love of the servant to the Lord. You cannot separate the tithes and the offerings from the love of the servant to the Lord Jesus, since they mean, in fact, the blood of those who have been saved on behalf of those who need to be saved.

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With such an emphasis, tithes and offerings has to be understood almost as a sacrament. If money is thought to be a sacred sacrifice, it is not difficult to explain why members contribute to their economic strength.

- IURD also gladly engages in politics and promotes their own candidates.³²²

4.2.3 - Leadership and organizational structure

IURD has a hierarchic structure. The apostle and founder Edir Macedo appoints the bishops who choose pastors and assistant pastors. The pastors again engage their *obreiros* (lay assistants).³²³

The IURD churches are led through a strict hierarchy with the bishops on top. The bishop leads the local temple and congregation, and under him there is a small army of pastors, the number varying with the size of the local congregation. Then there is an even greater army of *obreiros*. While the assistants are unpaid, the pastors are paid by the church, though not as much as I thought. My expectations were formed by some of the critics I had heard and made me believe that being a pastor in IURD was equal with being very rich. I understood that was not the case, at least not for ordinary pastors. A pastor in IURD, in addition to accommodation, just receives the Brazilian minimum wage of R 465 pr. month (about 230 USD or 1400 NOK). They live, eat and reside on the Church property.³²⁴

4.2.4 - Important practices

If theology is not the strong point of IURD, their creativity in practices and experiences truly is.

³²¹ <http://www.arcauniversal.com/iurd/emquecremos.html>, 1 June 2011 (My translation)

³²² Furre 2008: 38

³²³ Furre 2008: 38

³²⁴ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

In the services water and oil from the holy land is distributed for people to drink and to activate their faith by. Leaves of roses are given to symbolize the love of Christ. A huge white cloth to walk under or the building of the wall of Jericho onstage, are just some of numerous elements.³²⁵

IURD is a church for experience. You never know what really will take place. The basic structure of a service is more or less like this: There is the local bishop leading the entire service. He is preaching, praying and shouting most of the entire service. Sometimes he starts singing a song and then the worship leader on a synthesizer who is always ready during the service, steps in, often with his golden and velvet like voice. “*Entra na minha Casa, entra na minha Vida, ...*” The whole congregation joins in, and people may become very emotional. But usually the bishop breaks in with some comments or sentences, or to pray. Everything is very emotional. Maybe the song continues, maybe the bishop just continues to speak. The style can sometimes be monotonous. There is no explicit part of worship, or of preaching which is the usual liturgy in other Pentecostal churches. Everything is floating, the worship and singing, the preaching, the emotions, the offerings, the praying. Everything should follow the “flow of the Spirit”.³²⁶

4.3 – *Nova Vida*

I will also give a shorter presentation of *Nova Vida*.

In chapter 2.5.2 we saw that *Igreja de Nova Vida* was founded by the Canadian missionary Robert McAlister in 1961. Since then *Nova Vida* has seen a steady growth. McAlister’s focus on divine healing was so strong that in every place he preached he placed a poster with Psalm 103:3: “He forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases”. Thus, it has been said that healing was the mark of McAlister’s ministry.³²⁷

After McAlister death in 1993, the church has been split in several independent groups.³²⁸ Today, this original emphasis on healing was not so evident in the *Nova Vida* church I visited. I interviewed a young assistant pastor named Joao in NV in Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro. He explained that there are now four main churches of *Nova Vida* each with several *branches*. The church I visited was founded five years³²⁹ earlier from NV in Bonsucesso (in Rio de

³²⁵ Based upon my own observations as well as reports from Berge Furre (Furre 2006: pp. 39-51)

³²⁶ Based upon my own observations as well as reports from Berge Furre (Furre 2006: pp. 39-51 and 2008: pp. 37-45)

³²⁷ <http://www.invb.com.br/igreja.php#>, 21 December 2011

³²⁸ Interview with assistant pastor Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 6 May 2009

³²⁹ At the time of the interview, May 2009

Janeiro), and had about five hundred affiliates.³³⁰ The pastor studied one year in Kenneth Hagins, Rehma Bible School, in Tulsa US, before he started this independent branch of the *Nova Vida* church with the blessing of his superior pastor.³³¹

Joao was my translator in another interview. Then he explained me that

*- This church here is more Neo-Pentecostal than it is Pentecostal. It is a Charismatic church. That is this current. Because it is hard to explain charismatic in Brazil, you can't say this is a charismatic church, they will not understand, you have to say Neo-Pentecostal. So Neo-Pentecostal they kind of understand.*³³²

The main focus, of this specific branch of *Igreja Nova Vida* in Tijuca, was the teaching of the word, according to assistant pastor Joao. He explained that some churches are more focused on evangelism, while the concern of this church was to help the believers to exercise their ministry. By teaching the word of God, they believe, people will get their lives in order (this, however, did not mean that they do not do evangelism). Joao has seen a small growth, the year and half he has been working there. The growth consisted mainly of people who already were Christians and who sought deeper teaching, but also new converts.³³³

This was also confirmed by my informant Miguel on my question “*What would you say is the best thing about this church?*”. The answer I got was clear: *The Word! The Word!* [Laughing]³³⁴

According to my informant, who knew of the history of NV, Edir Macedo was a part of NV for almost ten years and even served as a deacon there, before parting and founding IURD. Several of the practices found in IURD, Macedo learned by McAlister in NV. For example, the custom of drinking a cup of water that has been blessed by the pastor as *a point of contact* to assist your faith in receiving a miracle, Macedo learned from McAlister.³³⁵ NV had today abandoned this practise and Joao declared:

³³⁰ Interview with assistant pastor Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 6 May 2009

³³¹ Interview with assistant pastor Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 6 May 2009

³³² The interpreter, Joao, gave an additional explanation during a part of the interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 27 April 2009

³³³ Interview with assistant pastor Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 6 May 2009

³³⁴ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 27 April 2009

³³⁵ Interview with assistant pastor Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 6 May 2009

- *I do not need a glass of water to say, you know, to activate my faith, which are the things that they do. [...] . I believe that my point of contact is the Word.* ³³⁶

Chapter 5 – Emic Approach: Presentation of Interviews and Observations

In the previous chapter, I have described some of the most significant churches of Brazilian Pentecostalism. I will now turn to my informants and field observations, before analysing them in the light of the different types of theories that I have presented in chapter 3.

In total, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews, a number of informal talks³³⁷, and at least 25 church visits. Of this material, I have selected as case studies, a few of my informants and a few of my recorded observations for a more extensive presentation. The presentations in this chapter are descriptive and *emic* rather than analytical in nature. Based upon my observation, I believe their stories are prime examples of how Pentecostalism grows. Many more with similar stories could be found. My reason for this approach is to get some close glimpses from an *emic* and descriptive point of view, before we go on with analyses and discussion in chapter 6 and 7.

In addition, I will also briefly mention my other informants in this chapter. These informants and other observations will provide more background information, and function as additional sources and can thus be used in the discussion in the next chapters.

During my fieldwork, I was looking for two groups of informants:

- (1) Converts with their personal stories and views. Four of these informants will be presented in a more extensive version.
- (2) Pastors with information and overview of their local churches as well as their personal views and reflections. Information from these sources has been valuable for the presentation of the churches in chapter 4.

³³⁶ Interview with assistant pastor Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 6 May 2009

³³⁷ If valuable information was obtained through informal conversations, I later wrote field notes from the conversations.

Some informants fall into both categories. I will indicate what category with the symbols (1) and (2). All informants are presented anonymously except for the prominent and public pastors.

Table with Overview of the Informants:

Main informants:

“**Junior**” (1) and (2) from AD, Rio de Janeiro - see chapter 5.1

“**Isabela**” (1) from AD, Rio de Janeiro - see chapter 5.2

“**Roberto**” (1) and (2) from IURD, Rio de Janeiro - see chapter 5.4

“**Miguel**” (1) from NV, Rio de Janeiro - see chapter 5.6

Additional informants (see chapter 5.8):

“**Joao**” (2) from NV, Rio de Janeiro

“**Melvin**” (1) from AD, Manaus

“**Anderson**” (1) from AD, Manaus

“**Thiago**” (1) from AD, Manaus

Pastors/bishops with information and knowledge about their local churches:

Jonatas Câmara (2) is the pastor-president in IEADEM in Manaus

Jessé Mauricio Ferreira (2) is the pastor-president in ADMAF in Rio de Janeiro.

5.1 - The Story of Junior (*Assembleia de Deus*)³³⁸

My first informant has a dramatic, but still not so unusual life story in Brazil.

³³⁸ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

5.1.1 – Conversion

Profile & Background

Junior is in his mid thirties, married and the father of two children. Today he is a fresh looking man, with a contagious smile. Alongside his ministry as a pastor he also works with selling Aloe Vera products. Junior was not born and raised as an evangelical (his own words). His mother was a spiritist and his father a member of the drug gangs. Few *traficantes*, as the Brazilian label is for members of the drug gangs, survive their thirties. Junior's father was not an exception. When Junior was thirteen his father was killed.

- When I was 13 years old I lost my father and I became involved with drugs. Everyone said I was just like my father. That I would die in the same way as he died.³³⁹

Thirteen years old Junior got to know the drugs and also started to rob and steal. Still he was able to get into the Navy as he turned eighteen. But his use of drugs was discovered. Junior was arrested and lost everything. When, in addition, his family relations were breaking and his young beautiful wife was about to leave him, his life was falling apart and something needed to change.

The Change

In his *comunidade* (the more political correct way of saying *favela*) Pentecostal churches were available.

- I started to attend gatherings in a house, every Monday and listened to the word of God in that house [...]³⁴⁰

Junior did not become a Christian during these first encounters:

- [...] When I left the house I smoked marihuana. And all of my friends was mocking me and making jokes. They said, ohh you have become a crente, a believer. I said, I am not a Christian. I am just there to hear the word of God.³⁴¹

One Monday a Pastor came by who himself had been a *traficante*. This was an eye-opener for Junior. The pastor told his testimony about how God had delivered him from the drugs. Junior explains:

³³⁹ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

³⁴⁰ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

³⁴¹ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

- [...] if God freed him from the drugs, he could deliver me too I thought. And I accepted Lord Jesus into my life, but I still wanted to use the drugs. When I came home I took all the drugs and threw them out.³⁴²

Still Junior struggled with the addiction for some time.

The Breakthrough

The breakthrough came after reading the Bible and visiting a Pentecostal church for the first time. Junior tells:

- The first time I opened the Bible in my house, I opened in Luke (chapter) nine, which says: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself. I started to fight with my will for three days. The last day I went to Pentecostal church there in the comunidade (favela). And I started to hear the praise, and I started to feel things I never had felt before. My body became warm, it felt like fire. I started to cry and clap my hands. And when the service finished, I did not know that I already was free from the drugs. A young man outside the church was smoking marihuana, blew the smoke in my face and I immediately started to vomit. And since that day I never used drugs anymore. I was free in Jesus.³⁴³

Church life

All of this happened in one of the *filhas* of *Assembleia de Deus Missão Apostólica da Fé* in São Cristovão, Rio de Janeiro. Junior has been a part of the same *church family* his entire Christian life. At the time of the interview he was just about to finish his period of six years as a youth pastor, three years as an assistant youth pastor and three years as the main one. At first, still in the *filha church* in the *favela*, Junior worked with evangelization among the *traficantes*. But a desire grew in his heart to work with the youth of the church. The pastor of the *filha church* did not permit him to do that. Later he attended a youth seminar in São Paulo gathering about 8000 youth. In this event Junior tells that he experienced the Lord speaking to him through a prophetic act. The message was that the Lord would bring in his hands a great number of youth. His vision should be to put in the minds of the youth to have one vision and one heart and to speak one language.

³⁴² Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

³⁴³ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

The *filhas* of ADMAF, São Cristovão has been very much divided and independent. Junior started a work to unite them. One of the strategies was to arrange youth camps with the goal of bringing unity, enjoyment and spiritual devotion.

*- And of our most important strategies we use - is to get the youth enjoy seeking the holiness of the Lord. Through the devotional time they spend with the Lord. Where they would get their own real experiences with the Lord, and that a desire should be birthed in their hearts to enjoy the holiness of the Lord, something which cannot be forced but has to be birthed.*³⁴⁴

Successful business

Junior has not just been involved in church activities. His primary concern at the time of the interview was some new opportunities for his business. To be able to get a decent job in Brazil you have to study in college. Because Junior just studied until high school there were few opportunities.

*- But the Lord gave me an opportunity, through a friend [...]*³⁴⁵

This opportunity was a network company of beauty and cosmetics selling products of Aloe Vera.

*- With these tools we can bring health to the people and help people to change their financial lives. And through this opportunity we could advance the kingdom of God. Through this opportunity I have free time to do the work of God. I could live any place in the world. (laughing) I can be a missionary not depending on the church.*³⁴⁶

In the beginning people in the church did not believe in the idea, but when they saw the results of Junior the attitude was changed and today several people from the church is involved with the business. Junior was just about to move to another major city to expand his work. This advance would be done in connection with central figures in the AD church there. In such a way his success with the business is closely linked with his participation and leading role in the Pentecostal church.

³⁴⁴ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

³⁴⁵ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

³⁴⁶ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

I will turn to another special episode from the life of Junior which he told me in the interview. This episode I believe can reveal some important aspects concerning Pentecostal growth that will be worth analysing.

5.1.2 – Prison Incident

Because of his former life as a *traficante* (member of the drug mafia) Junior went to prison after he became a Christian. There in the prison he was leading a service at 5 o'clock in the afternoons. His lawyer put his life in danger when he tried to get him transferred to another prison, where the majority of prisoners belonged to a different group of *traficantes*. If transferred there, he would most likely have been killed, just because he had been in another prison where the majority belonged to a rival group. The confusion caused by this made his fellow prisoners suspect him for hiding something and they withdrew from him. Junior said he got a sense of death and felt attacked by evil spirits. As he was going to lead his usual service, the leader among the inmates in his cell pronounced that he would resolve a special case afterwards. Junior's execution and death seemed unavoidable. Then, according to Junior something took place which changed the whole atmosphere. Junior tells: "*And when I started to preach the anointing and the authority of the Lord came upon me. And I said: Lord, if I die, I will die worshipping.*" No one in the cell was allowed that day to sing or clap because they were mourning the death of a member of their group, the "Red Brigade" (*Commando Vermelho*). But Junior preached and said:

*- Rogerío Lemgruber (the founder of the Red Brigade and the creator of their codex) is dead. But there is a man who died two thousand years ago, and his tomb there in Israel is empty. And because of that, today, even if we cannot sing or clap hands, I will break that law, because that man died for me.*³⁴⁷

Then Junior started to sing and glorify the Lord, and *the anointing of the Lord* filled the cell.

During the interview as Junior was telling me this story, he did so with a dignified voice and with tears in his eyes appearing, and for a moment he could not hold back from speaking in tongues. It was clear that this incident had left deep impressions on my informant.

The other prisoners in the cell as well started to praise the Lord and a man having an evil spirit started to manifest. They put their hands on his head and expelled the demon. The man accepted Jesus and two more prisoners did as well. During the same time two other people

³⁴⁷ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

were baptized in the Holy Spirit and started to speak in tongues. Everything happened inside the prison cell, which as Junior describes it, was filled with the *glory of God*. Afterwards the leader of the cell inmates said they would resolve another thing, and instead of killing Junior he told him: “*Whatever you want to do in this cell, you will do.*” Junior grasped the opportunity and answered he wanted to hold a Bible class every Sunday. So in the middle of the cell 80 prisoners started to hear *the word of God*.³⁴⁸

5.2 - The Story of Isabella (*Assembleia de Deus*)

Isabella is a warm and sympathetic lady around forty years old. She is married and has two teen age sons. Today she runs a small laundry firm, and lives with her husband and two sons in a small apartment in a nice middle class neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro.³⁴⁹

Background

Isabella grew up in a rural area of the interior of northern Brazil. Her father actually accepted Jesus when she was a child, but soon left church and caused a horrible situation for the family. The words that Isabella had heard about Jesus, however was kept in her heart. Isabella’s father started to drink heavily and he turned very aggressive and violent. He began beating Isabella’s mother a lot, and also had sexual relationships with many different women. Her brothers were also beaten, but Isabella was spared because her father recognised that she did not reject him despite of his actions. The four brothers and three other sisters did not respect their father, and therefore Isabella was treated differently by her siblings and even by her own mother. When one of Isabella’s older sisters was pregnant, her father hit her, and after this incident she left her home. The incident proved to be devastating for the baby, who was born paralysed and died two years later.³⁵⁰

Isabella’s mother suffered so much with her abusive husband who was drinking, beating her and sleeping with various girls. As if that was not enough, her mother also got sick with fibromyalgia. She had lots of pain, and also started having internal bleedings. They went to doctor after doctor, but nothing helped. Her father hoped that she would die, so he could marry again with another woman. He was still a handsome and athletic man, working as a cowboy in a farm.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Interview with Junior in Rio de Janeiro, 5 May 2009

³⁴⁹ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

³⁵⁰ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

³⁵¹ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

One day during work in the farm, they had to catch a bull from another farm that had escaped and run into their farm. The cowboys jumped on their horses, and when they were about getting control of the bull, Isabella's father suddenly became ill. He fell from the horse, broke his neck and died.

After his death, the family had to leave their home and move to a very poor house with the few things they had left. Isabella was just thirteen years old, and she had to take care of the home and her brothers and younger sisters by herself. Her mother was in the hospital, and her older sisters did not return to the house.³⁵²

Conversion

During this time, Isabella's older brother started attending church. From her childhood Isabella had kept in her heart that Jesus was good. Her brother, who went to church, began to speak about Jesus and also started to pray for their mother.

After an operation at the hospital her mother got an additional infection, and the doctors said that she would die.

- I started to think, I don't have a father and now I will lose my mother. And I remembered that my mother had taught from the word that God takes care of the ones who [do] not have fathers [orphans] and the widows. When this happened with my mum, it was just one month after what happened to my father. I stopped the college and the school, and started to take care of my younger and older brothers, and I could not count on my older sisters. Some of my sisters were younger than me. And when I was washing the clothes in the little river with cold water it was 6 am. It was too early for the clothes to dry, [and] for me to pass and take to my grandmother who would take to my mother in the hospital. And there I spoke: God you take care of the widows and the orphans. And God had mercy on us.³⁵³

Isabella prayed, and her brother went to the hospital with some "brothers" from the church and they prayed and prophesied, and a miracle happened.

- The doctors said she will die. But Jesus healed my mum.³⁵⁴

³⁵² Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

³⁵³ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

³⁵⁴ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

Altogether Isabella's mother did not spend more than 28 days in the hospital.

Isabella's brother then took Isabella to his church. I asked her what kind of church it was, and when Isabella described the church, she started to speak with an emotional voice and even cried.

- Pentecostal, full with the power of God (cheio do poder de Deus), very full of revival (muito cheio de avivamento) My heart started to burn and I accepted Jesus and I stayed. I walked from my house to the church two hours and forty minutes. I walked a lot.³⁵⁵

Church life

After Isabella grew up, she moved to São Paulo and married. Seven years ago (at the time of the interview) Isabella moved to Rio de Janeiro with her family.

Today all her brothers “*serve the Lord*” and all are Pentecostals. Her mother did not marry again, but she lives in Recife and “*serves Jesus*”.

In the beginning of the interview, before she began telling her story answering: “Why are you a Christian today?” she stated:

- I am a Christian today because I feel this fire inside of my soul.³⁵⁶

Later in the interview, Isabella said that she intends to stay in the Pentecostal church the rest of her life because she likes it, and “*in this church we have more intimacy with the Holy Spirit. You start to speak in the tongues of angels.*”

For Isabella speaking in tongues is very important, “*this renews my strength all day*”.

- When I came to Rio, I started to look for a church. I visited different. But neither of them testified in my spirit. I came to the filha of this church in Copacabana. I stayed there. Thereafter I came to the mother church, because of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in my heart.³⁵⁷

Pentecostal Growth

I also asked Isabella about her perspectives on the growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil.

³⁵⁵ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

³⁵⁶ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

³⁵⁷ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

Isabella explained that for example in São Paulo there are now many Catholic churches that have become Pentecostal.

*- They speak in tongues, and jump and celebrate. It is so strange!*³⁵⁸

As a cause for growth, Isabella again pointed to São Paulo. There the Pentecostal churches are so big, and there are lots of neighbourhoods in the suburbs with many churches. When you pass by in the streets you hear people shout “*gloria, gloria, gloria*” and speak in tongues. When people hear the noise they get curious and they enter the churches. The gospel is contagious, and people find that they like it. They also see the results and hear the testimonies, what “*the move of the Holy Spirit*” has done in the lives of people. And they find that they like Jesus.

