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“It is time to rise”: Pentecostal Politics in Democratic Brazil

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of
Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Priscilla Pereira Vieira da Costa Garcia

Committee in charge:

Professor Joel Robbins, Chair
Professor Jonathan Friedman
Professor Rupert Stasch

2014

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

DEDICATION

To Alberto with all my love

EPIGRAPH

Le savant n'est pas l'homme qui fournit les vrais réponses,
c'est lui qui pose les vraies questions.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“It is time to rise”: Pentecostal Politics
in Democratic Brazil

by

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Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, San Diego, 2014

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This thesis explores the current involvement of Pentecostals believers with politics in Brazil, with emphasis in the career of Pastor and Congressman Marco Feliciano. I argue that the Pentecostal engagement with politics in Brazil can be explained by the existence of a Pentecostal model of democracy. This model emerges

from the participation of Pentecostal believers in the advent of a new democratic state from 1986, a year that saw the end of a 21 year military dictatorship in the country. In my view, these believers partake of both the existing social imaginary of what it means to be part of a democratic state and appropriate it within a Pentecostal view of the world. It is my contention that, stemming from this model, Brazilian Pentecostals developed a complex political theology in which political engagement became part of what it means to be a committed Pentecostal.

The political theology that emerged among these Pentecostals intertwines religion and politics in two ways. The first, what I call *Political Evangelization*, is the attempt by pastors to evangelize churchgoers in a political way by preaching to them about the importance of being politically involved. The second, which I refer to as the *Evangelization of Politics*, relates to the work of evangelization implemented in the Brazilian National Congress by those Pentecostal pastors who are also congressmen.

“It is time to rise”: Pentecostal Politics in Democratic Brazil

If no one rises to rethink what is Brazilian democracy in this Christian country that we are all part of, we will have to rip this book apart [he holds the Bible] (...) When I quote the letter to the Romans, I'm called homophobic... I was quoting Genesis, I was called a racist. Datena¹ was speaking of God in his program, and he was sued by atheists. What will this country become? I have freedom of speech and this book [the Bible] will continue to be the book that will change the history of the world. Here is a verse that I marked from the book of Psalms (...) the psalm number 33, that says: "Happy is the nation whose god is the Lord."²

Pastor Marco Feliciano

“You know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep.”

Romans 13:11

On March 7th, 2013 Pastor Marco Feliciano, from the Assembly of God church, was elected president of the Commission for Human and Minority Rights in the Brazilian Congress³. The election, scheduled for the previous day, was suspended due to protests against Pastor Marco Feliciano's candidacy for the presidency of the Commission. The protesters occupied the hallways and the room where the election was to take place in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. The election was successfully carried out the next day, after the “troublesome” civilians had their access to the election room denied, a decision which made the president of the session, Deputy Domingos Dutra, decide to leave the session in “solidarity with Brazilian society” that, according to him, had its right to participate violated⁴. This episode was widely discussed throughout the Brazilian media

and initiated a wave of protests throughout the country that lasted almost the entire year of 2013⁵.

The protests resulting from the election of Pastor Marco Feliciano arose from many different groups. However, two distinct viewpoints have emerged: 1) Pastor Marco Feliciano is not the proper person to have such a distinguished post in the Chamber of Deputies due to the pastor's public and "private" (in church) declarations that were considered homophobic and prejudiced towards minorities. Among the groups opposed to the pastor's election, there is a substantial portion of Brazilian society that believes his ascension to the post of president of the Commission for Human and Minority Rights poses a possible threat to democracy and to the secular state⁶; 2) the second viewpoint comes from the people that stand in solidarity with Pastor Feliciano. Among these groups are Pentecostal believers, both politicians and civilians, a portion of the Catholic population, and some of the conservative portion of Brazilian society.

What we currently see in Brazil is not only an ideological battle between the Christians and the conservatives fighting for Christian causes over liberal causes or vice-versa. This is actually the surface level debate. What is at stake in this situation, rather, is the existence of at least two contradictory views of democracy; different models of what it means to be in and to constitute a modern democratic state. These two contrary views manifested in both the approval and disapproval of Pastor Feliciano's election as the president of the Commission for Human and Minority Rights epitomize the existence of different models of what we call politics in a democratic state (see **Fig. 1**), which in this work I consider as the "ensemble of practices, discourses, and institutions that seek to

establish a certain order and to organize human existence” (Mouffe 2006:323) within a national state.