Isabella also had a small remark about the AD church she now attended:

*- In our church here, we don't have any space for testimonies. But if we open the space for testimonies we would see that many people would have testimonies. ... Because there are results.*³⁵⁹

But she also told that they have had a lot of prophetic words over the church, “*because the revival will start here. And I am waiting.*”

5.3 – Observation: “Victory Campaign” (*Assembleia de Deus*)

I arrived at São Cristovão at the church localisation through what had become the normal procedure: Bus 474 from Rua Tonelero, Copacabana – through quite a couple of places: Botafogo, Lagoa, the tunnel under Corcovado and *Cristo Redentor* (Christ the Redeemer) and then onto the high way. The bus ride took more than one hour this night, as the hour between 18pm and 19pm weekdays is the rush hour. The service had just begun, but the congregation was still sparse. For *Assembleia de Deus Missão Apostólica da Fé* in São Cristovão (ADMAF) the Tuesday night service is the main joint service during the week. On Sundays the congregation meets at the local *filhas*. On Tuesday there is a joint meeting for all the *filhas* in the “mother church”. The hall would usually fill up after some time. Brazilians are not usually so good at punctuality. This night as all the seven Tuesday nights in the “Victory Campaign”, the service was recorded and broadcasted live on the internet.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

³⁵⁹ Interview with Isabella in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

Assembleia de Deus Missão Apostólica da Fé in São Cristovão (ADMAF) lies just underneath and beside the main highway leading towards Galeão International Airport. The surrounding streets are dark and empty by night, not a place you would hang out as a European.

This was the fourth Tuesday night in the "Victory Campaign", a campaign of seven meetings. I had been visiting ADMAF several times already, but this night I got to understand something more of Brazilian Pentecostalism. The fervency and atmosphere I was about to witness this night, was an overwhelming experience. This night I experienced what people may call "Pentecostal revival".

There were a couple of announcements and actually two separate offerings, where people came to the front and threw their envelopes of contribution or just cash into a piece of cloth held by two assistants.

What made a lasting impression, though, was what took place during the preaching.

The Bible text being read was John 20,19-22, with emphasis on verse 22: "*When he said this, he breathed on them.*" When Jesus breathed, he breathed everything that he was onto the disciples. All heavenly things were breathed on them, the bishop pointed out. As disciples of Jesus, we can take part in his life – wisdom, healing, victory, etc.

There is light in the end of the tunnel!

A bit into the preaching a change suddenly occurred. It was as if the intensity of the service escalated. The bishop raised the beat as if a sudden inspiration took over, something which he also declared. It was as if the congregation sensed some kind of energy already before or as the bishop started to speak with this new inspiration. The atmosphere rose with expectation. Scattered shouts of "*Gloria a Deus*" filled the room. The bishop declared with strong confidence and shouted:

I am prophesying: There is light in the end of the tunnel! We are walking through a tunnel. The tunnel of victory, the tunnel of faith. There are times of struggles and it needs discipline, but there is light in the end of the tunnel! And I'm prophesying: God will turn the direction of the wind! You have been walking the tunnel and the wind has been blowing in the opposite direction. God will turn the wind in your direction. God

*will turn the wind now (agora). You will get through the tunnel of struggle and get your victory! I am prophesying right now! Take your victory! Take it!*³⁶⁰

The bishop was in ecstasy. He ran back and forth on the huge scene, leaning forward, screaming, shouting, blowing in the microphone, twisting his face, closing his eyes. He was preaching, declaring “with every fibre in his body”. The atmosphere or mood which followed is hard to describe. It was ecstasy. Already as the bishop started in this new mood it was if the heartbeat made a jump, people realised that something was about to happen. Somebody shouted “*Gloria a Deus*”, more people were shouting, there were people speaking loudly in tongues, some people stood up from their chairs. My translator shouted in my ear, both because of the need of speaking loudly enough due to the audio level and because he himself got very excited. It was not hard to be carried away. It was an interaction between the stage and the congregation, between the pastor and the people. It escalated and escalated until it reached its climax. In the end the whole congregation was on their feet tramping the devil under their feet, praying and crying to God. Some people cried with their hands lifted towards heaven. Some just jumped up and down uninhibited. This night I experienced “Pentecostal revival”, or put in a more academic manner, a highly ecstatic form of a Pentecostal service.

I will now turn from AD to IURD and present two sources. My first source is an interview with a convert and youth pastor called “Roberto”. The second is an observation at a weekly IURD service – the Tuesday service called “Session of Spiritual Unloading”.

5.4 – The story of Roberto (*Igreja Universal*)

Roberto is a vital, smiling and a good looking man in his twenties. In his short life he has experienced both struggles of life and achieving success. His involvement with *Igreja Universal* started eight years ago and the church has a central place in his life story. One and a half year before the interview he sold his enterprise to become one of the youth pastors at the main temple, the Worldwide Cathedral of Faith, at Del Castilho. Today Roberto says he is happier than ever before.

Teenager:

³⁶⁰ This section was not recorded and then transcribed, but written down in my field notes as accurate as my memory would allow. (Participant observation in ADMAF in Sao Cristovao, Rio de Janeiro, 7 April 2009)

But Roberto was not always happy. His adolescence in the Rio de Janeiro lower middleclass neighbourhood *Padre Miguel* was troublesome. His parents were at one point Christians, (now they are far from God according to Roberto). There was a lot of fighting at home, not of violence but with arguments. This made Roberto confused and depressed:

*- I use to be fail. To be fail in many things. Failed in my job, failed in my studies, in my school life, and I was so sad with my family [...] it was so sad for me, because I was only 15, I am just a teen, my mind was so confused in that age, in that time [...]*³⁶¹

In his teen-age period of struggling and identity crisis something happened that would affect the direction of Roberto's life in a major way. Roberto was fifteen years old and went to second grade at high school. A friend there who was a Christian since childhood started to invite him to church (*Igreja Universal*). In the beginning he refused, but finally he joined him to church.

Roberto tells:

*- [...] but when I started to go with him I met many young people , many young people like me, people who was suffering, who were from the church from the time when they were kids. But they were different people. I started to attend more frequently, once a week, twice a week, 3 times a week [...] I was not a Christian yet, I attended frequently because of my friend. One month later I had a decision.*³⁶²

Roberto's decision to convert occurred a rainy Thursday night, he recalls. The youth meetings were on Thursday nights, and Roberto was home alone in his house when a thought suddenly struck him:

*- Why do I not go alone to the church, why do I expect someone to come here to call me to go with him (me). So, I went alone.*³⁶³

- And that day was so special – the preaching, the preaching there was talking about salvation about changing, changing of the life, changing of the heart, of the life, how Jesus can change your heart and you mind, our way of life. And that day I was sure, I was sure that I had to surrender my life to him. One Thursday night on November 2001,

³⁶¹ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

³⁶² Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

³⁶³ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

*a rainy night, and that day I surrendered my life to him. [...] Since this day I was not the same person. I am a different person, a different man, a different youth.*³⁶⁴

For Roberto this was a dramatic event. His life changed, from being a depressed person who saw himself as a failure in most things - in his job and in his studies, to become someone who achieved things. Roberto started to evangelize and invite his friends to church like his friend had invited him. When he graduated from high school he began to study management at college, and later he even got a job in the financial department of the major bank, *Banco do Brasil*.

Still this was not the most important change according to Roberto:

*- Ahhh, the number one thing that changed in my life was the change of my heart, Jesus changed my heart and he threw away every bad feeling that I had inside of my heart before, he threw away many things that are so bad [...] and I started to love the people, to love the souls of the people.*³⁶⁵

Life went on really well for Roberto but his ambitions were even higher. He quit the bank job to start his own enterprise. This enterprise Roberto refers to as a miracle of faith:

*- I had no ways to start my enterprise. But I asked to God, I asked, I asked God give me a way, give me a way to start, to start my enterprise, my business, to start it, to become a great businessman, and God gave me ideas God gave me many ways to start it. And from nothing my father helped me with money, and it start to appear money from every side (Laughing).*³⁶⁶

The enterprise had to do with events and entertainment and commercials, for example he arranged movie releases. In this period Roberto had his own office downtown and a financially privileged time.

*- I was never broke and I always had everything I wanted.*³⁶⁷

This is a rather unusual life path for a young boy growing up in a Brazilian lower middle class neighbourhood. The boundaries of life in Brazil are usually limited by your social background and neighbourhood. Crossing these borders is a demanding process and requires strong motivation and hard work.

³⁶⁴ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

³⁶⁵ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

³⁶⁶ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

³⁶⁷ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

Owning his own small enterprise and always having money was not the last stop in the short career of Roberto. Roberto sensed that Jesus was calling him to become a pastor.

*- I started my own enterprise. I had an office in the downtown – and I started to work by my own, until Jesus called me to be a pastor. And when then I – I quit, I quitted from all works – I quit from everything [...] I just quit everything because I already had a call by Jesus.*³⁶⁸

Roberto actually quit everything and sold the enterprise before he had any tangible invitation to be a pastor. Sometime after this, when he got a request to become a youth pastor in *Igreja Universal*, he was already prepared.

*- [...] after when Jesus called me, I had a call by a pastor [...] and he told me, you have a call by Christ [...] and I came [...] And here I am a pastor, I have been here for one year and three months!*³⁶⁹

Financially this was a real step down. Roberto went from always having money and being able to get the things he wanted to just get enough for the maintenance of the basics. Still Roberto says:

*- But I am so happy now, I am happier now! I am happier now as when I had my own company [...] It is so nice here, it so nice to do a work where you can help people and preach for them, and you can see a change happening in their lives, it is so nice, I have no words for that.*³⁷⁰

5.5 – Observation: “Session of Spiritual Unloading” (*Igreja Universal*)

The contrasts are striking in Del Castilho, Rio de Janeiro, one of the large crossroads in the densely populated and “dangerous” north-east part of the city. Surrounded by *favelas* and poorer neighbourhoods on all sides, lies the posh shopping centre Nova America - you may just escalate from the metro tracks and you find yourself in a world of fashion. What distinguishes this from any other western shopping metropolis, including the large centres of Rio Zona Sul where the tourists shop, is the prices. The same kinds of stores are found here in Nova America but you will just face local *cariocas* and Brazilians, as well as a long lasting wallet. But the shopping was not the reason bringing me to Del Castilho this Tuesday night. As I walked from the metro shopping passing the street sellers and the dark side roads, I

³⁶⁸ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

³⁶⁹ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

³⁷⁰ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

quickly understood this was not the normal walking track for foreigners. Walking for seven minutes, passing between the shantytowns and even two churches (probably Pentecostal), suddenly a giant complex of buildings arose. The architecture, size and glittering white stone stands in sharp contrasts to the surroundings. This is the “Worldwide Cathedral of Faith”, the main temple of *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*.

Entering the temple area which even had a couple of armed guards was still quite a pleasant experience. Relaxing surroundings created by a small garden with a waterfall and soft background music from some hidden loudspeakers made the noisy world outside disappear. The smiling and friendly *obreiros* or ushers, at least twenty just at the outside of the cathedral, were strategically placed and neatly guiding you towards a section where available seats still would be found. This was obviously a smooth working and professional church signalling a strong self confidence.

I entered the gigantic stadium, with eleven thousand seats, a little bit late, witnessing something unlike anything. The large auditorium with the ceiling about 30-40 meters above our heads was filled with about five thousand worshippers singing and clapping. A few hundred uniformed assistants (*obreiros*) and pastors fully dressed in white - white trousers and white shirts – were moving around in the building. But what caught my attention and gave me a chilling feeling down my spine was the display going on onstage. In front of, or more accurately, under, the large cross, about ten metres tall, that was mounted on the wall, a spiritual and physical battle was evolving. Some 12 or 13 shivering and shaking persons, sometimes crawling like snakes, sometimes growling were brought to the stage and commanded to kneel and place their hands behind them, something which they obeyed. One to three pastors or *obreiros* followed each of these apparently demon possessed, while the bishop fronted the congregation leading them in prayer. At one point the bishop stuck his microphone up in the face of one of the possessed demanding to hear who is Lord. We could all hear the demon growling and wheezing, and watched how it tried to avoid the microphone. In the end it had to give in, and the congregation cheered. Then it was time to expel the evil spirits and the bishop asked the whole congregation to help. Some sort of a victory song was sung by the people while everyone threw their hands behind their shoulders, symbolizing that they were throwing the demons out of the cathedral. At the crescendo of the song everyone shouted: “Out, in the name of Jesus”, and in a moment all the frantic persons on stage calmed down – except for one, whom one of the assistant pastors then took care of, and after a short time this person also turned calm.

Later in the same *culto*, Claudomir, the bishop of IURD Del Castilho, preached about salvation: *No matter what you achieve in life. No matter what great deeds you accomplish and how much influence you gain, if you have not accepted Jesus in your life, it does not count.*³⁷¹ He mentioned a famous Brazilian TV-host³⁷² and designer who died just that same day. *This man accomplished many things, but that does not count in front of God.*

The bishop gave a call to salvation and I estimate that several hundred people (maybe close to one thousand) rushed to the open area in front of the stage to receive their salvation. I asked one of the assistant pastors close to me who these people were. Presupposing that probably many of the same people are rushing forward every night, the answer I got was surprising: *These are mostly first time visitors and new people, many who come because they have seen us on television*, he said without reluctance. This was just an ordinary Tuesday night in one of the 700 IURD temples, although the largest, that are spread all over Rio. In addition IURD has *cultos* not just Tuesdays, but every single day of the week – morning, afternoon and night – and their temples stay open for 24 hours for anyone to consult. I had just been witnessing at the forefront the growth of Brazilian Pentecostalism.³⁷³

5.5.1 – Protection

On another occasion, I was given a flyer inviting me to a *Concentracao de Fe e Milagres com a Protecão da Familia* – Concentration of Faith and Miracles for the Protection of the Family – taking place in *Igreja Universal* the coming Sunday at 9.30am. Protection from several things was listed, among others the *balas perdidas* (lost bullets). I could not understand the meaning of this at first, but later learnt that “stray bullets” in shoot outs is a very real threat some places! The power of the Spirit can even protect against “*balas perdidas*”! The flyer proclaimed:

Without God’s protection, many families are being struck by negative forces. They are victims of stray bullets, kidnappings, lack of peace in the home, fear, panic disorder, misery, sadness etc. Behind all this there exist spiritual forces.

³⁷¹ The sections in italic are my free renderings of Claudomir’s message in IURD in Del Castilho, Rio de Janeiro, 17 March 2009.

³⁷² Clodovil Hernandes died the 17 March 2009, what was not made any point of from the pulpit was his openly gay life.

³⁷³ Participant observation at *Catedral Mundial da Fe* in Del Castilho, Rio de Janeiro, 17 March 2009

5.5.2 – Devotion

I should also mention that there were parts of the IURD services designated for people to pray and seek God individually. I observed this, both during a Sunday service at Del Castilho³⁷⁴, and during a weekday service at Botafogo. At Botafogo the lights were actually turned off to give people some more privacy³⁷⁵. I watched people crying, lifting their hands, “lost” in a passionate seeking of God, several with tears pouring down their cheeks. Heads were bowed, arms reaching up towards heaven, the faces tied together in deep concentration. It was a strong collective emotional response. At Del Castilho I was struck by the impression that this dedication was much stronger and mightier than what I observed at one of the world’s largest football stadiums, Maracana.

I will also present some material from *Nova Vida*.

5.6 – The story of Miguel (*Nova Vida*)

Conversion

Miguel converted to Pentecostalism in his late adolescences. Five months before the interview, he started attending *Nova Vida* after a journey through a handful of protestant churches. Miguel is married, has two daughters, and works in an IT company. Socially, he belongs to the middle class.

Miguel was raised as a Catholic but as is common in Brazil his family also practiced spiritism in the form of *Umbanda*. When he was seventeen he got to know a girl in school who was the daughter of a pastor. She later became his wife. Even though Miguel practiced *Umbanda*, he said he believed in God and started to go to church with his girlfriend. He often ended up debating with the Pastor concerning the traditions of the church and about religion. This, Miguel describes as his first encounter with Christ. Everything the Pastor said seemed to make sense. Miguel recalls his moment of decision.³⁷⁶

- I saw that everything the pastor said made sense. And I challenged God. I liked very much a worship song called Lion of Juda. And I said, Lord, if you really exist I really would like to hear this song during the service. They started praise and worship, and they finished praise and worship. The pastor came up on the platform. And all of a

³⁷⁴ Participant observation at *Catedral Mundial da Fe* in Del Castilho, Rio de Janeiro, 24 May 2009

³⁷⁵ Participant observation at *Igreja Universal* in Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro, 15 April 2009

³⁷⁶ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

*sudden he stopped preaching his message and said the Holy Spirit is touching me. And I would like all the youth and the teenagers to come to the front, the Holy Spirit is really pulling me. And we are going to sing the song Lion of Juda! So, I started crying and I went to the front, and since then it was like honeymoon.*³⁷⁷

His Family

After his conversion, Miguel got a desire to also bring his family to church. His mother joined very soon, but for his father it took almost thirteen years.

During the interview Miguel spoke as a matter of course of a realm where the spiritual and physical dimensions overlapped. Later, on another occasion Miguel also shared more experiences involving spiritual dimensions.

According to Miguel, his father had a sort of an “addiction” to samba and was serving an entity in *Umbanda*. This entity or demon, which even had a name, “Sepilntra”, was a big problem because it possessed him and occasionally took control over him. When it manifested his father could become violent and very aggressive and at one special episode he beat Miguel’s sister with a punch on her face. When he tried to attack his mother, he was not able, because she was already a believer. This happened several times and Miguel had to come home and bind his father to the bed because he was not able to control himself.³⁷⁸

According to Miguel, the demon occasionally left his father and moved to the boyfriend of his sister and then came back (because they were not believers this could happen). The demon also tried to take his father to the cemeteries to do rituals there.³⁷⁹

- And this was my first encounter with the devil. Because when the demon was possessing my father, and he wanted to go out, I used to take hold of my authority and say, no you are not going out, so he wouldn’t.

- He wouldn’t go out? (Me)

- No, he wouldn’t go out, it obeyed [Miguel] (name changed).³⁸⁰

Miguel had a certain authority over his father when he was in this “possessed” state.

³⁷⁷ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁷⁸ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁷⁹ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁸⁰ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

In 1997 Miguel's father received a prophecy that he had to get out of spiritism, if not he would die. But he just laughed. Three months later he was in a condition between life and death in the hospital. When Miguel's father was in the hospital, Miguel could feel *God's presence* and therefore preached to his mother and sister, and told them that his father would get out of the hospital and out of bed. The doctors said, if there will be a miracle, he will only lose his leg. They gave him six months to get out of the hospital. But he could leave after 45 days!³⁸¹

– *With both legs? (Me)*

- *Yes, with both legs. Yes, he was completely healed with both legs.*

- *It took two years, and then he was walking without a walker or the crutches. Today he is born again, a believer.*

- *He {Miguel's father} had a desire to go to the church, he could not wait until he got into church. He had help from a friend, a pastor from Assembleia de Deus. And glory to God that he was seeking the Lord!*³⁸²

Church Relations

Miguel liked very much to study the word of God and became part of a Baptist church. In this period he was an active blogger on the internet and he wrote a lot against the baptism in the Holy Spirit.³⁸³

- *But the word of God showed me the opposite. So I stopped writing the blog.*

- *What in the word of God changed your mind? (Me)*

- *Acts.*³⁸⁴

Miguel also believed God was calling him to work with spiritual deliverance (*libertação espiritual*)

- *So I went to a Pentecostal Church. I went to one nearby home. I had a lot of strifes with my wife about that church, and I had heard about the bible school here. When I*

³⁸¹ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁸² Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁸³ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁸⁴ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

*brought her here, she liked it a lot, so we started attending here. But the search for a Pentecostal Church was a call that I had, to work with spiritual deliverance.*³⁸⁵

Evangelist

I asked Miguel if he was evangelising:

- (Laughing) *He (my translator referring to Miguel) preaches the word every day on his work.*

- *Many times I was required to come to a place and fix something. And I got there and the computer was working! And I started preaching the word, and the person started to cry and started to tell, and started speaking stuff like my daughter tried to kill me. So I started counseling the person, and it wasn't just once or twice, it was many, many times, because I am an evangelist.*³⁸⁶

Later it was also revealed:

- *Today I had an opportunity to speak to somebody about God.*

- *Today! (Me)*

- *Yes, today. She is, she believes in spiritism, a kardecista, from Alan Kardec, The founder of spiritism.*³⁸⁷

This was a clear indication that my informant was eager to share his faith.

5.7 – Observation: Sunday Service in Nova Vida

Nova Vida gave the impression of being a fresh and modern church with people who dressed in a nice and fashionable way. In the clean and nice entrance I was welcomed by men dressed in suits and even guided to a free seat on the first row in the full auditorium (250 seats).

The Sunday service began 9.30 am and started with one hour of uninterrupted worship, just interrupted by the worship leader herself. At one point during the worship session, she worshipped, or more accurate led the congregation in prayer, for about ten minutes. At 10.25am the pastor entered the platform. He prayed and led the congregation in prayer for at

³⁸⁵ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁸⁶ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁸⁷ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

least ten minutes before the offering. Then he preached about confessing the promises of God, something he taught is different than just positive confession.³⁸⁸

Also the worship was important for my informant Miguel. His wife came because of the worship and that was a reason he started attending too. Comparing with his former Baptist church the attitude towards worship was way different. My interpreter refers what my informant said:

*- The fact, one of the facts, making me come here were praise and worship. That's why my wife came. That was what made me decide to know that I wanted to come to this church. Sometimes in the Baptist church, they used to cheer, or expect the praise and worship to finish. Here it is kind of the opposite, there is a longing. There (in the Baptist church) was like 3 or 4 songs and they wanted to end it up quickly, because they couldn't bear it. Here it is almost about one hour, sometimes.*³⁸⁹

5.8 - Additional Informants

As mentioned, I have some informants that will function as additional sources. Due to limitations of space I will not be able to present all informants to the same extent. However, I will briefly present them since they may contribute in the following discussion. In the interviews with two of my informants, Anderson and Thiago, there were some problems with the translation. As a consequence I will not regard them among the main informants. Still, I did receive some relevant information that could prove to be useful.

5.8.1 - Joao (*Nova Vida*, Rio de Janeiro)³⁹⁰

Joao is in his late twenties and an assistant pastor in *Nova Vida*. He grew up in a Christian family that belonged to *Nova Vida*, and has been a Christian all his life. He told his life story and provided me with information about the *Nova Vida* church, as well as sharing thoughts and opinions about Pentecostal growth in Brazil.

5.8.2 - Melvin (*Assembleia de Deus*, Manaus)³⁹¹

Melvin is not Brazilian but a British youth in his mid twenties. He converted to Pentecostalism during a travel to Brazil and Manaus. Melvin is an interesting source concerning how Brazilian Pentecostalism can cross cultural barriers and reach further out than just Brazil. I have found it most fruitful to present Melvin's story in chapter 6, discussing

³⁸⁸ Participant observation in *Nova Vida* in Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, 26 April 2009

³⁸⁹ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

³⁹⁰ Interview with assistant pastor Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 6 May 2009

³⁹¹ Interview with Melvin in Manaus, 18 May 2009

features found in his story that may be important for understanding the growth of Brazilian Pentecostalism.

5.8.3 – Anderson (*Assembleia de Deus, Manaus*)³⁹²

Anderson is a teenager who grew up in the rural area of the Amazon region without his family. He does not know his mother or his three brothers. Only nine years old, he left his father's house and survived by taking small jobs in the jungle, like helping the men with the timber and working with ceramics. From his friends he heard that life was easier in Manaus, something that proved not to be true when he went there. His friends did not really care about him when he arrived, and Anderson found himself all alone in the big city.

The young boy sat in a square crying and sighed that if God was real, he would send someone who loved him. Later, he got a small job at a gas station where he washed the customer's cars. It happened to be a gas station used by pastor Jonatas Camara (the pastor president of IEADEM). One of the pastor's sons got to know this lonely boy, and also noticed a good character in him. Anderson was introduced to pastor Jonatas who then actually opened his home for him, took care of him and let him live there. Anderson says he liked the AD church the first time he went there. During the second service he made a decision in his heart, and when the pastor gave the salvation call he went to the front crying a lot. Then he attended a course called *Encontro com Deus* (Encounter with God), where he says Jesus touched him and changed his life and soul. This happened two years before the interview. Today Anderson is dreaming about taking an education and to become a lawyer.

Anderson pointed to the love and care he experienced in the AD church as a reason for growth. He believes that people are in need of the love of Jesus, and many who are in desperate situations see the only solution in Jesus. For example, he has seen former *traficantes*, prostitutes, and even homosexuals come to the church, and become changed through the *Encontro com Deus*, and some of them are today cell group leaders.

5.8.4 – Thiago (*Assembleia de Deus, Manaus*)³⁹³

Thiago is a man in the beginning of his forties. He grew up as a Christian but left the faith. He achieved great success within Brazilian Jiu-jitsu, one of the most popular sports in Brazil, and became both the regional and national master within his division. Despite the great achievements, he ended up in what he today describes as a black hole. Thiago started using drugs and nothing he did gave him purpose. In a moment that was very difficult, he cried out

³⁹² Interview with Anderson in Manaus, 18 May 2009

³⁹³ Interview with Thiago in Manaus, 19 May 2009

to God for help. The answer he found in the AD church in Manaus, where he was embraced and welcomed and “got to know” Jesus. Pastor Jonatas Camara helped him and believed in him. Thiago says God helped him saving his family life, and also helping him achieving success in his job and business. Today Thiago is an active member in the church with many responsibilities. He is an event manager arranging gospel events, as well as leading IEADAM’s work in the prison. Several strong stories from the prison work could be told if space permitted. During the interview, Thiago expressed great admiration of pastor Jonatas and the church, pointing to their vision and focus on mission and love for the lives of people.

Chapter 6 – Etic Approach: Analysing my material

I will now turn to an analysis of the material presented above. Four interviews and three observations that I find exemplifying typical traits of the growth of Pentecostalism have been presented.

6.1 – Junior’s story – Analysis

(See Chapter 5.1 for Junior’s story - AD)

6.1.1 – The Process of Conversion

Junior comes from a very troubled background, yet today Junior is a bright family father whom I observed in the family setting from a close angle. Observing him in his daily life, there were no reminders about his earlier life.

Junior’s conversion can be viewed from several angles. His conversion is characterized by elements of a broken and troubled background leading to a crisis. This fits well into the paradigm of *deprivation theory* – a broken man bound in drugs and violence in need of structure and a firm basis for life. An interesting point is that he chooses to turn to a Pentecostal church for redemption. He neither went to the spiritist center, even if his mother had been a spiritist, nor the Catholic Church which officially is the national religion. A Pentecostal Church was available in the neighbourhood, and this is where Junior turns to look for a possible change in his life. This is an indication of an understanding among people in the *favela* that the Pentecostal Church is a place where serious help can be found. At least for

Junior this was the case. It also illustrates a tendency: the religious and the holy are regarded with respect in the *favela*, even by criminals.³⁹⁴

Junior's conversion was a process including several Monday Bible group gatherings leading to the decisive moment. What triggered his decision was a testimony which made identification possible. Someone who earlier had been a *traficante* and shared his lifestyle, had been converted and had stopped using drugs and even become a pastor. If that man could experience deliverance, Junior could as well! The message came from someone like himself whom he easily could identify with. The message did not come from a foreign priest but from someone sharing his social class and background. Quantitative studies³⁹⁵ support this point and show that Pentecostal pastors are more likely to be "one of the people". This gives Pentecostalism a clear advantage when it comes to identification, bridging the cultural gap to a minimum.

I will list some tendencies that are exemplified by Junior's case. These are also in accordance with my general impression and observations.

- Pentecostal Churches are present and easy accessible for the person in crisis.
- People, especially in the *favela*, seem to know that the Pentecostal Church is a place to turn to when you are in real deep trouble.
- Identification with the Pentecostal Church is easier in the sense that the Church consists of people more like oneself (when compared with for example the Catholic Church³⁹⁶).
- There is often a period of time, in the life of the informant, from his first encounter with Pentecostalism to the moment of a decision and conversion.

Further, coming from a deprived background, after converting, Junior's social identity changed dramatically. The theories of *social change* would possibly emphasize these elements. Pentecostalism exemplified and offered an opportunity of change for this Brazilian man. Junior grasped this opportunity to "climb up the social ladder". Watching Junior's life and story today, how he gained a stable family life and economic freedom, one would

³⁹⁴ I found this tendency repeated at other instances as well. For example in the interview with my informant Thiago and in the reports about pastor Marcos Perreira. See also the article <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/05/brazil-drugs-rio-de-janeiro?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487>, 13 May 2012

³⁹⁵ Chesnut 2003: 57

³⁹⁶ Chesnut 2003: 57

evidently agree with the “social changer”. Pentecostalism really worked in his case! His business and economic success go hand in hand with his involvement in Pentecostalism. For example, his business opportunities owe much to the large network he has gained through the Pentecostal community.

The theories of social change seem to work best when looking back in time. In the life story of Junior there has really been a social lift. The question, however, should be asked: is social change the immediate reason and the most profound motivation for his conversion, or is it rather a consequence of the conversion? I find it hard to believe that long term rational calculations for future opportunities give a profound motivation for converting to Pentecostalism. Such a conversion implies just as much a sacrifice when it comes to lifestyle and moral standards. Still, people look at others, and if they see examples of life improvements in others that may cause them to follow in the same path. Junior saw the example of the former *traficante* and drug addict that was totally transformed. This caused a strong longing in him to change in the same way.

The more pragmatic versions of the social change theories hold that people flock to Pentecostalism to seek solutions for their immediate needs. This version fits much better with Junior’s case. Junior was in a desperate situation and looking for a solution to his problems with drugs, something that was causing family problems. Studying this individual case, I find this explanation more plausible than talking about a rational calculation of future opportunities.

Still, it is necessary to question a too narrow paradigm of social change. If a solution orientated approach is the key for understanding Pentecostal growth, why do people continue as Pentecostals after they have received a solution, or even if they have not? Do they find in the Pentecostal churches more than the immediate solution they were looking for? If solutions for immediate needs were the most important growth factors, we would not expect such a large amount of people to remain Pentecostals.

As well as social needs, could there also be religious or existential needs involved? Emilio Willems pointed to an unbearable sense of *anomie* or moral meaninglessness when explaining the growth of Protestant churches.³⁹⁷ *Anomie* as a product of poverty is the key point within deprivation theories. Existential needs, which is an experience not limited to the poor and marginalised, could be seen as another type of *anomie*. In addition to social issues, the person

³⁹⁷ Cox 1995: 171

converting could consciously or unconsciously be looking for answers to deeper needs of meaning and purpose. The convert may find a sense of meaning, fellowship and belonging that is attractive within Pentecostal churches. Whether the social issues are solved or not, Pentecostalism could be an attractive option in this way, the social matters then becoming secondary.

Junior's problem with drugs was a serious problem, and he probably needed a clear break with his former environment, thus Pentecostalism also afterwards provided a safe place where his deliverance could be maintained. What caused Junior to consult Pentecostalism, was his overwhelming social needs. Losing his young wife, drug addiction and being fired from his work became too much to handle. These immediate needs became the impetus leading to seek Pentecostal help. In Junior's case these social concerns seem to exceed any existential needs.

Yet, the story of Junior is not complete without mentioning another type of experiences.

The testimony triggering his conversion presented a "miracle of deliverance from drugs", and a hope of experiencing the same kind of "miracle" arose. First struggling for some time without becoming free from the drugs, the miracle was sparked by the conviction that came when he read the Bible (the gospel of Luke) for the first time. This released a motivation and power that made Junior fight by use of his will power for three days.

The final and decisive episode during Junior's process of conversion was the encounter that took place the first time he attended a Pentecostal service. During the church service, at the time of worship, Junior started physically to feel things he never had felt before. He describes that his body became warm and that he felt something like fire. Junior lost his self control and started to cry and clap hands. This did not occur through any act by someone else, but by the "holy" atmosphere he experienced in the meeting. The result was deliverance from drugs. When smelling the marijuana right after the service, instead of being tempted as usual he started vomiting. Unexpected social change in an instant! Since that day, Junior says, he has never used drugs! This was an experience so overwhelming and redeeming that a lasting change was the result. I will maintain that we need theories such as the category of spiritual power theories to shed light on experiences such as these ones. Thus we can state that the theories of *social change* do not catch the whole picture.

In Junior's life, we see that we find aspects of all the three categories of theories suggested in chapter three. A broken and deprived life becomes a social success through a powerful

experience when consulting Pentecostalism. What is the more central and crucial for his conversion? I have indicated above that *social deprivation* or *social change* are not the most fundamental concepts for explaining his conversion.

Do we rather deal with an integrated complex picture where all components have to be in place to produce the result of conversion? What if the result was no social success? Would the informant still be a Pentecostal? Or, what if there was no powerful experience involved, would he have converted at all? The answer may be no.

Reflecting further on this, I will now turn to a review of Junior's experience in the prison.

6.1.2 - The Prison Episode

During the special episode occurring in the prison, there was something which my informant described as *the anointing of the Lord* and *the glory of God* that filled the prison cell. This sensation of *anointing (uncão)* or *glory (glória)* seems to have led to the following exorcism and speaking in tongues. Something broke in, which completely changed the atmosphere in that specific location and situation. It was not just an individual or subjective experience, but something affecting several inmates at the same time. The episode resulted in three prisoners immediately accepting the Pentecostal message and also changed the critical situation for Junior in the prison. There was something shaking the very reality of those being present.

6.2 - Divine Encounters

At this point I will introduce a phrase and an analytical concept for cases found in my material such as the one described above. What took place in the prison cell of Junior I will define as a *divine encounter*. Introducing the term *divine encounter*, it needs to be noted that in the present context I use this term in a descriptive sense. The question whether the actual cause is divine I do not attempt to discuss, that would mean going beyond the descriptive level. However, I will remain methodologically open, something which means that I will not *a priori* exclude the possibility of a supernatural explanation. With *divine encounters* I mean religious experiences or manifestations which, whether self-experienced or observed, may challenge, attack or re-order the very worldview of the people involved.

When the worldview of a person is challenged, there will be a need for adopting a position in relation to that specific experience. Such a position-taking may lead to different outcomes, as denial, rejection, re-ordering or acceptance. *Divine encounters* thus require interpretation by the participant and for some that would mean a certain degree of integration of the concept into their worldview or an adoption or re-ordering of it. A divine encounter of this kind is

such a shaking religious experience that it is hard to remain neutral. Distancing oneself or taking no position would still mean reacting, even if by denial or escape from the actual occurrences. I will explain and discuss the concept *divine encounters* more in chapter 7.2.

Another phrase, related to *divine encounter* is the term *power encounter* used by John Wimber³⁹⁸ and Peter Wagner³⁹⁹ among others. *Power encounters* refer to an empirical and physical manifestation of power, and I find this expression helpful for the analyses of some of the phenomena now under discussion. I will keep this term too on a descriptive level, not concluding the cause of these physical manifestations. But, as regarding *divine encounters*, I will remain methodologically open, not excluding a priori the possibility of a supernatural explanation. I understand *power encounters* as one kind of *divine encounters*

This concept of *power encounter* seems to fit well with what took place in the prison cell with Junior, a place of violence and criminality void of Christian influence. According to a theological understanding, the gospel of Jesus Christ entered new territory and challenged the situation in the prison.

There were something which Junior called *the anointing of the Lord* and *the glory of God* that filled the prison cell, and led to the following *power encounters* of exorcism and people speaking in tongues. The result was three criminals converting to Pentecostalism. We see that the *power encounters* pointed out in this case play a vital part in expanding the boundaries of Pentecostalism.

As stated, I understand *power encounters* as one kind of *divine encounters*. Actually, I find it fruitful to point out several varieties or examples of divine encounters that I find present in my material. Examples of these are:

1) Power encounters like exorcism and conflict with evil forces, resulting in empirical and physical manifestations.

2) Religious experiences of the numinous, the awe inspiring and divine, hereunder religious ecstasy.

3) Healings and miracles

³⁹⁸ Wimber 1985: 28

³⁹⁹

4) Experiences of being indwelt by spiritual power, exercising abilities as speaking in tongues or other “spiritual” gifts.

5) Answers to prayers

Going back to Junior’s story, we can identify several *divine encounters* there too. For example, his experience the first time he attended a Pentecostal service and the conviction he felt when reading the Bible.

These *divine encounters* seem to have been very decisive for the process of Junior’s conversion, as well as having a major impact in the prison cell.

We will now turn to our next informant from AD.

6.3 - Isabella’s Story - Analysis

(See Chapter 5.2 for Isabella’s story - AD)

With her broken family situation, a violent father, domestic chaos and poverty, Isabella clearly comes from, what can be called, a deprived background. It would be easy therefore to regard this informant as an example of what the theories of deprivation claim. However, this might be a too quick and general conclusion.

What was emphasized by my informant at several occasions, and thus can be understood as crucial for her attending the Pentecostal church, was not that the church offered order in a chaotic situation, but because it was “full of the power of God” and offered healing.

The healing of Isabella’s mother was the major reason for her to become a Pentecostal. The family had had encounters with Pentecostalism previously, but it was not until after the healing that Isabella turned into an active member.

Chesnut points to the powerful remedy of faith healing that Pentecostalism offers in response to health problems stemming from poverty, as a major growth factor.⁴⁰⁰ The case of Isabella corresponds quite well with his observation. However, in Isabella’s case the healing occurred before her conversion. She converted because she witnessed the “power of God” to heal her mother.

Despite the obvious aspects of deprivation, it is therefore too simple to solely base the conclusion on this. The theories of deprivation also tend to point to the disintegration of social

⁴⁰⁰ Chesnut 1997: 5

structures caused by immigration from the rural to the urban sphere. The conversion in this case took place in the rural district, before my informant moved to the city, and in this way does not correspond with the deprivationist view of Pentecostalism as an urban phenomenon. Chesnut also criticises the theories of deprivation for losing sight of how people seek immediate solutions for specific needs, usually health related, rather than a more general sense of *anomie*.⁴⁰¹ If deprivation was the primary cause, we should have expected Isabella and the family to become a part of Pentecostalism earlier.

From an etic perspective it is obvious that the healing had a major impact in Isabella's story. On top of all the difficulties for Isabella, her mother got sick and was dying according to the doctors. This became too much to handle, and brought Isabella into desperation. In the midst of this desperate situation the Pentecostal church became a source of rescue. Isabella's brother had begun attending a Pentecostal church, and brought some "brothers" from the church. They "*prayed, prophesied and preached*" to her mother, and this led to a miracle, according to Isabella.

I do not have access to a detailed review of the healing, and would thus not be able to discuss the actual healing itself. However, it is clear that Isabella's mother got well, despite the prospects of the doctors, and for Isabella this was a tangible miracle. It was an experience that had a crucial impact and transformative power on her life path and view of life. In such a way, this corresponds with the concept launched in the previous chapter. The healing was a *divine encounter* that had a transforming effect. It was a proof for Isabella of God's care, and of the message preached by the Pentecostal church.

This divine encounter was further confirmed by what Isabella found when she converted and began attending the Pentecostal Church. Isabella used different words to describe something that met her in the church, something that obviously was crucial for her.

The Pentecostal church was "full with the power of God (*cheio do poder de Deus*), "very full of revival" (*muito cheio de avivamento*). "*My heart started to burn. And I accepted Jesus and I stayed*".

As she described the church, Isabella turned emotional and even cried. The experience of *power, revival, fire, intimacy with the Holy Spirit* and a *testimony in her spirit* are different words for a crucial aspect that Isabella highlights. These words describe something numinous

⁴⁰¹ Chesnut 1997: 4-5

and awe inspiring and point to religious experiences of transcendence, something that corresponds with the concept of *divine encounters*.

What she found in the Pentecostal church was so important that it was worth sacrificing several hours of walk. Two hours and forty minutes it took her to be able to attend the Pentecostal church.

Isabella also has experienced social change. Today she is not poor, but a hardworking lady who runs her own little laundry store and affords to live with her family in a small apartment in a descent neighbourhood. It has been a movement from the lower class to the middle class. However, this is a social increase that has taken place over a period of time after her conversion and should only be regarded as a consequence of conversion if viewed in connection with her Pentecostal affiliation.