Figure 1: Protesters at the Brazilian National Congress in support (on the left) and against (on the right) the of Pastor Marco Feliciano as president of the Commission for Human and Minority Rights. Photo by Pedro Ladeira, © Folha Press/UOL, 2013. Photo used with permission. “Protestos Contra Marco Feliciano” <http://fotografia.folha.uol.com.br/galerias/15028-protestos-contra-marco-feliciano#foto-266336>

This work explores the involvement of Pentecostal believers with politics in Brazil in recent years, emphasizing the current events unfolding in the political and religious career of Pastor Marco Feliciano from the Assembly of God church. The theme for this research began with my own curiosity, as a researcher of Brazilian Pentecostalism, to understand why Pentecostals became involved with politics in Brazil, especially in the last two and a half decades. I always found this question very intriguing because, as many researchers have noted before, Pentecostalism tends to withdraw from politics because it considers it to be a worldly realm with little to offer to “true Christians”. However, the involvement of Pentecostals with politics seems to be a

phenomenon not only seen in Brazil, but in various parts of the world, which can be seen in works such as those of Eriksen 2013, Freston 2001, Marshall 2009, O’Neil 2010, Palacios 2008, Reyes and Tejeiro 2010, Rodríguez 2008, and Zub 2008.

Understanding the Pentecostal engagement with politics in Brazil, in my view, necessarily entails that we define politics and democracy in the terms these Brazilian Pentecostals define them, avoiding assumptions based on other definitions of these categories that are not employed by these agents. The explanation of why Pentecostalism changed from an apolitical to a political movement in Brazil and how this religious movement relates to politics has to come from within the movement. We ought to investigate how politics and democracy are conceived among these Pentecostal believers so that we may find why political participation is important for them and how, each day, politics is becoming a constitutive part of their lives as Christians.

I argue that Brazilian Pentecostals have created their own model of democracy and politics in which the religious and the political realms are intertwined in a way that one realm perpetually flows into one another. For these Pentecostals, the values of Christianity cannot be separated into two distinct realms such as “civil society”, in which religious activities happen, and “politics”, in which non-religious activities occur. According to their view, true democracy works only when religion and politics are intermingled because it is this very interaction that enables the debate between secular liberalism and religious conservatism. This is the only way to maintain real democratic governance because it prevents the imposition of a single doctrine, which automatically constitutes authoritarianism, not democracy. Based on this view of democracy and politics – which is the product of multiple forces and processes that are both global and

local, general and specific all at the same time – these Pentecostals developed a political theology in which political participation is understood to be part of being a “true”

Pentecostal and citizen in Brazil.

Political Theology is an analytical category understood as the manifestation of the Pentecostal model of democracy in politico-religious practices of these believers in different settings (e.g. Church and Congress). Political Theology here designates the two sets of practices that stem from the Pentecostal model of democracy and from their understanding of the role of Pentecostalism in Brazil as a missionary movement of human salvation. The first set of practices, which I call *Political Evangelization*, and the second, which I call *Evangelization of Politics* function as analytical categories that help us understand how Political Pentecostalism in Brazil operates differently in church settings (private sphere) and in political settings (political sphere). These two categories serve as units of analysis and as “living” examples in which the *modus operandi*, the underlying driving force for the Pentecostal political participation in Brazil, is embodied in practice and manifested in different social settings.

The Development of Pentecostalism in Brazil

Pentecostalism refers to a specific form of Christianity in which adherents believe in the ability to receive and perform the “gifts of the spirit” or *charismata*, which are defined by having ecstatic experiences such as speaking in tongues, healing, prophesying, and falling into trance (Anderson 2004; Anderson 2010; Robbins 2004). Pentecostal Christianity, apart from its emphasis on *charismata*, has four main core beliefs widely shared among Pentecostals worldwide: 1) Jesus saves; 2) Jesus heals; 3) Jesus baptizes

with the Holy Spirit; 4) Jesus will return (Robbins 2004:121). Core to Pentecostalism is also its emphasis on evangelization with churches highly “encouraging all [of their] members to act as evangelists working to convert others” (Robbins 2004:124).