There are certainly aspects of deprivation present in Isabella's story, but yet other elements, as pointed out, seem more crucial for her conversion. A quantitative approach might have missed some of these aspects that stood out in the semi-structured interview. The healing of her mother was a decisive event and an empirical manifestation, and can thus be called a *power encounter*. Also the religious experiences of "the power of God", "revival" and of being indwelt with "fire" have to be emphasized. These elements of healing and religious experiences could be summarised by the concept of *divine encounters*, and here, I will argue, we find the major cause for Isabella's affiliation with Pentecostalism.

6.4 - "Victory Campaign" - Analysis of Observation in AD

(See chapter 5.3 for the presentation of this observation)

The service in *Campanha da Vitoria* was one of several Pentecostal services, I observed, that contained some highly ecstatic elements, but this was one with the most distinct forms of it. I will first describe the *emic* impressions this specific service gave me through the participant observation. After attending such a service you walk out with a sense of wonder and awe. What really happened today? Have I become a changed person? You do not want to lose the special atmosphere and the inspiration and the energy that was felt. The ecstatic preaching seemed to have an influence on everybody in the church. Even I, as a foreigner and observer, was touched by this sense of victory and new dignity. During the ecstatic preaching you believed you could overcome any obstacles, the struggles you were taking part of in life seemed suddenly to be only minor things. I could see how the people seemed uplifted. The

message that was delivered declared that life will change to the better and we will overcome because of Jesus.

Here, I believe we are approaching something essentially regarding the growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil. If you walk out feeling better than when you walked in, you will probably come back. If you walk out from the Pentecostal church uplifted and renewed, with new strength and energy to face your daily struggles and situations, you will want more of this. It is not improbable that this can be a major reason why people are drawn to the Pentecostal congregations and services. A service like this one will fuel the capacity to carry on with church life and moral life. Probably, even several uninspiring services will not extinguish what one service of this kind brought forth. People will still seek to get more from this “heavenly source”.

Was this just my individual and subjective experience or feeling? Most people joined in fully. It was definitely a collective experience. For me, it was participant observation. I was present and to some degree joined in and took part of what was happening, but still trying to keep some critical distance, observing for my notes.

Turning to an *etic* review of the episode, was it mass suggestion or mass psychology? Certainly there is an element of mass suggestion, or more accurate mass psychology, involved. But this is more a description of a phenomenon than an explanation of the cause itself. Obviously, there was an emotional appeal directed to the crowd, causing similar reactions among the individuals. What caused this phenomenon of mass psychology is a question on another level, a meta-level. Could it be God or the Holy Spirit at work? I will neither be able to, nor try to explore this question in depth in this thesis. However, I will indicate some possible causes by discussing the phenomena in the light of theories of Pentecostal growth.

During football games at the world famous *Maracana* stadium, I also, as a participant observer among the more than 70 000 people, experienced a state of wild ecstasy. One could argue that the Pentecostal service corresponds better with the Brazilian celebrative mood and thus gives Pentecostalism an advantage over other denominations that are stiffer in their manners of expression. Even if this could be a point, the two types of experiences never struck me as parallels, even if the outward behaviour may have looked quite similar. I found the Pentecostal ecstasy to touch some inner and existential chords, something not comparable with the excitement of the football games and the atmosphere in the stadium.

I suggest that the kind of experience I am presently discussing should be treated as a religious phenomenon, rather than just being seen from a psychological point of view. It is *sui generis* unique in its character and should be treated on its own.

The Brazilian sociologist Waldo Cesar points to something transcendent characterising the Pentecostal phenomena. Pentecostal religiosity leads to an orientation towards another reality.⁴⁰² The kind of experiences I am discussing is not merely an arousal of emotions, but something that also involves a acknowledgement of God, something that affects one's will, values and love and can result in a changed understanding of oneself. These aspects are pointing to the numinous, the mysterious, the transcendent. Here we are touching an area where we may be in need of a new language to express the realities we are talking about. Therefore I have introduced the term *divine encounters* in an attempt to come to terms with these numinous experiences.

Do the social theories include ecstatic moments like this within their frame? The Norwegian theologian Sturla Stålsett, a modern deprivationist, summarises some thoughts after observing Pentecostalism in Brazil:

*“Maybe they received something they were in need of, even if the crutches were not thrown away. They received a strong experience. What experience? An experience of being an individual – together with thousands of other individuals – in a meeting with God and divine forces, good and evil. Without shame they were able to cry out their longings. They could tramp the demons under their feet, and renew their hope that tomorrow, next week, next month the miracle will happen. They could make order in a chaotic world by splitting it in two: The Good and the Evil. And in the midst of all the spirituality: They were allowed to be “body” – with longings, needs, pain and feelings.”*⁴⁰³

Stålsett here recognises some value of the ecstatic behaviour from a sociological perspective. The participants of the Pentecostal service got a positive psychological effect.

⁴⁰² Shaull & Cesar 2000: 33

⁴⁰³ Stålsett, Sturla, ”Øyeblikkets religion: Pinsekirkene blomstrer i fattige land” in www.aftenposten.no, June 13th 2004 (url: <http://aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/article808286.ece>, December 2011) (My own translation)

Waldo Cesar rather talks about it as transcendence, as a quality of what exists or acts on its own, above knowledge or the world of experience.⁴⁰⁴

Something similar, I observed at another occasion in one of the *filhas* of ADMAF in the *favela* Tiuti (reckoned as a very dangerous *favela*⁴⁰⁵). I attended a *congresso* (conference) that was going on the whole day. About 50 people attended the small church, as different preachers came and preached. In between the seminars, there were worship sessions (drums, el guitars and base guitar were used). After one preaching session, something special took place when the worship evolved. The atmosphere turned so “powerful”, emotional and “holy” that people started to react in different ways. Some knelt, some lay flat on the floor face down, and others were embracing each other. Tears poured down the cheeks as several people wept, some loudly, others quietly. The small church was filled with people praising and praying. The worship team continued, and one of the singers, a young girl, went on singing just simple words, sounds and melodies in the microphone while she was on her knees for the next hour. The program was just put aside and the next preacher was skipped. What went on was more important. The worship and prayer continued for about one hour in this holy presence, something that definitively was a corporate experience. This atmosphere and the reactions were less ecstatic than during the reported service in the Victory Campaign⁴⁰⁶. Yet, I find these events basically to be of the same kind. There was a collective presence and *act of surrender to the mysterious* that may best be described by the term *divine encounters*.

Harvey Cox, also a contender of *spiritual power*, though of a different kind, would point to a primal spirituality deep within the human soul that he believes the Pentecostals have rediscovered – something parallel to what can be found in folk religions and shamanism. He compares Pentecostal music and glossolalia with jazz, the parallel being improvisation, as a key quality.⁴⁰⁷ Music is a form of expression that cognitively is not intelligible but still communicates in very powerful way.

What took place in the service of the *Campanha de Vitoria* as well as in the *congresso* in the *favela* had an empowering effect on the people. If this kind of experience leads to transformation or adjustment of one own’s worldview, it should be regarded as a *divine*

⁴⁰⁴ Shaul & Cesar 2000: 38

⁴⁰⁵ My middle class host family marveled that I had dared to go there.

⁴⁰⁶ See chapter 5.3

⁴⁰⁷ Cox 1995: 139-140

encounter. These experiences I therefore find more appropriate to put in the category of *spiritual power*, as a kind of *divine encounters*.

6.5 – Melvin’s story – Analysis

(See chapter 5.8.2 for a brief introduction of Melvin – AD)

As explained in chapter 5, I have chosen to present the story of Melvin here in chapter 6 as I find some features in his story that might enlighten our present discourse.

Melvin, my European informant who converted to Pentecostalism during his stay in Brazil, was not from a deprived social background. He had studied at some really good schools and his father was a wealthy man, paying for his son’s adventures in the exotic Brazil. Still, Melvin, according to himself, was not happy on the inside. He had fun going to parties and the VIP booths, but he was lacking purpose. He was struggling to find himself.

There was something missing, but before he became a Christian he did not see this clearly. Melvin describes this condition of not knowing what he wanted with his life as a sort of depression. Melvin’s need was more of a “spiritual” kind, but he was not really aware of that before he converted. When he was invited to church the first time, he went there because he thought that there would be attractive girls there, plus an opportunity to get an interesting experience and a possibility to learn more of the language. When the friend called again and invited him the next week, he came for the same reasons. But the third time, as they were talking about salvation, something “wonderful” happened:

*- I started to cry, and there was no, I don’t know why I was crying. But I just started to cry and there was no idea why I was crying ... and that was how God was good to me, I felt so saved, you know for the first time in my life I felt so saved, in the presence of somebody, which is the Holy Spirit ... I can’t explain it exactly. It is unexplainable, but it is something so, so beautiful and wonderful.*⁴⁰⁸

This episode marks a change in Melvin’s life. There was something new and different in his life. The next Sundays he came back and he has been a part of the AD church since then. Melvin actually decided not to go back to Europe but to stay in Brazil and be a part of the church for a longer time.

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Melvin in Manaus, 18 May 2009

We see that also in this case there is a special encounter connected with conversion. Melvin did not go to the Pentecostal Church at first, searching for something religious, even though we cannot exclude hidden or unconscious motives. Without being conscious of a special need at least, Melvin found himself overwhelmed by something numinous. There may have been unconscious longings for purpose and meaning as Melvin also admits, but they were met in a moment of “*the presence of somebody... The Holy Spirit... It is unexplainable,*” to use his own words. The moment of an “*unexplainable presence of the Holy Spirit*”, I think is best described by the term *divine encounter*.

Melvin explains that after his conversion he attended a course called *Encontro com Deus* (meeting or encounter with God), which is a course that is arranged for newly converted people. “*That is where God really touched my life and changed my mind and everything.*” In this setting Melvin says he had several encounters with God and also received his spirit baptism. If it was not for this course Melvin is not sure if he would still be in the church today.

6.6 – Roberto’s story – Analysis

(See chapter 5.4 for Roberto’s story – IURD)

The story of Roberto is a story of success and sacrifice. Roberto fulfilled what seems an impossible dream for many in Brazil, moving from the lower strata of society to achieving economic independence. Then he gave it all up for the cause of his faith. Even if the family of Roberto had some resources at hand – his father provided some capital for the start of his business, and thus can be placed in the middle class – success is not easily gained.

Roberto’s story follows the typical traits of a Pentecostal conversion testimony: How life was before the conversion, building up to a climax which is the turning point, and then how life became after. The moment of making the decision becomes the climax and centring point of his life story. This way of constructing an image of oneself has become the custom in Pentecostal congregations and is cheered forth by an enthusiastic crowd. It should be stated that one could possibly be tempted to overemphasize the darker sides of life before conversion and to paint a brighter picture of the life after. Taking a possible overemphasis into account, this definitely still was a crucial moment for Roberto, who recalls both the month and weekday and several details, for instance that it was a rainy day. Roberto also ascribes his success and achievements to this turning point. Clearly his conversion triggered a new strong motivation to do his uttermost. It could be described as a continual force chasing

him up and forth, instead of settling down. Roberto's attitude, before and after the conversion, would be different when facing new challenges. To step out of your social limitations in Brazil a motivation like this may be needed. The story of Roberto stands out, having several climaxes or promotions. When achieving and mastering something new, Roberto does not settle and makes himself comfortable, but continues to chase for more. This could be a result of the message that is emphasized in IURD.

6.6.1 – The Faith Message of IURD

Roberto pointed to the teaching about faith as the best with *Igreja Universal*. I will in the following paragraph refer a lesson about faith that Roberto gave, something that also gives us an understanding of what IURD teach.⁴⁰⁹

*- I think the best in this church, is how we learn to use the power of our faith.*⁴¹⁰

He continued, explaining that human beings have feelings and faith, just like soul and spirit. Faith and feelings are different entities. While feelings are natural, faith is a gift from God and thus supernatural. For faith to work properly it has to be distinguished from the feelings of the person. If they instead are mixed there will be confusion. In the moment faith is exercised it has to depend solely on the written word of God, and the feelings put aside. There are Biblical examples of this. Abraham used his faith when God asked him to sacrifice his son. Gideon used his faith when he sacrificed the second veal which was for the maintenance of the family, unlike the first veal which belonged to God. He would by no means be able to give this sacrifice to God, jeopardizing his family, if it was based on his feelings. Gideon trusted in the word of the Lord: *“Give it to me and I will be with you and you will defeat all your enemies and you will free all the people of Israel”*.⁴¹¹ Gideon made the sacrifice in faith, trusting in the word that the Lord had spoken.⁴¹²

This kind of faith could be labelled *overcoming faith* or *conquering faith* and is one of the central aspects of the IURD theology and message. It is taught and learned over and over again, and even the main temple of *Igreja Universal's* has been named “The Worldwide Cathedral of Faith”. This type of *conquering faith* must not be mixed with the faith of salvation. *Saving faith* is received when one accepts Jesus, while *conquering faith* is also

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

⁴¹⁰ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

⁴¹¹ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

⁴¹² Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

understood as a gift but something that can be developed and exercised in the here and now life of the believer.

This focus on *conquering faith* is a common aspect among a group within Neo-Pentecostalism called the *faith movement*. Edir Macedo was influenced by the Canadian preacher Robert McAlister before they parted and Macedo founded IURD.⁴¹³ Since then, *Igreja Universal* developed independently of any foreign mission and overseeing. Impulses though, have been gained from sources outside of Brazil, for example through books by Kenneth Hagin and *the faith movement*.⁴¹⁴ Kenneth Hagin can be reckoned as the leading figure and most influential within the North-American *faith movement*, also called *The Word of Faith movement*.⁴¹⁵ This movement emphasizes the positive confession of the Word of God and “spiritual principles” which follows the “law of faith”.⁴¹⁶ The authority of the believers is an important point.⁴¹⁷ The North American faith gospel has been criticized for tendencies to promote egoistic goals like getting larger houses and fancier cars. The IURD has many elements of this message but in a form, shaped within a Brazilian context. The faith message of IURD has been formed by facing the desperate challenges of an underdeveloped country and by the confrontations with a vivid religious and spiritual world within a frame of Catholicism. The faith message in Brazil deals primarily with essential needs of everyday life such as getting a job with an acceptable income to provide for the family. Thus, I suggest we can talk about a Brazilian “phenomenon” – maintaining that we can reckon *Igreja Universal* as an indigenous Brazilian Church movement, which now, in its next phase, exports itself to the rest of the world.

Obviously this message of conquering faith has been important for Roberto, and can be seen as a cause for the unfolding life story and social change that has taken place in his life.

Sharing his conversion story, Roberto said:

⁴¹³ Goncalvas da Silva 2007: 5 / Interview with Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 6 May 2009

⁴¹⁴ Furre 2006: 45-46 / Anderson 2004: 158

⁴¹⁵ The message is known by different labels such as the *faith message* and *positive confession*, or the *prosperity gospel* and *health and wealth gospel*. (Anderson 2004: 157-158)

⁴¹⁶ Anderson 2004: 158

⁴¹⁷ Hagin, Kenneth E.: *The Believer's Authority*. Tulsa, OK: RHEMA Bible Church: 1986

Some theologians criticize Hagin for emphasizing the authority of the believer to such an extent that the consequence is a degrading of God, putting humans on a divine level. See for example Kjell Olav Sannes in *Det guddommeliggjorte menneske og den menneskeliggjorte Gud*. This criticism has been countered by Øyvind Gaarder Andersen, see for example the series of articles published in *Dagen*: 17 December 2005, 21 & 23 January 2006, 4 March 2006, 20 April 2006.

- *And that day was so special – the preaching, the preaching there was talking about salvation about changing, changing of the life, changing of the heart, of the life, how Jesus can change your heart and you mind, our way of life.*⁴¹⁸

Roberto either refers to this *special day* of his conversion, or indicates that the preaching about salvation in IURD was a special occasion. The last interpretation corresponds to my experience that salvation is preached, but maybe not quite as often as the conquering type of faith.

During a sequence of the interview, Roberto described what happens with people coming to IURD:

- [...] *he listens the word, he learn what he has to do, and after he accepts Jesus into his life, he surrenders his life to Jesus, Jesus changes his heart, and he start to use his faith like I said to you, he starts to use the power of his faith to conquer many things.*⁴¹⁹

This leads to the IURD formula: Accept Jesus into the life – start to use the power of your faith – conquer many things.

Let me here refer to the Norwegian professor Berge Furre who has spent three years studying IURD. According to him you will not find many separate original elements in their preaching. *“The originality of IURD lies more in the composition of the elements – the way it exploits the elements of faith, the entirety of the presentation. This is what, in terms of its numerical growth, obviously ‘works’.”*⁴²⁰

In the USA we know the American dream about how the poor guy is working his way upwards, achieving the impossible. The faith-prosperity orientated gospel with its foundation in the USA may have resemblances of the American dream. Could the faith-prosperity gospel be seen as a Neo-Pentecostal variant of the American dream?⁴²¹ In the IURD you have a transplanted version of this story. It is the IURD story. Roberto’s story fits this *Universal* dream perfectly.

⁴¹⁸ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

⁴¹⁹ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

⁴²⁰ Furre 2006: 45-46

⁴²¹ One could even turn the question around and ask where the elements of the American dream find their origins. Could the origins be found among the early immigrants and revivalists fleeing from the European persecutions, bringing pietistic values with them like “my utmost for his highest”? The history may thus be traced back to the Puritans who found not only religious freedom, but also abundance of resources and possibilities in their new land.

The *Universal* story tells about the miserable man or woman, enslaved in poverty and violence, bound by evil spirits. After attending the IURD services, his or her eyes are gradually opened for the spiritual truths of the gospel. Jesus is accepted and received as saviour and lord in life, and the demons of poverty are expelled. A new journey of faith can start. Through exercising the faith you have received, sacrificing and attending the services, you will build yourself up to become a conqueror. Nothing is impossible for the one who believes. Never stand still, never settle, always continue – is a message shouted with passion in the IURD services! Roberto's life has been impacted in a major way by this IURD message.

So how should one analyse the story of Roberto? What are the causes for Roberto's conversion? There are aspects of deprivation – a confused and depressed teenager without a firm basis in life. But there is also the story of social and positive change, as well as a message of faith which turned him around. For Roberto there is also a specific "*culto*" or church service triggering his conversion and later an enterprise which he calls "a miracle of faith". Roberto's story has aspects from all of the categories of causes for Pentecostal growth outlined in chapter three.

The demand side was a miserable life in which he felt like a failure. The supply side was the message of hope and salvation, visible through youth like himself who also were struggling, but who were different. The supply side was possibly attracting him. Roberto wanted to become like these other young people himself.

Roberto's story fits very well into the social change paradigm when seen as a whole. As a Christian attending *Igreja Universal*, Roberto learned how to cope with limited resources. In IURD he learned to change his self understanding from looking at himself as a failure to become a success. In such a way, converting to IURD could be a strategy to cope with a miserable life. Yet, I do not find it plausible that Roberto converted because he understood that this would bring him earthly success. The success came later, years later. However, I can agree that he may have got a hope for a better life through IURD. During the month when he attended IURD services before he converted, a hope for something better may have been raised. The consequence of Roberto's conversion was a changed life, but was it the decisive cause which led to his conversion? In the beginning Roberto had a hostile attitude. He even opposed attending church and rejected the invitation from his friend. This hostile attitude however was changed during one month of attending IURD services. The crucial point in his

conversion was what happened a rainy Thursday night, November 2001. First he made a decision to go to the youth service alone, even if his friend had not invited him this time. His conversion later that night started already at that point. No one forced him or asked him, he came to the service by himself. Thus he internalised the custom of attending service. It was the message that night which provoked the decision. The message was about “salvation and how Jesus can change your life and your heart”. Roberto realised that he had to “surrender”. And since that day he has not been the same person according to himself.

When analysing Roberto’s conversion, one must take into account not only the spoken words, but what may lie underneath. Among Pentecostals, telling about what God has done in one’s life has become the common way of constructing one’s personal conversion testimony. This often tends to focus on results and tangible evidences of God’s provision. What is not so easily described in words, but nevertheless could be a crucial factor in the conversion process is, as stated in the previous chapters with Junior and Isabella⁴²², the numinous, awe inspiring and divine encounter. We could sense this in the story of Roberto. What really happened during the night of the conversion? The preaching was about salvation “*And that day I was sure, I was sure that I had to surrender my life to him*”.⁴²³ Something made Roberto sure that he had to surrender. It was probably not a reasoning that this would give him a successful life, but rather a realisation of the need of personal salvation. In a sense deprivation theories have elements of truth, not only from a sociological point of view however, but also from a Pentecostal perspective. From this perspective, without Jesus in your life, you are deprived of the most important thing of all: Jesus Christ. Through an encounter with the divine, people realise this, often, but not exclusively in the setting of a church service.

It may be a combination of the three explanations described. The deprivation aspects drive the pre-convert to seek solutions. He may be more open to embrace a new way of life. Still, the conversion will not take place without a *divine encounter*, I will maintain. The deprivation aspects may bring the convert to a place where a spiritual encounter is likely to take place, for example during a church service. But the spiritual encounter is the most significant factor, or cause, of the conversion, the *sine qua non* factor.

⁴²² Chapter 6.1 and 6.3

⁴²³ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

Social change I believe is a more important factor in the post-stage of conversion, rather than in the pre-stage. When the convert experience social change after conversion he is more likely to remain in the new faith.

The changes for Roberto were immediate. Before his conversion Roberto was “a depressed person” and “he felt like a failure”. He was “so confused” because of the fighting in his family. Then he began to see the world from another angle. He started “to love people”, “to love the souls of the people”, and as a consequence, he started to evangelize others and invite people to church.

What also needs to be said is that Roberto found meaning of life. He got a mission and something to live for. He went from being a “lonely wolf” trying to navigate through a dark and tough world, to get a family of fellow believers with a vision to reach the whole world! Roberto got a vision larger than himself. Roberto is here in all probability an example of many, many others. Through the Pentecostal message of hope and salvation self esteem is raised in people. Poor and marginalized people from the slums of Rio de Janeiro are empowered and suddenly believe they can conquer the world. Right now, multitudes of people rejected by the society and the world are making such plans and are about achieving them. “Watch out the Pentecostals are coming!”, as C. Peter Wagner wrote already in the 1970’s is becoming true!

We have heard a testimony from an IURD convert, now we will turn to an observation.

6.7 – Libertação – Analysis of Observation in IURD

(See chapter 5.5 for the presentation of this observation)

The public practice of *libertação*, liberation or deliverance from evil spirits, like the one I witnessed is one of the practices that have given IURD its reputation. The main service of *libertação* is held on Fridays but deliverance now also is a focus in the “sessions of spiritual unloading” on Tuesdays, where my observation was recorded.⁴²⁴ During these weekly services, the preacher leads the congregation through a collective exorcism, sometimes singing “it’s time for the demons to leave” to the melody of the theme song of a television show (Xuxa television show). In a special procedure with the whole congregation

⁴²⁴ The weekly day consecrated to the casting out of demons has been Fridays at the services of *libertação*. Nowadays there is also specific service Tuesdays called *Sessão do Descarrego* (Session of Spiritual Unloading). The IURD webpage explains that this service was created to fight against the spiritual forces of evil because more and more people are plagued with problems of spiritual nature. (<http://www.arcauniversal.com/iurd/reunioes.html> 2 July 2011)

participating, often several thousands, the demons are cast out as people are stamping their feet and throwing their arms behind their shoulders.⁴²⁵

The congregation was standing, watching in awe the display of spiritual battle on the stage, that Tuesday night in Del Castilho. How should we interpret this observation? What importance should such manifestations be given, and how does it impact the growth of IURD?

An observation like the one I witnessed naturally demands a response from the observer. It may cause people to rearrange their worldview or adjust their perception of reality. But often, how people will interpret and relate to these literally physical manifestations of power, however, may differ from person to person, depending on their worldview. For example, the reaction of a Brazilian and a rational European observer could be very different. The worldview of the observer plays a significant role in this process. The sceptic would maybe even question whether the manifestations are real since they may not fit into their “modern” worldview. Other solutions or explanations would be sought.

The “Brazilian worldview”⁴²⁶, however, has a strong spiritual orientation and does not exclude exorcisms, healings or other manifestations of the spiritual.⁴²⁷

When mainstream Brazilians observe *power encounters* like exorcisms, it will often be understood as a real and visible spiritual battle evolving. This battle could demonstrate which spirit or which religion is the stronger. This is what is changed in their perception of reality, not the reality of a spiritual world being manifested, but the power of the name of Jesus and the “Pentecostal Spirit” over the spirits of the Afro-Brazilian religions. Through these weekly services *Igreja Universal* shows that it contains amazing power. Spiritual power is a language that is very relevant in the Brazilian culture.

This corresponds quite well with Wimber’s concept which sees *power encounters* from a theological point of view as a clash between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

Such power encounters may challenge the Western rational way of thinking in a different way. To settle the premises, manifestations of these kinds do occur, and in larger numbers than the academic world maybe realises. Researchers of “Majority World” Pentecostalism are

⁴²⁵ The observation of Chesnut (Chesnut 1997: 46) corresponds well with my observation. See also Chesnut, 1997: 84.

⁴²⁶ Of course there is a multitude of worldviews present in a populated nation as Brazil. However, I speak of the prevailing popular Brazilian understanding that has a certain spiritual tendency.

⁴²⁷ See chapter 2.1 – “The Mission Field”. Renato Ortiz, professor of sociology at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo describes Umbanda as the national religion of Brazil. (Itioka 2002: 105)

aware of the manifestations of exorcisms taking place and it is definitely not seen as an occasional “theatre” put up by the Church.⁴²⁸ People passing into an unconscious and ecstatic state, shaking, foaming or acting with a changed, sometimes animal-like personality, as I witnessed, really take place in decent numbers. The question is rather why these manifestations occur.

I have not found many scholars of the *deprivation* or *social change* paradigm that have chosen to deal with this question and explain what the deeper causes behind these “unpleasant” ecstasies can be.⁴²⁹ They just state what occurs and that the manifestations play a role in the world of the people experiencing them.⁴³⁰ Often they are interpreted in terms of syncretism and continuation with the prevailing cultural beliefs. The manifestations are treated as *social constructions* for their participants. Some scholars may think, without stating it, that these manifestations are possible to explain in terms of psychology.⁴³¹ There is often a hidden and vague idea that poverty and lack of education may cause the unconsciousness of these people “to play them a trick”. I believe such explanations are too simple.

Missiologist Tormod Engelsviken, who has analysed this phenomenon based upon his observations and research in Ethiopia, holds that most attempts at “scientific” explanations of possession tend to be reductionistic and cannot come to grips with all the evidence of a possession case.⁴³² Such phenomenon has to be treated as a religious phenomenon *sui generis*, and cannot be reduced to a psychological, medical or cultural phenomenon.⁴³³

Deprivation theories and social change theories do not easily comprehend these phenomena. Lalive d’Epinay contended that the Pentecostal congregations were not contexts where modern attitudes could be learned but a new sphere where the old folk beliefs in miracles and supernatural intervention could be nourished.⁴³⁴ This is a very reductionist view that does not come to grip with the data.

Scholars that actually address this question are more often pointing to *spiritual power theories*. For example Peter Wagner from a theological point of view assigns the spiritism of

⁴²⁸ Furre 2008:41 / Chesnut, 1997: 83-86

⁴²⁹ Mary Esperandio offers some suggestion based upon her own experience in “Globalization and Subjectivity: A Reflection on the ‘Universal Church of the Kingdom of God’ in a Perspective Drawn from Psychology of Religion” in *Spirits of Globalization – The Growth of Pentecostalism and Experiential Spiritualities in a Global Age*. Editor Stålsett, Surla J. London: scm press, 2006: pp. 52-64

⁴³⁰ Chesnut 1997: 83-86

⁴³¹ Esperandio 2006: pp. 52-64

⁴³² Engelsviken 1991: 84

⁴³³ Engelsviken 1991: 84

⁴³⁴ Cox 1995: 174

Brazil as real works of the devil and recognises the exorcisms to be in touch with the factual world, as also the Pentecostals do themselves.⁴³⁵

I will not be able, in this thesis, to discuss further why these frenzies occur and why the name of Jesus seems to contain a releasing power over them. My purpose is rather to understand how these *power encounters* are causes of the growth of Pentecostalism.

Patricia Birman, one of the voices of the Brazilian school, points out the practice of exorcism in IURD as passages between IURD and the Afro-Brazilian cults.⁴³⁶ She argues that IURD's concept of conversion rather should be understood as *passages*. Her view is that there are spaces of interlocution between religious groups. For example that IURD does establish a group of ritual and symbolic activities that function as a bridge between their own and other religious systems. These activities facilitate passages between one group and the other. Between IURD and the Afro-Brazilian religions, exorcism (of the Afro-Brazilian spirits) functions as the basic bridge. The spirits of Umbanda and Candomblé are accepted as real entities but driven out. In such a way there is a natural bridge from one religious group to another without the need of a total change of worldview. Instead their worldview is integrated and subordinated into the other group's worldview. Birman points out that her study concentrates on passage from Afro-Brazilian religions to Neo-Pentecostalism (IURD). If the person came from a different religious context, whether that be Catholicism or other Protestant denominations, other bridges should be looked for.

The theory of a natural bridge between the Afro-Brazilian religions and IURD is definitely an interesting point. There is continuity with the previous religions, but it should be pointed out that there is also a decisive break. The spirits from Afro-Brazilian pantheon should by no means be sought or consulted any longer. There may be continuity or passages in the sense that the "experienced reality" of the population participating in the cults is not denied, but addressed, confronted and subordinated.

IURD takes the spiritual experiences of people seriously, and has a way to deal with it. Birman's attempt to downgrade the concept of conversion to something less drastic, does not come to grip with the transformation of the IURD followers like Roberto.

⁴³⁵ Wagner 1986: 126

⁴³⁶ Birman 2007: pp. 115-132

Chesnut found in his study that 91% of the IURD members had visited an Umbanda center, compared to roughly half of the AD informants.⁴³⁷ It clearly indicates that IURD's war on the Afro-Brazilian religions results in a growth particularly from this group. Conversion the opposite way, from Pentecostalism to the Afro-Brazilian religions, is nearly non-existent.⁴³⁸

6.8 - Miguel's Story - Analysis

(See chapter 5.6 for Miguel's story – NV)

Miguel's conversion does not really fit into the schemes of deprivation or social change. He has an education from college and works as a system analyst. There was nothing specific Miguel wanted to change before he converted.⁴³⁹ His moment of decision and conversion took place after a somewhat special request to God. Under special circumstances a specific song that Miguel requested was actually sung, something that provided a strong emotional moment for Miguel and started what Miguel calls a "honeymoon".

His journey towards the moment of conversion, however, started some time before this incident. He got a girlfriend, who was the daughter of a pastor, and she became a link for him to attend church. In the Church he used to discuss with the pastor, and was thus gradually influenced.

In Miguel's story of conversion the important elements do not seem to be deprivation or social change. Rather, we see in Miguel's story that the spiritual dimensions are important for his affiliation with Pentecostalism. In Pentecostalism, more explicitly in AD and NV, in contrast to the Baptist church, he found something that addressed the spiritual issues that were relevant for his family, especially his father's involvement in Umbanda. Before he converted, Miguel also practised Umbanda, even though he regarded himself Catholic. We see here the syncretistic nature of popular Catholicism exemplified.

We also get a glimpse of the Brazilian worldview with specific entities or spirits with names that for example regulate things that are connected with samba. For Miguel the spiritual and physical dimensions overlapped. Pentecostalism clearly addressed and provided answers to Miguel's spiritual experiences. It provided authority over the evil spirits. Miguel had a wide range of encounters with spiritual manifestations. In the theological faculty where he studied he was even referred to as "Miguel with his horror stories". For example, at one occasion his

⁴³⁷ Chesnut 1997: 69

⁴³⁸ Frigerio 2007: 46

⁴³⁹ Being asked if there was something he wanted to change in his life before he converted, Miguel simply answered no. (Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009)

father had placed a plate of food offerings (which is an Umbanda ritual) in his apartment in a bathroom that was seldom used. As Miguel and his mother prayed, they suddenly heard something being shattered. Afterwards they found this plate of food offerings broken on the floor. It had fallen down and been broken as they prayed!⁴⁴⁰ Miguel saw this as an example of God's might and the power of prayer that is stronger than spiritism. This episode should be regarded as a power encounter.

There was also an episode of healing. His father recovered from a serious condition and much quicker than the doctors expected. This was an experience that caused Miguel's father to turn from spiritism to "seek the Lord". Actually, he could not wait to go to church after being healed.

Miguel emphasized different traits of Pentecostalism in the interview.

For example *Spirit baptism* was important for his affiliation with Pentecostalism. Also praise and worship was of significance. According to Miguel there was an important difference between his former Baptist church and the new Pentecostal church in their attitude towards worship.

Miguel also referred to prophetic words twice in the interview. One was a warning to his father, the other came in a special situation when he was about to make an important decision. A missionary from AD, who did not know about his situation, prayed and prophesied over him for about ten minutes, and said that he should not do what he had in mind. The words of the missionary addressed his situation and thoughts accurately. Miguel referred to it as a "tremendous experience with God".⁴⁴¹ Again, Miguel mentioned that God had spoken to him by his presence and through giving him inner peace.⁴⁴²

What clearly stands out as crucial for Miguel are not the circumstances, but the spirituality Pentecostalism provides. Again, we find various kinds of what I have called *divine encounters*, such as power encounters, a healing, answers to prayers, experiences of "God's presence" and prophetic words.

To come to grips with what Miguel describes we need the category of spiritual power theories.

⁴⁴⁰ Informal interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

⁴⁴¹ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

⁴⁴² Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

Miguel therefore seems to be an example pointing more to the *spiritual power theories* rather than deprivation or social change.

It should also be pointed out that Miguel was a prime example of a Pentecostal sharing his faith, something that was done on a daily basis. We see that Pentecostals are eager to share their faith with others, thus the message spreads and the Pentecostalism advances.

6.8.1 - Nova Vida

Nova Vida was also a church emphasising a message of faith. Compared with *Igreja Universal*, the other Neo-Pentecostal church in my sample, *Nova Vida* was, however, somewhat different. It could be described as having a different style, more sophisticated, targeting the middle class. The service was more organised with a sequence of worship and then preaching, unlike IURD where the different parts were floating together. Praise and worship was an important part in the NV service.

Still the teaching of faith can be said to be basically of the same content. Generally speaking the basic content is the same one: *Nova Vida* provides a Pentecostal spirituality and message of faith.

Chapter 7 – Etic Approach: General Tendencies in the Data

We have done several case studies, where both individual conversion stories and observations from three different national churches have been analysed. Now we will go beyond the individual and specific cases, to look for common traits and aspects found in the data. We will not deal with each church on its own, but rather deal with Brazilian Pentecostalism, exemplified by these churches. Let us extract and summarise some of the elements found in the material just presented. Some traits may be found in all of these three churches, others may have a clearer expression in just one of them. The more instances of an element are found in my sources, and if common in more than one of the churches, the greater significance it will have.

We have previously mentioned two sides of the phenomenon of Pentecostal growth. The *demand side* or the surroundings and circumstances leading people to Pentecostalism, and the *supply side* of what Pentecostalism offers.

In addition, the link or connection between the demand side and the supply side is of importance – in other words, how the supply side is communicated or mediated to those on the demand side. We talk here about, for example, structures, strategies, ways and tools of communication, marketing and use of media being important for availability and visibility. These aspects I put in a category which I will call *structural growth dynamics*.

Where social scientists tend to focus on the demand side,⁴⁴³ – asking what is pushing people to Pentecostalism – as a theologian I would like to bring into the discussion also the supply side and raise the question of what makes Pentecostalism so attractive? The theories of deprivation view the growth as an escape, while social change theories points to a positive change. However, both share a sociological point of view, which does not necessarily grasp certain experiences of a religious nature that have been discussed.

The structural growth dynamics, I see more as facilitating the growth, rather than causing it in the basic sense, and therefore these factors are regarded of secondary importance as an object of study in this thesis.

Through the data that have been presented and analysed we identify different aspects. We will now discuss some of these traits.

7.1 – Social Change – From Victim to Victor

The theories that were labelled social change basically say that Pentecostalism grows because it works - that people get better lives when becoming Pentecostals. However, as pointed out in the previous chapter, social change seems to be something following conversion rather than leading to it. Still, social change could be regarded important for the growth as a constituting factor and because people observe others. Several of my informants, like Junior, Roberto and Isabella, exemplify social change through their stories.

Social change can find its impetus through the message preached in Pentecostal churches.

An outstanding feature found in my data is the concept of what we can call *overcoming faith* or *conquering faith*. This aspect was especially highlighted through the interview with Roberto from *Igreja Universal*. A strong emphasis on this message, however, was found in all the Pentecostal churches in my study, though with its most distinct version in the Neo-

⁴⁴³ For an important exception, see Shaul, Richard & Waldo Cesar: *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches – Promises, Limitations, Challenges*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2000. Shaul & Cesar want to emphasize a dialog between sociology and theology for a more encompassing analysis of this religious phenomenon. (Shaul & Cesar 2000: 108).

Pentecostal churches IURD and NV. *Nova Vida* claimed to be a church where the teaching of the Word was given priority. What teaching? The teaching about faith (faith to exercise your ministry and overcome) was also there a main theme. The pastor, who had studied one year at the Word of Faith Rhema Bible School, preached according to this tradition of confessing the promises of the Word of God during the Sunday service I attended.⁴⁴⁴ In *Assembleia de Deus* a series of meetings was named *Campanha da Vitoria* (Victory Campaign). A message of faith and victory was preached, though the articulation tended to be somewhat different from IURD. “*You will get through the tunnel of struggle and get your victory! I am prophesying right now! Take your victory! Take it!*”⁴⁴⁵ The inspired message brought the whole congregation into ecstasy.

7.1.1 – Passivity or Initiative?

A quick and superficial glance at the *faith gospel* could make us believe that people are led to give up the “here and now life”, to quit taking initiative in their daily life and instead wait for the utopian future that will just “descend from heaven”. This, however, seems to be an observation far from reality. The faith gospel does not make people passive, but rather the opposite. Before attending Pentecostal churches many people born in the ruthless Brazilian society and poor communities turn passive when the dreams of their youth die and their daily struggle does not bring much result. This can lead to an acceptance of a state of poverty and make people settle with an attitude of passivity towards life – *born poor, die poor*. An understanding of oneself as a victim soon defines reality. Our informant Roberto was in a condition like this as a teenager before he converted. Passivity towards life can take different shapes. Men especially try to ease the pain of poverty through different means, making for example alcohol abuse a hard reality in the slums.⁴⁴⁶ Others become *traficantes* - parts of the drug gangs - as a way to rise above the social limitations and to experience some sort of power.

7.1.2 – Conquering faith

The faith gospel presented by the Pentecostal churches challenges passivity towards life. With passion the IURD preachers cry out the message of using your faith, sacrificing and expecting God’s blessings. Faith is seen as the key to conquer and overcome obstacles such as illness and poverty. By faith everything can be achieved and solved and you can become prosperous. For example, the title of one of Edir Macedo’s books is “*The Supernatural Power of Faith*”:

⁴⁴⁴ Participant observation in *Nova Vida da Tijuca*, 26 April 2009

⁴⁴⁵ Participant observation at ADMAF in Rio de Janeiro, 31 March 2009

⁴⁴⁶ Chesnut 2003: 47

The résumé of the book says: “*What if I tell you that all you know about faith is just the tip of the iceberg? What if you found out that there is a dormant giant inside of you waiting to be awakened?*”⁴⁴⁷ This dormant giant inside of you waiting to be awakened is the faith you have been given by God. The message aims to activate the listeners. The people attending IURD are encouraged to start looking for opportunities and grasp them.

During the interview with my informant Roberto, when I asked him what IURD meant by *learning to use their faith* and if this was primarily by giving in the offering, Roberto interrupted and eagerly explained that you learn to use your faith in every way you can imagine. It is about getting a better life and to grasp the opportunities that you get:

- [...] *if a little opportunity, little like a needle appears to you, you should take them, you should take it, you should take it, you should fight for it, you should fight for that opportunity, even if that opportunity is so small, so little you should fight for it, because that opportunity can be the opportunity of change your life.*⁴⁴⁸

This message of faith presented by the Pentecostal churches is not a message of passivity. It is a message of taking initiative, of taking active steps of climbing out of a miserable state of being.