Pentecostalism is a fairly new development within Christianity, but its magnitude as a global movement is attested by its number of adherents worldwide, about 500 to 600 million (Anderson 2010; Robbins 2004, 2010). What makes Pentecostalism so interesting is the ambivalent (and successful) way in which it adapts to the cultures it encounters, generating a new culture of itself, without straying far enough from its canonical form to become a different religion (Robbins 2004:119). This is particularly evident in the development of Pentecostalism in Brazil, in which this form of Christianity, imported from the United States and established in the country by foreign immigrants from Europe, became an integrated movement within Brazilian religiosity (Freston 2001:15). According to Campos (2010:17-19) – and corroborating with Robbins’ (2004) argument – Brazilian Pentecostalism is a movement that epitomizes traces of continuity and rupture within itself.

Elaborating a scheme to trace the “genealogy” of Brazilian Pentecostalism’s features, Paul Freston (1993, 1995, 2001) divides the history of Brazilian Pentecostalism into three “waves.” This is an analytical division proposed by Freston that identifies and classifies Pentecostal churches according to their styles of preaching and worship, church organization, and dress and moral codes among other things. Freston’s categories (“waves”), as Bledsoe (2012:25) and Cáceres (2006:55-58) argue, should be understood as fluid movements in which the Pentecostal churches of each posterior “wave” are built upon the religious premises of the anterior “waves”. The churches from each succeeding

wave innovate by adding new practices and concepts without breaking from the main canon present in the churches of previous “waves”.

Despite the limitations of Freston’s model, I believe that examining the history of Pentecostalism in Brazil, as it unfolds in each “wave”, might enable us to pinpoint the moment in which politics became a concern and lived reality among some Pentecostal believers in the country. This historical account may allow us to understand why Brazilian Pentecostalism became political by pointing out the historical context in which political concern emerged within Pentecostalism.

According to Freston (1993, 1995), the first ‘wave’, also known as the classical Pentecostal wave, started around 1910-11 with the founding of the Christian Congregation of Brazil and the Assembly of God Church by foreign immigrants who had had direct contact with the Chicago Holiness preacher William Durham. The main characteristics of the first ‘wave’ were the baptism with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues (Bledsoe 2012:27; Mariano 2005:31; Oro and Semán 2001:182) and the use of a strict moral code. Classical Pentecostalism continued to grow in Brazil until the 1950’s, the decade of the advent of the second ‘wave’ of Pentecostalism (Bledsoe 2012:27; Corten 1999:49; Freston 1993:66).

The second ‘wave’ of Pentecostalism in Brazil emerged in a conjuncture of social change epitomized by the growth in urbanization, development of national industry and the modernization of the country during the 1950’s - 1960’s (Bledsoe 2011:33; Mafra 2001:34). It ended with the birth of the third ‘wave’ of Pentecostalism in the middle of 1970’s. Simultaneous with the rapid social change that occurred in Brazil during this time was the growth and fragmentation of the Pentecostal movement. The second “wave” of

Pentecostalism is characterized by the establishment of three main churches: the *Foursquare Church*, the church *Brazil for Christ*, and the *Pentecostal Church God is Love*, all born in urban São Paulo. The main differences between churches of the second “wave” and those of the first “wave” are the emphasis on healing (Bledsoe 2012:33; Mariano 2004:122-123, 2005:31, 36) and the emphasis on exorcisms (Chestnut 1997:37). Other notable differences between first and second “wave” churches is the latter’s less strict moral and behavioral code associated with its less traditional styles of worship (Bledsoe 2012:33), and the use of mass communication media (the radio) to diffuse God’s work .

It is also during the second “wave” period that we see, for the first time, the involvement of Pentecostals with politics, when Manoel de Mello, founder of the church *Brazil for Christ*, – as well as other members of his churches – actively helped to elect the first Pentecostal in Brazil, Levy Tavares in 1963 (Baptista 2009:21). However, the Pentecostal participation in politics declined during the years of the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964-1985) and it did not become stronger until the 1980’s, with the advent of the 1986 elections and the implementation of a democratic constitution in 1988.