7.1.3 – Tithes and Offerings

To give money in the offering is seen as just one of many ways of exercising and learning to use your faith: “*everything that people quit because of Jesus, he has promised that they will receive back a hundred times.*”⁴⁴⁹

Giving is an important praxis in *Assembleia de Deus* and other Pentecostal churches. The tenth is expected. It was not unusual with two offerings in some AD services I attended. And IURD has been heavily criticized for their focus on giving and sacrificing money.⁴⁵⁰ The

⁴⁴⁷ <http://www.uckg.org.za/products-page/books/the-supernatural-power-of-faith/>, 20 November 2010. These words remind about Kenneth Hagin in *The Believer's Authority*: “*I asked myself, “Do we have authority that we don't know about – that we haven't discovered – that we're not using?”*” (Hagin 1986: vii)

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May 2009

⁴⁵⁰ Critics have come both from institutions outside the church, media, former members, and even from other evangelicals. Several controversial cases involving IURD (referred as UCKG in English) have also made big headlines in the media.

- Recently Sao Paulo's public prosecutor has charged ten leading members of IURD, including bishop Macedo, of fraud and money laundering. The case has not been settled.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/13/brazil-evangelical-leader-charged-fraud>, 12 December 2011.

Some other examples are:

usual criticism is that the people are being exploited and taken advantage of because of their good faith. As to the convert's change of mentality, however, the importance of sacrificing should not be underestimated. The change from being a victim of life who can only receive help, to someone who can actually give and contribute is a revolutionary step. Regardless of how the IURD and its leaders spend this money, sacrificing carries a dignifying element for the convert who practice this. By giving, the believer gives of him or herself. It expresses an anticipation of God's response and is a participation in a greater cause. It is a sort of luxury, a gesture of "waste", and thus a clear break with the mentality of being poor.⁴⁵¹

7.1.4 – Redemption and Lift – From Victim to Victor

Learning to use the power of your faith is a message of hope addressing the everyday struggle of many in the Brazilian society, and it, no doubt, receives a massive response. It is a message that changes mentalities. From being a passive player in life, just "waiting" for the problems of poverty to arrive or trying to forget them in pleasures of alcohol and what the street can offer, one is being transformed to fight back and take active steps to conquer and shape one's own future. As illustrated by Roberto's testimony⁴⁵², the message proves its ability to actually change the mentality of the person involved and bring results! Also Junior and Isabella from AD could be mentioned here (see below).

We here see the pattern of what has been called *redemption and lift*. Donald McGavran, a missionary historian and missionary to India, proposed this idea in his books *The Bridges of God* (1955) and *Understanding Church Growth* (1970)⁴⁵³

Redemption and lift points out that one of the results of conversions within evangelistic movements, has been a lifting of whole classes of societies from poverty to relative prosperity. Former "pagans" held down by alcoholism, drug addiction and sexual promiscuity

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- A Belgian Parliamentary Investigation in 1997 accused the UCKG of being a criminal association, whose only purpose is enrichment. (*Parliamentary Inquiry for the purpose of establishing policy in combating unlawful practices of sects and of the dangers of such for the community and individuals, especially adolescents* - a report given to the Belgium Parliament / April 28, 1997 by Mr. Duquesne and Mr. Willems) The report itself caused controversy and the Parliament ultimately rejected it. UCKG later won a legal case against the State of Belgium in respect of several of the allegations that had been made.

(http://uckg.org/show_pages.php?tbl_pages_id=PGURL-f804ec7a50, 03 July 2011

<http://www.lachambre.be/FLWB/pdf/49/0313/49K0313009.pdf>, 03 July 2011

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Church_of_the_Kingdom_of_God, 03 July 2011)

- Ex-members suing UCKG in Houston, United States. These cases are referred to as *the Francisco Martinez case* and *the Victoria and Jesus Lorenzo case*.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Church_of_the_Kingdom_of_God, 03 July 2011)

⁴⁵¹ Cesar & Shaull 2000: 30

⁴⁵² See chapter 5.4 and 6.5

⁴⁵³ Synan 2008: Article published on http://www.believersstandunited.com/word_of_faith_movement.html, 27 June 2011

have been redeemed from these powers which produce poverty. As a result of becoming Christians, they have abandoned their former lifestyle and become honest and hard-working members of society, and as a consequence been lifted to a higher level on the social ladder.⁴⁵⁴

Redemption and lift is a phenomenon that can be found in a group, unfolding over a period of time. Based on my material I will introduce a new expression, which I will call *from victim to victor*. The *victim to victor* is an individual experience whereas *redemption and lift* normally refers to a collective rise. As the *redemption and lift* is a gradual increase over time, *victim to victor* points to an immediate change in the mentality of the individual. It refers more to the mentality than to the actual change of the circumstances. From being a victim drifting about by the circumstances, the convert realises his power to shape his own life, and as a consequence even his surroundings. The new believer does not need to accept reality as it is, but can by the power of God, and through exercising his or her faith, start a new journey. As well as the word *victor*, I could also use *conqueror*. The message of *conquering faith*, preached in Pentecostal churches as IURD, AD and NV, is one important impulse leading to this change of attitude. Conversion brings new values and a new dignity in life.

In an interview from the research of Shaul and Cesar I found the same element expressed by an informant from *Assembleia de Deus* with these words “... when a person accepts God, he or she is no longer a beggar, no longer begs. He or she is blessed by God.”⁴⁵⁵ Also Chesnut states that the evangelical faith affects the way in which the Pentecostals subjectively experience poverty.⁴⁵⁶

Bernice Martin was mentioned in chapter 3 as a representative of the theories of social change. The term *from victim to victor* corresponds well with the ideas of Bernice Martin and her description of how these new movements empower the individuals in new ways and bring freedom for those who have been left out of the “radar screen” of society.⁴⁵⁷ According to Bernice Martin, the Protestants (in Brazil about 80-90% of them are Pentecostal⁴⁵⁸) tell how conversion gave them increased control over their own and the community’s fate, and expanded the possibilities within reach realistically. The new Protestantism therefore is not

⁴⁵⁴ Synan 2008: Article published on http://www.believersstandunited.com/word_of_faith_movement.html, 27 June 2011

⁴⁵⁵ Shaul & Cesar 2000: 26

⁴⁵⁶ Chesnut 1997: 16

⁴⁵⁷ Martin, Bernice 1998: 107

⁴⁵⁸ Escobar 2002: 89 / In Rio de Janeiro, the second largest city in Brazil 91% of the Protestants are Pentecostals. (Chesnut 1997: 3)

just a hope for the hereafter or a “sectarian religion for the oppressed”, but highly relevant for life “on this side”.⁴⁵⁹ In other words, conversion changes people *from victims to victors*.

In chapter 5.3, I described a meeting during the “Victory Campaign” in *Assembleia de Deus* that literary illustrates the concept *victim to victor*. People walked out of that meeting with a renewed dignity and strength. For a moment the hard realities of life seemed so small and were put aside. “Jesus the great victor has breathed his life upon his disciples.” The inspired words from the pastor had empowered a congregation to see themselves as “victors”.

According to what I have observed, this kind of meetings do not make people escape from real life, but rather give them an impetus to live life to its fullest and grasp the opportunities that come within reach. An example from *Assembleia de Deus* is my informant Junior⁴⁶⁰ who turned from being an outlaw and drug addict to become an independent and successful businessman and family father. Also my informant Isabella⁴⁶¹ had journeyed from a childhood of hardship, to run her own little laundry shop and live in a middle class neighbourhood.

In such a way Pentecostal churches become a major source for motivation towards life. The Pentecostal message reveals that the potential for every individual is much greater than they imagined. It does not matter if one comes from a poor background, in Christ they are blessed and can overcome. This can be an attractive option for poor and marginalised people, thus supporting the view of Martin that this can be the “difference between riding the wave of social change and being swamped by it.”⁴⁶² In the interview with Roberto we heard how this kind of preaching had made an impact on his life. Roberto’s attitude changed and we see a new energy and drive to achieve more. This brought forth tangible results and as a result he ended up with his own enterprise.

As we see, the mentality change from *victim to victor* corresponds with the theories of social change better than the deprivation theories and their reductionist view of an “escape” from society and life. It is not an escape, but a major source of motivation towards life.

7.1.5 - Social Climbing

Both of the two informants, Roberto from IURD and Junior from AD, fit well into the *victim to victor* scheme. An objection to my point could be that Roberto and Junior are rear exceptions and “lucky winners“ of Pentecostal conversion. Brazil is an emerging market

⁴⁵⁹ Martin, Bernice 1998: 110

⁴⁶⁰ See chapter 5.1 and 6.1

⁴⁶¹ See chapter 5.2

⁴⁶² Martin, Bernice 1998: 110

which has experienced great economic growth in recent years, and one could argue that the socio-economic rise in the Pentecostal churches just follow the rest of Brazil. Does the increase among the Pentecostals really surpass the general increase in material wellbeing? The *victim to victor* concept is not, however, dependent on the answer to this question, since it speaks more of a change of mentality than an actual change.

On the other hand, R. Andrew Chesnut and Bernice Martin are very convinced that the socio-economic growth among the Pentecostals surpasses what they would have experienced as just “ordinary” members of society.⁴⁶³ The economic growth does not reach all of society. Large sectors of the population are left out of the emerging market. For these people life actually is turning tougher, as the prices for basic goods and services are pushed upwards by the growing middle class. The gap between rich and poor thus increases. The general increase is not for everyone. Where do we find the Pentecostals? Pentecostals seems to be social climbers, moving from the lower and middle rungs of the lower classes to the upper echelons, and even to the lower rungs of the middle class.⁴⁶⁴ Emilio Willems and Bernice Martin nearly hold that the Protestant growth (primarily Pentecostal) is one of the major causes in the creation of the new Latin American middle class.⁴⁶⁵ Martin points out that the “Pentecostal revolution” in Latin America seems to perform the same “miracle” that Methodism provided in America and in England during the first stage of industrialism – where the Protestant work ethic and active citizenship developed rather than revolutionary class politics.⁴⁶⁶ She concludes that Protestantism has caused a critical mass of people whom contain stability in the transfer to the postmodern age⁴⁶⁷ – in other words a middle class. The question can thus be turned completely around. Is actually the “Pentecostal revival” an important factor of the general economic growth? If this is the case, the study of Pentecostalism becomes even more relevant.

⁴⁶³ This is one of R. Andrew Chesnut’s main conclusions in his book *Born Again in Brazil* (1997). Also for Bernice Martin the increase in the socio-economic realm for Pentecostals is a consistent point in her article “From pre- to post-modernity in Latin America: The Case of Pentecostalism” (1998).

⁴⁶⁴ Chesnut in *Born Again in Brazil* claims the major factor of Pentecostal growth to be that they contain the powerful remedy of faith healing. Faith healing, however, for him also includes improved health caused by *redemption and lift* and a rise in living conditions. (Chesnut 1997: 18)

⁴⁶⁵ Cleary 1999: 136

Already in 1967 Emilio Willems suggested that the Protestants (the majority being Pentecostals) in Latin America were producing a new middle class, something the continent had lacked. (My source to Willems here is Cox 1995: 171-172)

Roberts Bryan found Protestant men in Guatemala more likely to be self-employed than non-evangelicals. Roberts 1968: 757 (My source to Roberts is Chesnut 1997: 21) Chesnut however did not see an obvious difference between Pentecostals and their impoverished contemporaries in his study conducted in 1993 (Chesnut 1997: 21).

Martin, Bernice, "From pre- to postmodernism in Latin America: the case of pentecostalism" in *Religion, modernity and postmodernity*. Editor Heelas, Paul Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, pp. 102-146

⁴⁶⁶ Martin 1998: 128

⁴⁶⁷ Martin 1998: 128

7.1.6 – Social Change and Financial Miracles

The message of *conquering faith* may correspond with the social change theories for growth. Yet, the growth caused by the *conquering faith* aspect should not be limited to just the categories of social change. There may be incidents of what might be called financial miracles. Where a job just occurred out of the blue as an answer to prayer, for the believer this could be seen as a miracle and a proof of God's care. Anderson pointed to how he was taken care of by the AD pastor as a major prayer answer when he cried out to God in despair. Such incidents will have the effect on the believer of a divine intervention and fall into the category of *spiritual power theories*. My informant Roberto spoke about his enterprise as a miracle of faith. God given ideas and money appearing from every side made him experience this enterprise as a miracle.

In Manaus some well-kept Pentecostals, I met, who just had bought a new car for a good price called it "a miracle". The meaning of a miracle may be stretched too far sometimes. However, for people, originally coming from impoverished backgrounds, suddenly becoming able to buy items increasing their wellbeing, it is really a personal miracle. From such an example we can also see that Brazilians more easily attribute occurrences in life to God. To them God is not a distant God, but may act in this world. This corresponds well with the general religious orientation of Brazilians. Occurrences in everyday life may as well have spiritual as natural causes. Supernatural intervention is not an extraordinary event.⁴⁶⁸ Social change can therefore be seen as a miracle of God.

7.1.7 – Results of Changed Lives

*- I think the main reason it is the results. The results of changing lives. I think, no, I am sure about it.*⁴⁶⁹

Roberto pointed to the results as the main reason for growth in IURD. According to him, the results happening in the lives of people coming to IURD call for attention, and these rumours spread. He claims that positive results are common experiences for people coming to IURD. Now, we should not forget that Roberto is a youth pastor working for IURD and that he may be tempted to overemphasize the positive aspects and to "sell" the church to me.

- [...] we have many cases of restoration, family restoration, and many people that doesn't have a job, and an opportunity of job – occurs - occurs to him, to them – and we

⁴⁶⁸ Birman 2007: 126-127

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May.2009

have many results of life. And these results, these results – (chamo atencao) brings attention [...] they get here worse and they get good. ⁴⁷⁰

Can the same pattern of a social lift as we witnessed in Roberto's story be found in IURD in general?

Mary Esperandio, after three years of research on IURD, visiting almost one hundred meetings in different temples and cities, and after talking with numerous people, confirms what my IURD informant says. According to Esperandio, numerous people testify about the life improvement they have experienced after they joined the church. They repeat and reinforce the success formula: *"I had reached the bottom, had lost everything... then I joined the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and I began to prosper."* ⁴⁷¹

Berge Furre describes how he has witnessed a rise in the economic capacity of the IURD Church members. For example more parking lots are needed now than earlier. ⁴⁷²

Isabella from AD also emphasized the results and the role of testimonies. There are so many results, according to her, and when people enter the church they hear the testimonies and see the results and find out that they like Jesus.

A question that could be raised is whether the message about conquering faith always provides a positive effect. Could there be negative consequences as well, for example frustration, resignation and disappointment for some if the change does not take place? I cannot provide an answer to this based upon my interviews and observations. Of course, such an outcome cannot be excluded, however, the general tendency that I found, is that this message creates motivation and hope, something that leads to obvious positive effects and growth.

Often there are urgent and immediate needs that require a solution. In Junior's instance it was deliverance from drugs. For others it can be healing or solving domestic problems. These cases are examples of the *demand side*, how people are pushed towards Pentecostalism.

The Pentecostal Church thus has gotten a reputation for being a place able to transform lives. People go there to get redeemed from their deepest problems and the most destructive forces.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with Roberto in Rio de Janeiro, 26 May.2009

⁴⁷¹ Esperandio 2008: 47

⁴⁷² Forskning.no in an interview with Berge Furre.

(<http://www.forskning.no/artikler/2007/august/1188291811.88/print>, Februar 2009)

The Pentecostal Church is a place to turn to for help when in need. They offer hope for a solution, not just for the after-life, actually life can change today, even right now “*agora*”! Many people experiences redemption and can give their testimonies.

There seems to be many examples of positive results. But even if this was the experience of just a small portion of the people, these personal testimonies of ordinary Brazilians who have experienced the benefits of faith will resound with strong impact and bring great attention both on the inside and the outside of the movement.

7.1.8 - Religious market - Religion as Commodity

Sociologist of religion Reginaldo Prandi argues that religion has entered the domain of the private and individual, pointing to quantitative data showing that nearly a quarter of the Brazilian adult population has switched religion.⁴⁷³ From the private and individual it has moved to the sphere of consumption where the rules of the market apply. Religion has thus been transformed into a commodity and the devotee into a consumer, and “religious consumption does not necessarily imply conversion”.⁴⁷⁴ Individual and entirely practical reasons for conversion are nowadays widely accepted, and the convert will therefore, when confronted with a new problem not hesitate to change his religion again.⁴⁷⁵ Prandi does not just use the market perspective as an analytical model, but rather claims that religion has become a commodity and therefore another item to be adopted or discarded according to its usefulness when dealing with problems of daily life.⁴⁷⁶ According to this perspective a strong commitment and change of worldview is not found when religion is paid for, just as any other commodity on the market.⁴⁷⁷

My data indicates that Prandi is right in the conclusion that people seek solution for their immediate problems as release from drugs (Junior and Thiago) and healing (Isabella). Thus religion *can be compared with*, but *should not be reduced to*, a commodity. Chesnut criticises an understanding that reduces religious affiliation to “purely opportunistic efforts to solve concrete problems”.⁴⁷⁸ Is it not fully legitimate “*for an impoverished favelada in Rio de Janeiro to choose Assembleia de Deus over participation in a local CEB because the former*

⁴⁷³ Frigerio 2007: 36 (Frigerio refers to Prandi 1996: 257) Prandi, Reginaldo, “Religião paga, conversão e service” in *A Realidade social das religiões no Brasil*, ed. Antonio F. Pierucci and Reginaldo Prandi. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1996 pp.257-273)

⁴⁷⁴ Frigerio 2007: 36 (Frigerio refers to Prandi 1996: 257)

⁴⁷⁵ Frigerio 2007: 36 (Frigerio refers to Prandi 1996: 262)

⁴⁷⁶ Frigerio 2007: 36

⁴⁷⁷ Frigerio 2007: 36

⁴⁷⁸ Chesnut refers to Burdick (Burdick 1993: 8) and criticises his view of religion. (Chesnut 2003: 7)

offers faith healing and other gifts of the Spirit while the latter does not?."⁴⁷⁹ A high percentage of the population that has switched religion, also remain Pentecostals and highly committed to their church. While specific needs can be a reason for a number of people to seek to Pentecostal churches in the first place, this can, and often do, develop into a more profound identification.

7.1.9 – Church or Agency?

This point leads to a related discussion concerning *church* versus *agency*. By *church* in this context is meant a community of believers having a commitment to their religious institution, sharing common beliefs and doctrines, caring for each other and participating in the Church activities on a regular basis. By *agency* is meant a (religious) institution that can be consulted when there is a need. You come to solve your particular issue and then you are free to leave. This could very well include a transaction in form of payment or other payback services. There is not a requirement to change your values to join the institution.

The African-Brazilian religions and folk religions are more of the *agency* type. For example Umbanda *terreiros* are centres to consult when there is a need. It could be a need for healing, guidance, or solutions of financial or domestic problems. To illustrate this view, we could talk about a market perspective. Thus, we have a spiritual market. There is a transaction, you pay or make your offering to get a solution to your problem.

Do people change when they connect to Pentecostal churches or do they merely use the church as a religious “shop”? Of the churches presented in this thesis, IURD seems the most relevant to discuss along this line. An objection to looking at IURD as a church in the traditional sense is a claim of a large number of backsliders among IURD converts. First, let us ask, is this a valid observation? The answer is not that clear. I have not yet found any statistics confirming this. Yes, there seems to be a large number of apostates, but this observation does not give us the whole picture. A large number of people also remain in IURD. In 2010 they represented about 3.5 million members.⁴⁸⁰

According to my observation, this objection is true to some extent, but it is not the whole picture. There are obviously curious people just coming by for one night or a shorter period, it would however be wrong to count them as affiliates and therefore also as backsliders. There are crowds coming just to consult, but there is also a large and growing number of highly

⁴⁷⁹ Chesnut 2003: 7

⁴⁸⁰ Mandryk 2010: 163

committed members. IURD has gained a large surface of contact, and the more visitors and “consumers”, the larger the group of members will be, even if just a minority of the visitors will join the church. Actually, some of the most committed religious members I met in Brazil I found in IURD. I saw sacrificing mentality among their attendants, like Roberto, unparalleled in other denominations. Some of the churchgoers I also met again every time I visited their *cultos*.

7.1.10 - Love

One feature that especially was pointed out through the interviews in *Assembleia de Deus* in Manaus was love. Anderson, the teenager with no family who was invited to live with the family of the pastor president in the AD church in Manaus, emphasized the love he experienced as a reason for growth. Thiago, the former jiu-jitsu master, told how the pastor, Jonatas Camara, had cared for him and helped him, and also given him free rein to use his talents in the church. The pastor told him: “*Who am I to close the doors of the church for you? Welcome to the church. I love you!*” The church was described as a missional church that loves people. Melvin, the British adventurer, also underscored the striking love and care he found in the church. It is reason to believe that such a love characterises the churches generally. This is confirmed by the way I was received as a foreigner. However, I found this feature more striking in AD than in IURD. In Universal my impression is that one may come more anonymously

7.1.11 - All Layers of Society

An argument of deprivation could be that most Pentecostal converts come from deprived backgrounds. However, since the largest sector of the Brazilian population is living under conditions of deprivation – more converts should also naturally come from this sector. Statistics adjusted for the demographic aspects, still seem to show that there is a higher percentage of Pentecostals among the lower classes,⁴⁸¹ but the Pentecostals are moving upwards socially⁴⁸².

Anyway, as I have pointed out before, even if social deprivation definitely is a factor of significance, it cannot be considered the main reason of Pentecostal growth. I asked pastor Jonatas Câmara in the large AD church in Manaus, about who his converts were. As stated previously, he explained that the converts are a mixture of people and that there are people

⁴⁸¹ Chesnut 1997: 17-18

⁴⁸² Chesnut 1997: 18

coming from all layers of society.⁴⁸³ Even judges from the Amazonas state court and two *deputados estaduais* in the governing state council were members of the AD church.⁴⁸⁴

So, even if the majority of converts may come from the lower layers of society, it is obvious that Pentecostalism reaches not only the downcast and deprived, but also people in the circles of power and wealth. If Pentecostal growth actually penetrates all layers of society, and a number of people also from the upper social layers, like judges and senators, convert to Pentecostalism, this indicates that deprivation or social change alone cannot be the basic explanation.

Among my informants, even if some of them came from a deprived background, for example Melvin, Miguel and Thiago did not. Though Melvin enjoyed financial freedom, parties and adventures, and Thiago had experienced success in sports, as well as financially, they pointed to a lack of meaning and purpose in their lives. Pentecostalism offered them meaning and Biblical answers to existential questions. Social needs, for example addictions and relational problems, may also be symptoms of deeper needs, existential or spiritual ones – needs of meaning and purpose. Thus we could talk about “existential deprivation”, something very real and significant for all people – also for the wealthy ones.

Pentecostalism offers something to live for. Freire Costa, a Brazilian observer has asked with IURD in mind: “*What does our public and private culture offer, above all the culture of the elite? - Beer, football, carnival and a trip to Miami. And what about IURD? - It offers a global perspective on life.*”⁴⁸⁵ The same could definitely be said for AD and NV as well.

7.2 – Divine Encounters

As indicated through my data, theories of deprivation and social change cannot alone explain the massive growth. What I find in the material as the more immediate and causing factor is a certain kind of religious experiences or phenomena. I have introduced the term *divine encounters* as a designation of these experiences. As explained before, this term signify a religious experience of something awe inspiring and divine, a “presence of God” that makes it hard for the participant to remain neutral. Expressions used by my informants may be: “holy moments”, a prison cell filled with “glory” and “the anointing of God” (Junior), a sensation of “fire”, the power of God”, “revival” (Isabella), “God’s presence” (Miguel), “the presence

⁴⁸³ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with pastor Jonatas Câmara conducted in Rio de Janeiro, 28 April 2009 / Interview with deputado estadual Wanderley Dallas in Manaus, 19 May 2009

⁴⁸⁵ Shaull & Cesar 2000: 30

of the Holy Spirit” (Melvin). These experiences can be individual, but also collective, as for example the AD meeting in the Victory Campaign that turned highly ecstatic.

7.2.1 – Divine Encounters Leading to Conversion

Several of my informants refer to special encounters or experiences during the service or worship as what triggered their decision to convert – experiences I am categorising as *divine encounters*.

Junior for example had this kind of encounter the first time he visited a Pentecostal church. To him this happened during the worship time, when he heard the music and the praise. *“And I started to hear the praise, and I started to feel things I never had felt before. My body became warm, it felt like fire. I started to cry and clap my hands.”*

Together with a conviction that came from the reading of the Bible, this experience actually resulted in a deliverance from drugs.

Isabella’s heart “started to burn” and she “accepted Christ” when she attended the Pentecostal church. She describes an experience of being indwelt with spiritual power *“I am a Christian today because I feel this fire inside of my soul.”*

Roberto recalled a day in November 2001, which he remembers so clearly, even details like that “it was a rainy Thursday”. He attended church and the preaching was about salvation, and suddenly Roberto was just “so sure” that he had to surrender to Jesus.

Miguel had a special request to God. To be sure about God’ existence, he wanted to hear a special song during the service. During the time of worship the song was not sung. However, when the pastor stopped in the middle of his preaching to gather the youth to sing this specific song, Miguel was overwhelmed. He started to cry and describes it as “a honeymoon”.

Also Melvin, my informant from England, who attended the AD service in Manaus as a tourist, was struck by what he now calls “the presence of the Holy Spirit” in his moments of conversion. They were talking about salvation, and Melvin started to cry even if he did not know why he was crying. He just “felt so saved”.

Anderson too, was deeply moved, and cried a lot during his conversion.

We find that in almost every conversion story recorded, a religious experience of a special kind – an experience of something holy and divine, which is so overwhelming that people convert. These numinous religious experiences seem hard to describe for the informants.

Such an experience can also be so powerful that people sometimes react physically. Some weep, some shout (*Gloria Deus*), shake or clap their hands, fall, speak in tongues. For example in the prison cell of Junior, several things occurred: speaking in tongues, physical manifestations of evil spirit possession. Junior used the words “*glory*” and “*anointing of the Lord*” about what took place in the prison cell.

The Pentecostals understand such experiences as an encounter with God through the Holy Spirit. It has to be regarded as a profound existential experience, a *sui generis* religious experience.

These experiences seem to occur, both in connection with songs of worship, as for Junior and Miguel, and in connection with the preaching of the gospel, as for Roberto and Melvin.

Through my data I find these experiences to be a crucial element in the process of conversion, and I have introduced the concept *divine encounters* to describe them.

7.2.2 – Divine Encounters Confirming Salvation and Renewing Faith

In Manaus the AD church had a course for new converts which they called *Encontro com Deus* (Encounter with God). Melvin said that this course was crucial for his life as a Christian, because this was where God really touched him and where he was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

- That was so so awesome ... If it was not for that “Encontro com Deus” I would not have been in church today. [...] That is where God really touched my life and changed my mind and everything.

The experiences Melvin had during this course had a confirmative function in his life as a new convert. Also my informant Anderson referred to the course *Encontro com Deus* as crucial for his decision to “follow Christ”, according to himself this is where “Jesus touched him” and “his life and soul changed”.⁴⁸⁶

Junior, also from *Assembleia de Deus*, explained that the most important strategy in the youth work was to lead the youth to “*their own real experiences with the Lord*”, “*something which cannot be forced but has to be birthed.*”

This describes the same goal as the concept *Encontro com Deus*, which is arranged in Manaus, and thus seem to be an important feature of AD. *Assembleia de Deus* seeks to create an opportunity and prepare people for such religious encounters with God.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Anderson in Manaus, 18 May 2009

I have also described episodes of collective experiences that exemplify this feature in a clear way such as the observations in the AD Victory Campaign and the *congresso* in the *favela*. I observed a similar kind of devotion also at *Igreja Universal* and during the praise and worship in the Sunday service in *Nova Vida*.

In these instances the *divine encounters* renew, confirm and deepen the faith of the believers, and are thus not limited to the process of conversion.

I believe, based upon my data, that what I have called *divine encounters* is essential for understanding the growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil.

7.2.3 - Goose bumps or Life Changing?

Such moments are usually very emotional, and can, as explained above, be described by my informants as a honeymoon (Miguel), a change of heart (Roberto), holy and glory (Junior), fire (Isabella).

Are these experiences just feelings and goose bumps? Such *divine encounters* definitely seem to have an emotional and feel good effect on the participants, but they also seem to address existential needs its deepest level. In the process of conversion such *divine encounters* may have a profound effect on people, making people take serious decisions that change the direction of their lives totally. It was definitely something deeper than just goose bumps for Melvin, Junior, Isabela and Roberto. Therefore, such experiences are of another kind than just some superficial sensations.

Sturla Stålsett recognises some value to the ecstatic behaviour from a social perspective. The participants of the Pentecostal service got a positive psychological effect that made life easier. Is this view adequate for the experiences I have discussed? The Brazilian sociologist Waldo Cesar holds that Pentecostal religiosity leads to an orientation toward another reality, and through this experience of transcendence, people start to view life from a different perspective. The immanent things of this world are reordered to its proper place, poverty, struggles and situations can be faced differently.⁴⁸⁷

Cesar refers to Peter Berger who has tried to describe the transcendence of the mystery of certain religious practices. According to Berger this transcendence can be viewed as a quality of something that exists or acts on its own, above knowledge or the world of experience. It is ineffable and indefinable and needs symbols in order to be expressed. The response of the

⁴⁸⁷ Shaul & Cesar 2000: 33

individual can be a gift and a surrender of oneself that goes beyond the logic of the marketplace, something which is only explained through the mystery of a personal surrender.⁴⁸⁸

This is something that exceeds mere sensations and psychological effects, and involves the very being and most profound existence of a person. We are talking about *sui generis* religious experiences.

7.2.4 – Spirit Baptism and Power

Spirit baptism is an example of a *divine encounter*. Studies from Belém shows that 79,4% of the interviewed Pentecostals there were baptized in the Spirit.⁴⁸⁹ Of my informants, 6 confirmed that they had spoken in tongues, there were no negative answers.

Receiving *Spirit baptism* is an ecstatic experience. The Pentecostal service thus does not just aim at the rational mind, but even more at the spirit and soul of the person. *Spirit baptism* is next to conversion, one of the defining moments in the lives of the Pentecostals.

The ecstatic experience often seen in a Pentecostal church needs a brief discussion. It may be a very strong emotional experience, and might be described as a kind of experience outside oneself. Chesnut claims that the dissociated state of consciousness induced by spiritual baptism allows believers to transcend their oppressive social locus.⁴⁹⁰ However, to speak of these experiences as involving a dissociated state of consciousness, I do not find corresponding with its nature. The participant does not lose control or is taken over by something else, but rather voluntarily gives of himself.

Anthropologist I.M. Lewis suggests that a harsh social reality engenders the need for escape and release. This is the conclusion of deprivation theory. Such ecstatic escapes in the poor communities are often drugs and sex. The ecstatic power experienced in the Pentecostal world, however, is not just a flight, but clearly fills the believers with strength to face a harsh reality and to persevere.⁴⁹¹

For my informant Isabella, speaking in tongues was something she described as renewing her strength every day.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁸ Shaull & Cesar 2000: 40 (Referring to Peter Berger: *A Rumour of Angels*. 1990: 74-75)

⁴⁸⁹ Chesnut 1997: 94

⁴⁹⁰ Chesnut 1997: 96

⁴⁹¹ Chesnut 1997: 96

⁴⁹² Interview with Isabela in Rio de Janeiro, 10 May 2009

In Portuguese *poder* can be both the noun power and the verb to be able. This says something about the nature of power. Chesnut writes: “*it is the experience of divine power in their everyday lives that defines Latin American Pentecostals.*”⁴⁹³ The power that the Pentecostals experience inside the Church is so strong that it penetrates the walls and reaches out to the streets and *bairros* (neighbourhoods). This power is applied in the everyday life of Pentecostals, to face struggles, sickness, poverty and hard times.⁴⁹⁴ The Pentecostal believer is filled with power.

Some sociologists, like Chesnut, speak of spiritual baptism as a phenomenological bridge between the Afro-Brazilian cults and this new faith. Chesnut compares the possessions in these cults where the medium is taken over and “ridden” by the spirits with the Pentecostal *Spirit Baptism*.⁴⁹⁵ This notion does not correspond with my observation of these experiences. Even though there is a parallel in terms of direct contact with a “spiritual world”, the ecstasies within Pentecostalism usually can be controlled by the person involved.

7.3 - Healing

Another kind of *divine encounter* pointed to in the data is healing. The experience of a healing, considered as a miracle, can be an overwhelming experience for the one who is healed, as well as for those who observe it. Thus, it points to the numinous and divine.

My female informant Isabella converted because she witnessed her mother’s healing. Miguel saw his father healed. Junior also referred to several healings during the interview with him. I did not, however, get time to hear the full stories. The healing meeting I attended in Manaus draw a crowd of 8000 – 10 000 people. The pastor in the giant Church there, also told that me they registered about 15 000 healings through the *groups of evangelism* in 2008. R. Andrew Chesnut states that the main reason for growth is Pentecostalism’s offer of the powerful remedy of faith healing.

Already from the beginning in the Belém and Amazon region, Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren prayed for the sick and testified about healings. Especially in the 1950s and 60s both *Igreja Qudrangular*, Manoel de Mello and *Brasil Para Cristo*, David Miranda and *Deus E Amor* started out through healing meetings and crusades. Robert McAlister, the founder of NV, had a strong emphasis of *cura divina*, divine healing. Today, the former IURD minister Waldemiro Santiago sees some of the same response in the Worldwide Church of the Power

⁴⁹³ Chesnut 1997: 92

⁴⁹⁴ Chesnut 1997: 96

⁴⁹⁵ Chesnut 1997: 94

of God. Healing has clearly been, and still is, an important feature in the expansion of Pentecostalism in Brazil.

Chesnut has a creative explanation of why healings occur. He points to *redemption and lift* – conversion leads people to quit habits and vices, and thus expenses are cut down. As a result, spared funds can instead be used within the family, something leading to better nutrition and higher caloric intake. The Amazonian fruit acai and healthier food over time gives health improvements.

While not neglecting the social effects following conversion, this explanation does not come to grip with the more immediate experiences of healings, some which also Chesnut refers to.⁴⁹⁶

Generally speaking, Chesnut sees healing mainly as a result of social change and the placebo effect. But he talks about an unidentified therapeutic value of prayer, as well a positive benefit from dissociated states of consciousness, such as the Pentecostals, as he sees it, experience through Spirit Baptism.

I referred to Sturla Stålsett's observation from Igreja Universal in chapter 6.4. His assumption does not include much of an idea of spiritual power, but still he cannot completely deny that "miracles" do take place. "*Despite how many miracles and demon exorcisms that may happen in one of these enormous temples belonging to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in a Brazilian ... megacity a Friday night, there are guaranteed more people going home without getting their inner and outer wounds healed.*"⁴⁹⁷

When it comes to healing, this statement is a mere assumption of Stålsett. It is not based upon any (quantitative) research. Chesnut's study rather tells that more than 80% of the Pentecostal testimonies he collected (more than 4000 testimonies), related to *illness and faith healing*.⁴⁹⁸

The spiritual power theories hold that there is an explanation beyond the social ones, and that this actually is crucial for understanding the growth. Peter Wagner straightforwardly suggests that the growth is caused by the working of the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹⁹ Wagner holds that, in accordance with the supernatural worldview prevalent in Latin America, power

⁴⁹⁶ Chesnut 1997: 81-82

⁴⁹⁷ Stålsett, Sturla, "Øyeblikkets religion: Pinsekirkene blomstrer i fattige land" in www.aftenposten.no - June 13th 2004 (url: <http://aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/article808286.ece>, December 2011) My own translation.

⁴⁹⁸ Chesnut 1997: 8

⁴⁹⁹ Wagner 1986: 31

evangelism (of the kind that Jesus sent his disciples to do, as stated in Matt. 10:7-8) is a vital reason for the Pentecostal success.⁵⁰⁰ The Pentecostals give the Spirit more freedom to move in their lives and congregations, and thus see more results. Wagner exemplifies his points with several testimonies from individuals having experienced God's power at work. Thus, his arguments are mainly based on qualitative material.

Also the deprivationists like Lalive have found healing to be an intriguing feature. However, they view its role differently. For example Lalive concluded that the Pentecostal congregations were a new sphere where the old folk beliefs in miracles and supernatural intervention could be nourished, not contexts where modern attitudes could be learned.⁵⁰¹ But now, as Lalive's theories of Pentecostalism as a replacement of the structures of the pre-modern village in the urban sphere, seems to be outdated, maybe these beliefs in miracles and supernatural intervention should be emphasized once more?

Also Bernice Martin points out the importance of the search for healing in the process of conversion.⁵⁰² Pentecostalism has continuities with those very folk elements which were being purged from the Catholic Church after the Vatican II.⁵⁰³ Those continuities I will discuss in the next chapter.

7.4 – Spiritual Power and Battle against Evil Spirits

Another conspicuous feature that can be found in my data is the confrontation with or the battle against evil spirits. We find this aspect in several of my sources: Junior's prison story, the IURD "session of spiritual unloading", and Miguel's confrontations with his possessed father. From an etic perspective these religious confrontations can be called *power encounters*. Within this etic perspective the term is used phenomenologically in a descriptive sense. From a theological point of view, which for example John Wimber holds, such *power encounters* represent a clash between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. If not noted specifically, I use the term phenomenologically.

7.4.1 – The Excluded Middle

The missiologist Paul Hiebert introduced a term that can be fruitful in this regard, *the excluded middle*.⁵⁰⁴ *The excluded middle* describes a spiritual reality between the transcendent

⁵⁰⁰ Wagner 1986: 31

⁵⁰¹ Cox 1995: 174

⁵⁰² Martin, Bernice 1998: 125

⁵⁰³ Martin, Bernice 1998: 125

⁵⁰⁴ Hiebert, Paul G. "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle" in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, January, 1982: pp. 35-47

unseen world and the empirical physical world of our senses.⁵⁰⁵ The transcendent world within Christianity would be God the creator, heaven, hell and spiritual beings as angels in the transcendent reality. The term *the excluded middle* is based in a western academic context, where this cosmic area is an excluded or nonexistent realm, whereas it is not excluded in the southern hemisphere. *The excluded middle* is the area in between, where unseen or supernatural forces work on this earth, in local contexts interpreted as local gods, ancestors, ghosts, spirits, demons, forces, sorcery and magic.⁵⁰⁶ Hiebert found that his “modern” or “western” Christian worldview regarded all of this as superstitions and folklore, and therefore he did not address or provide meaningful answers to questions and experiences of this middle level that people had. For example, fear of evil spirits was met by a denial of the existence of these spirits rather than by emphasizing the power of Christ over them.⁵⁰⁷

The concept of “the excluded middle” is definitely applicable when dealing with the Brazilian worldview. In contrast to the traditional Protestant denominations who regarded the spiritual orientation as superstitions and folklores, Pentecostalism addressed this “excluded middle” with stronger power. *Power encounters* is a concept Hiebert suggests can meet and deal with experiences from *the excluded middle*.

7.4.2 - The Afro-Brazilian Spirits

We will now take a look at Brazilian popular beliefs, which constitute the background where Pentecostalism makes its mark. As described in chapter 2.1 Brazil is a country heavily influenced by a large number of different sorts of spiritism, leading some to say that Brazil is a spiritualist country rather than a Catholic one.⁵⁰⁸ Probably more than one third of the population regularly participates in their ceremonies.⁵⁰⁹ Earlier the figures were even higher. Peter Wagner refers to a statistic in the 1980ths claiming 60% of the Brazilian population (at that time 140 million) to be practicing spiritists, and a full 90% having participated in spiritist activities at one time or another.⁵¹⁰

The Afro-Brazilian religions or cults are not always understood as religions, but tools to be consulted when there is a need.⁵¹¹ To attend Umbanda *terreiros* and practice its rituals when

⁵⁰⁵ Hiebert 1982: 43

⁵⁰⁶ Hiebert 1982: 41

⁵⁰⁷ Hiebert 1982: 44

⁵⁰⁸ See chapter 2.1 – “The Mission Field”. Renato Ortiz, professor of sociology at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo describes Umbanda as the national religion of Brazil. (Itioka 2002: 105)

⁵⁰⁹ Chesnut 2003: 107

⁵¹⁰ Wagner 1986: 37

⁵¹¹ Chesnut 2003: 106

seeking solution for a problem does not necessarily make you an *umbandista* in the public opinion. Therefore many will call themselves Catholic, but frequently attend or make use of rituals from the Afro-Brazilian religions.

The main reason for people to consult the Afro-Brazilian religions or cults is to get help of some kind. It can for example be in connection with amorous relations, the lack of jobs, or problems with the family,⁵¹² a need for healing or protection from some sort of evil spell like *coisa feita*, a work of sorcery intended to block the path (*trancar a rua*) of a rival or enemy through sickness and injury. There can be a strong fear of the effects of such spells in popular belief.⁵¹³

It has been a normal practice to consider all religions beneficial, for many of the Brazil's poor. Each religion has its own specific know-how. Therefore, it has been seen as necessary and even morally correct to benefit from more than one religion.⁵¹⁴

The Afro-Brazilian religions are religions which arrived from Africa with the slaves and have been mixed with Christian Catholic beliefs. There are varying types with various names all over Latin-America and Caribbean, the most known probably being Haitian Voodoo. In Brazil the most common are Candomblé, Umbanda and Macumba⁵¹⁵. This is black spiritism and more practised in the lower strata of the society and involve achieving direct contact with specific spirits at the very core of their practices.⁵¹⁶ Candomblé is more a symbiosis of the West African Yoruba religion and Catholicism than an actual merge, where ritual practices centres on the multiple spirits that manifest themselves through possession of their human mediums.⁵¹⁷ Umbanda is a syncretism of Macumba (formed from the Bantu religion from Central Africa), Catholicism and Spiritism (both European and Native Indian).⁵¹⁸ Hundreds of distinct spirits inhabit the pantheons of these religions, but usually it is no more than twenty or so which are invoked and manifest themselves through the human mediums. In Candomblé the spirits have their original African names, such as Xango, Exu and Ogun.⁵¹⁹ In Umbanda, the *guias* or spirits are thoroughly Brazilian and have Portuguese names as Pretho-velhos (Old black slaves), Caboclos (Amazonian Indians) and Exus (“trickster” spirits often pictured as

⁵¹² Birman 2007: 127

⁵¹³ Chesnut 1997: 84 / Birman 2007: 127

⁵¹⁴ Birman 2007: 123

⁵¹⁵ Macumba is sometimes used as a name equivalent to Umbanda.

⁵¹⁶ Chesnut 2003: 105

⁵¹⁷ Chesnut 2003: 104-105

⁵¹⁸ Chesnut 2003: 104

⁵¹⁹ Chesnut 2003: 105

Brazilian gangsters and hustlers) The focal point for example in Umbanda is to let the *guias* and *orixás* (different spiritual entities) enter into the mediums and then assist the person who consults them. In a similar way in Candomblé, ritual dances are performed with the purpose of making spirits like *Cabocla Mariana* possess the attendants and lead them into a trancelike state. The mediums of these cults offer their mind and body to the spirits, who use them as vessels to both heal and cause affliction, as well as to impart wisdom and to entertain. The spirits do not work for free, often are blood of animals required as sacrifice.⁵²⁰ These are religions to consult when in need of guidance or miracles, or even to be used to cast spells upon enemies or competitors.

Kardecism, already presented in chapter 2.1, is the white version of spiritism, and very popular in the upper layers of the Brazilian strata, in the middle and upper classes. This is a “light” version of spiritism with less focuses on rituals and stronger emphasizes on good deeds.

7.4.3 – Power Encounters

As described in chapter 2, the “war” against Brazilian spiritism was launched on a larger scale by Robert McAlister, the founding father of *Nova Vida*, and then continued by his former disciple Edir Macedo in IURD.⁵²¹ According to my data, also my informant Miguel, belonging to *Nova Vida*, had several experiences with such confrontations and said he had a calling to work with *libertação espiritual* (spiritual deliverance).⁵²² However, I did not find this spiritual battle such a central feature for *Nova Vida* today.

Assembleia de Deus has not standardised *libertação* as IURD, which has set aside one or two days a week for this battle, but the ministers and lay people of AD frequently participate in such spiritual confrontations. My informant Junior’s story from the time in the prison illustrates this. His experience as well demonstrates a pattern of the Pentecostal growth: *Power encounters*, which demonstrate the spiritual superiority of Pentecostalism, and stir people to make a choice concerning religious affiliation and to re-orientate their perceptions of reality.

Another example is the *Assembleia* minister and pastor Marcos Perreira da Silva, who is probably the most known exorcist in Brazil. Pastor Marcos is often seen on national television because of his ministry among the *traficantes* and imprisoned. Sometimes he leads whole

⁵²⁰ Chesnut 2003: 105-106

⁵²¹ See chapter 2.5.1

⁵²² Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

prison cells in prayer and recanting of the past. There is a tendency that many criminals manifest evil spirits when confronted by pastor Marcos. (Several of these exorcisms have been recorded and can be watched uncensored on internet, for example on youtube.com) He has even been called by the police to stop riots among inmates in some of the toughest prisons.⁵²³

I heard about pastor Marcos from my informant Miguel in NV, who in response to one of my questions referred to a documentary⁵²⁴ he had seen on TV about how this pastor freed a girl that was kidnapped by *traficantes* (drug gangs). The gun just clicked when the criminal tried to pull the trigger. Later one of the gang members fell to the ground, manifesting signs of being possessed when Pastor Marcos laid his hand on his head to pray.⁵²⁵

My interpreter, the assistant pastor of NV, also became very eager and continued to explain:

*- He is tremendous! He has really a boldness in his ministry, it is not like just once or twice, he is being on the news. You know, and people on the newspapers and on TV, and people showing this. And you know sometimes instead of calling the police they call him! You know because he really has an authority over the demons.*⁵²⁶

I also, on other occasions, heard people refer to this pastor Marcos and various reportages about him they had seen on TV. Thus, it became clear for me that his testimony, and how he exercised authority over the feared *traficantes*, had an intriguing effect on a number of Brazilians (Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals). People are thrilled to see the “power of God” in action, defeating the armed gangs and the evil spirits possessing them. Such a testimony, watched in the homes of millions of Brazilian through the popular TV show *Fantastico* on *Globo* network, nourishes this understanding of the power that the Pentecostal churches contain.

IURD also regularly broadcast the *cultos of libertação* through their TV networks.

Power encounters clearly appeal to a large sector of the Brazilian population. When broadcasted through mass media as TV, the effect becomes even more significant. Pentecostal churches thus get known for having power.

⁵²³ The secular TV-show *Fantastico* made a report about Marcos Perreira 6 April 2008. (The reportage can for example be viewed here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPSt_Ikqp_8&playnext=1&list=PL22FCA020658A0D3D, August 2011)

⁵²⁴ The documentary referred to was the TV-show *Fantastico* 6th of April 2008.

⁵²⁵ Interview with Miguel in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

⁵²⁶ Interview with Miguel and Joao in Rio de Janeiro, 29 April 2009

7.4.4 – Divine Protection and Christ the Victor

The power received by the Holy Spirit also gives divine protection from both natural and supernatural evil. For example the flyer inviting to a meeting “for the Protection of the Family” which among spiritual evils also mentioned “stray bullets”.

Spiritual powers that can inflict harm are something many people fear. One of the reasons why people consult the cult centres is precisely to make peace with the spirits, offering small sacrifices so the spirits may protect them and not cause them harm. If the sacrifices stop, their assistance could stop, and the spirits could turn against the person instead. If there is a far greater and stronger power that can protect against all the evil powers, people would rather join his party. Now, where the lesser spirits require just small sacrifices, God requires the person to give his whole being.

Chesnut also found an increasing number of testimonies of divine protection from the early 1980s, something which confirms this as important.⁵²⁷

If there is something more powerful than the spirits and entities of Umbanda and Candomble, people would rather seek help and protection from this stronger power. The message of “Christ the Victor”, that Jesus by his death conquered and defeated Satan and the powers of evil, has a massive appeal in the Brazilian spiritist orientated culture. Therefore this message should be regarded as an important part of what explains the growth of Pentecostalism.

7.4.5 – Continuity and Syncretism or Rupture?

Some objections have been raised against how Pentecostalism, especially Neo-Pentecostalism, faces the popular spiritual belief. Researchers have tended to define some Pentecostal churches in terms of syncretism, something that especially is the case for IURD.⁵²⁸ The most important argument for this view is their emphasis on and praxis of exorcism. For example Chesnut states that “*The practice of libertação (literally “liberation” but more accurately defined as exorcism) vividly illustrates the postmodern syncretism at work in the IURD*”⁵²⁹

Further he describes IURD as a Pentecostal syncretism of beliefs and practices of classical and modern Pentecostalism, mixed with elements of Umbanda and reinterpreted through the lens of television culture.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ Chesnut 1997: 97

⁵²⁸ For example R. Andrew Chesnut (Chesnut 1997: 46) and Kenneth Serbin (Serbin 1999: 205)

⁵²⁹ Chesnut 1997: 46

⁵³⁰ Chesnut 1998: 45

As we have seen, the adherents of “the Brazilian School”⁵³¹ argue that IURD converts do not really change their worldview, just merely add the concepts of IURD. The argument is basically founded on the IURD cosmology (spiritual world) and its acceptance of the existence of Afro-Brazilian spirits. Thus, we have passages, a type of light or minimal conversions, they say.

The designations postmodern and syncretism due to the praxis of liberation or exorcism, I find to be at best a misunderstood argument. The same can be said about the description of minimal conversions based on an acceptance of the existence of the spirits within the Afro-Brazilian Religions. Both views carry specific presumptions about Christianity, a post-enlightenment and traditional western kind of Christianity which usually does not address a spiritual world. The reality of a spiritual world or an “excluded middle”, is on the other hand, not denied by Pentecostalism, Jesus is rather pointed to as the contrasting all-powerful one. The “excluded middle” is given a completely new interpretation and the paradigms of these two belief systems can be said to be incommensurable. Chesnut and the Brazilian academics do not seem to realise this obvious chasm between these two world views – the Afro-Brazilian religions and Pentecostalism. According to Pentecostal belief, the spirits are now demonic, and are renounced and denounced. I believe instead this break (with an acknowledged reality) is an aspect that is essential for understanding the Pentecostal growth in Brazil. It is deeply related to the power encounters that have been discussed above. Pentecostalism thus deals with this spiritual dimension.

Other voices, like the anthropologist Pierre Sanchis and sociologist Lísias Nogueira Negrão, have suggested the existence of a Brazilian “syncretic habitus” allowing “dual or multiple memberships” and “porous religious identities”.⁵³² This seems to be a valid view especially for the religious field of Afro-Brazilian religions and nominal Catholicism.⁵³³ The popular Brazilian religious culture constitutes a “common religious denominator” present in the different groups that make up the religious field. The minimal elements, according to Negrão, present in Brazilian religiosity are a belief in God and in a variety of intermediary spirits, the possibility of their interference in daily life, and their manipulation on behalf of the

⁵³¹ Patricia Birman (Birman 2007: pp 115-132), Clara Mafra (Frigerio 2007: 37 – Frigerio refers to Mafra 2000: pp. 57-85), Pierre Sanchis (Frigerio 2007: 37-38 – Frigerio refers to Sanchis in *Comunicações do ISEER* 1994: pp. 5-11, Sanchis in *Nem anjos nem demônios: interpretações sociológicas do pentecostalismo* 1994: pp. 34-63, Sanchis in *Religião e Globalização* 1997: pp.103-115 and Sanchis in *Fieis e cidadãos: Percursos de sincretismo no Brasil* 2001: pp. 23-25) Lísias Nogueira Negrão (Frigerio 2007: 38-39 – Frigerio refers to Negrão 1997: pp. 63-74), Reginaldo Prandi (Frigerio 2007: 36 - Frigerio refers to Prandi 1996: pp. 257-273)

⁵³² Frigerio 2007: 37-38

⁵³³ See chapter 2.1

devotees.⁵³⁴ Although Pentecostals believe in God and assume a spiritual world, Pentecostalism proclaims a clear break. By no means should the demonic spirits be consulted anymore. Therefore, such a view of a weak kind of conversion does not come to grip with the nature of Pentecostalism. The spirits of Umbanda and Candomble are by no means supposed to be exalted or consulted, but rather expelled and exorcised. I do not find syncretism to be a suitable description for the Pentecostal spirituality, and therefore it cannot be a valid explanation of Pentecostal growth. The popular Brazilian religiosity and Pentecostalism should be described as two incommensurable paradigms.

Harvey Cox believes that Pentecostalism has rediscovered a primal spirituality deep within the human soul that has much in common with the folk religions and shamanism. Cox is right in pointing out the vital importance of the spiritual dimension. However, like the Brazilian School, he does not grasp the break with the spiritual world of the folk religions, the denunciation and renunciation. Pentecostal spirituality is something qualitatively different from these folk religions. Here, Peter Wagner explains the field much more correctly.

From a theological point of view, however, it can be pointed out that the in belief and fear of the Afro-Brazilian spirits can be sustained by an overemphasis of this theme. This could create a dependence on the Church and the pastors for protection against the dangerous demons, and through testimonies of the dangers these cults represents, the belief in their power could be nourished. However, due to the deep roots these believes and practices have in the Brazilian popular culture it seems relevant with a strong emphasis of the topic. And, what is stressed is the break, not the continuity.

My data, especially from my informant Miguel and the observation of the session of spiritual unloading contradicts this “syncretic habitus” within Pentecostalism. Statistics also show that, though a number of individuals pass in and out of religious affiliation, a movement from Pentecostalism back to Afro-Brazilian religions and Spiritism is almost nonexistent.⁵³⁵

Patricia Birman suggests “*that exorcism, enables the converts the chance, previously difficult to contemplate, of breaking with the cultural, social, and religious principles that shape the popular image of the Brazilian Catholic worldview.*”⁵³⁶ She points to exorcism as a bridge from the popular belief to Pentecostalism.

⁵³⁴ Frigerio 2007: 38

⁵³⁵ Frigerio 2007: 45-46

⁵³⁶ Birman 2007: 115

Cosmologically, Pentecostalism brings a more holistic theology as it deals also with Hiebert's "excluded middle" area of life, thus dealing with aspects so important for people in the southern hemisphere, such as divine protection, guidance, provision and healing.

The reality of a spiritual world is not denied, and thus we could talk about a kind of continuity, but as stated there is also a clear rupture. Pentecostalism faces problems that the popular religions have tried to solve. The solutions found in these cults are now understood as demonic, and are therefore denounced and renounced. In Jesus the real solutions are found, it is proclaimed.

Philip Jenkins concludes:

*The types of Christianity that have thrived most successfully in the global South have been very different from what many Europeans and North Americans consider mainstream. These models have been far more enthusiastic, much more centrally concerned with the immediate workings of the supernatural, through prophecy, visions, ecstatic utterances, and healing.*⁵³⁷

7.4.6 - Charismatic Religion

R. Andrew Chesnut demonstrates in his book *Competitive Spirits – Latin America's New Religious Economy* how what he calls *pneumacentric* (spirit-centred) religions thrive in Latin America.

It is obvious that the religions that take into account a spiritual world, dealing with what Hiebert called *the excluded middle*, are the religions thriving in Brazil. This is also true for the Christian churches. Taking a glance at the Catholic Church, it is not the message of liberation theology about freedom from political and economic oppression that have prevailed. Rather, it is the message from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) of liberation and deliverance from demonic oppression that fills soccer stadiums and dominates the Catholic broadcasting.

R. Andrew Chesnut concludes: The CCR has prospered in the Latin American context because it offers faith healing and pneumatic spirituality, something that the Catholic Base Christian Communities (CEBs) do not offer.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Jenkins 2007: 125

⁵³⁸ Chesnut 2003: 100

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) by the mid 1990s had twice as many members as the Catholic Base Christian Communities (CEBs).⁵³⁹ The Base Communities who adopted the vision a “preferential option for the poor”, so popular and beloved in the academic circles, have not gained much ground. Their lack of focus on a charismatic and pneumatic Christianity makes them not opted for by the poor. The sort of Catholicism that is thriving is the charismatic variant.

What causes the continued growth of the mainline protestant denominations is, just as for the Catholic church, first and foremost the renewed groups with Pentecostal practices, for example the *Batistas Renovadas* and *Presbiteriana Renovada*. In order to survive, Chesnut states, the older denominations have had to “*pentecostalize*”.⁵⁴⁰

Chesnut argues that the winners in the religious market in Brazil are the *pneumacentric* religions, for him that also includes the spiritist religions. However, here the borders are too much blurred. Although, both assume a spiritual dimension, qualitatively they are incommensurable. And what Chesnut does not state too clearly, is who the winner is among the *pneumacentrics* – or to put in Pentecostal terms, which spirit is the stronger? The answer is demonstrated over and over again when the evil spirits named after the Afro-Brazilian entities are exorcized in the name of Jesus. It is also a fact that Pentecostalism grows at a higher rate than the other *pneumacentrics*.⁵⁴¹

7.5 – Structural Growth Dynamics

How do people attend a Pentecostal church? They need to know about it, for example through an invitation from a friend. In Brazil Pentecostalism, through its various congregations, has become such an influential force that people in general know about it. (More correctly, people may know about the specific church rather than the theological term Pentecostalism) *Igreja Universal* and *Assembleia de Deus* in particular have made its presence known for a large part of the population.

We find several and different types of growth dynamics when studying *Assembleia de Deus*.

⁵³⁹ In Brazil where 70% of the population are urbanites, approximately two-thirds of the CEBs still exists in rural areas – a further evidence of their lack of mass appeal. (Chesnut, 2003: 5)

⁵⁴⁰ Chesnut 1997: 3

⁵⁴¹ Chesnut 2003: 3

There are structural growth dynamics such as the form of organisation. For example through the idea of rapid planting of *filha-churches*, AD gets close to where people live and obtains a larger surface of connection. Cell groups are also a part of such structural growth dynamic.

I also notice through my interviews that the Pentecostals are eager to invite their friends and people they meet to their churches. They are not hiding their activities, but openly presenting their church life for the world. Often they try to persuade the same person until the person comes along, as in the case of Roberto, Melvin and Isabela.

Between the first encounter with Pentecostalism and the decisional service there is usually a period of time. Usually the *crente* (believer) was attending a couple of services before converting. This is my observation of the typical conversion process.

Many people apparently also attend Pentecostal services even if they have not been invited by someone they know. They come on their own because they have been reached in one of several ways – through TV-programs, radio stations and newspapers, help programs of various kinds. A massive work of evangelization is being done, both in the streets and by knocking on doors, creating many points of contact. This is especially true for IURD and AD that are reaching large portions of the population.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion: Summarising My Findings

The quest of the thesis was set out in the introduction and formulated through the main question of research: *What are the reasons for Pentecostal growth in Brazil?*

This theme has been shed light upon from various perspectives.

To summarise, my sources of insights have been: 1) Existing theories on the Pentecostal growth. 2) Empirical data

The prevailing theories of Pentecostal growth can be placed in three groups:

Deprivation theories tend to focus more on the *demand side* when it comes to religious change, that is to say there is a need in life which need to be filled. For these scholars, conversion to Pentecostalism represents a response in form of an escape from varying external structures and processes.

Theories of social change rather hold that Pentecostalism brings positive change and results. It is a legitimate life path and strategy that gives motivation to cope with life in a chaotic world. Social change also includes more pragmatic and practical reasons for conversion. Basically, Pentecostalism grows because it works.

Some researchers have also pointed to explanations of another kind, which I have called *spiritual power theories*. Spiritual power theories suggest that to fully explain the growth of Pentecostalism we have to take into account also another type of explanations that better explain the *supply side*. Pentecostalism is attractive because it offers an experiential and ecstatic spirituality, full of power.

Based upon my informants and observations, I find a tendency: Deprivation theories alone, I will hold, cannot explain the massive growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil. The demand side of deprivation may prepare people for conversion, but according to my material it is not the major cause for conversion. Instead, my material point to encounters and experiences of the numinous and divine that transcends the present condition.

Divine encounters such as experiences of the numinous and awe inspiring, healings, power encounters, experiences of being indwelt with power are so powerful that people experience real transformation and change their way of life.

Such experiences are *sui generis* unique in their character and should be treated on their own. *Divine encounters*, as I have called these experiences, reach people of all layers of society.

I also find on the supply side a positive message of hope and change that empowers and challenges the listeners to take initiative and thus rise above their misery. It is a message of faith turning *victims to victors*, and the result is a *redemption and lift* of large groups of people.

9 – Epilogue

Speaking from a theological point of view, this is first of all a message of Christ the Victor, whose power is stronger than all the demons and spirits of the popular Brazilian pantheon.

By divine encounters and this message of faith people are transformed from *victims to victors*.

10 – Abbreviations

AD – Assembleia de Deus

IURD – Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus

NV – Nova Vida

CCR – Catholic Charismatic Renewal

CEB – Christian Base Communities

IMPD – Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus

DE – Deus E Amor

BPC – Brasil Para Cristo

IEQ – Igreja Evangelica Quadrangular

IBGE – *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*

ISER – *Instituto Superior de Estudos da Religião*

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