The third and “final” Pentecostal “wave” emerged in the last years of the 1970’s. This “wave” is characterized by the emergence of what the literature on Pentecostalism often classifies as the “Neopentecostal” movement. In Brazil, the first Neopentecostal church, inaugurating the third “wave”, is the globally known Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD), which now is present in almost all countries of Latin America, North America, Europe; in half of the countries in Africa, and in a few countries in Asia (Oro et al 2003:29-30). The churches of the “third wave” – often established in large

buildings (“megachurches”) – are characterized by the presence of technology in their services, the use of televangelization, the emphasis on exorcism and divine healing, and the use of a less strict moral and behavioral code. They are also recognized by the use, in their preachings, of what scholars denominate “The Prosperity Gospel” and “Dominion Theology.”

The churches belonging to the third “wave” – mainly IURD – are also characterized by their emergence as political actors in Brazil. It is with the advent of this last “wave” that political participation of Pentecostals flourishes, especially from 1985 onwards. However, in my view, the remarkable importance of the third Pentecostal “wave” does not reside only in its emergence as a new style of Pentecostalism in Brazil or as a political actor per se, but in how the innovations of the third “wave” churches affected denominations from previous “waves”. The most apparent example of IURD’s influence can be seen in the modernization that occurred in some of the Brazilian Assemblies of God in the last two decades.

According to Correa, with the advent of the third “wave” of Pentecostalism and the rise of IURD, the Assemblies of God felt threatened by the competition in the religious market and began to “adopt a new style and to work with the new tendencies of society by adapting itself to the current values” (2013:114). Correa delineates the historical developments in which a traditional Pentecostal church such as the Brazilian Assembly of God – understood as belonging to the first “wave” – began to modernize and adapt itself to societal contexts (Correa 2013:114-116). For the author, the Brazilian Assembly of God became “neopentecostalized” (2013:117) when it adopted some practices that resembled those existing in “capitalist” churches and other modern

institutions. As examples, the author cites the Assembly of God's implementation of three things: (1) the use of technology in church services and its use for evangelization purposes; (2) the use of marketing strategies that promote a relationship between church and believer in a similar fashion to the relationship between business-consumer (Correa 2013: 116,118); and (3) the establishment of a less strict dress code (Correa 2013:117).

One of the "adaptations" Correa (2013) mentions is also the emergence of the Assembly of God Church as a political actor. To the author, it was the "modernization" of the Assemblies of God in Brazil that transformed the church's older conception of politics as "evil" and "demonic" to a sacred space for the Evangelical Parliament Bloc⁷ (2003:118-119). While I agree with Correa, I also believe the "shift" she identifies as the cause for Evangelicals changing their perception of politics from a "demonic" to "sacred" space is not enough to explain the involvement of Brazilian Pentecostals in politics. We ought to understand what caused this shift in political attitude.

In the next section, I offer an explanation for the "shift" that has been documented by Correa (2013) and many others⁸ that, I believe, might add some interesting insights to the literature on the political participation of Pentecostals in Brazil. To illustrate my arguments, I will focus primarily on the political discourses and practices involving the political and religious career of Marco Feliciano, from the church *Assembly of God Revival Cathedral (Assembleia de Deus Catedral do Avivamento)*. In other instances, I will also recall direct quotes and examples from another pastor who has been influential in Brazilian politics, Pastor Silas Malafaia from the church *Assembly of God Victory in Christ*.

Democracy and the Emergence of Pentecostal Politics in Brazil

Simultaneously with the constant growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil since the 1950's – which ultimately altered the religious panorama of the country – the Brazilian political arena has also undergone significant changes. The most significant of these changes was the establishment of a military dictatorship in 1964 and its abolition in 1985 with the implementation of a democratic government.

The move towards democracy, the political transition known as *abertura* (opening), began in 1974 under the government of General Ernesto Geisel and lasted until 1985 with the advent of democracy. As Araújo (2006) notes, the *abertura* was a period marked by gradual and controlled governmental concessions towards democracy mixed with pro-democratic campaigns, artistic movements, protests, and conflicts performed by civil society. In fact, the author characterizes this period as “[a constant] arm wrestling match” in which the military dictatorship and democracy, each represented respectively by the government and the civil society, fought for 10 years (Araújo 2006:154).

The commitment to political *abertura* and the decision to fight for it, as Araújo notes, was strengthened because of a significant change within one of the anti-government leftist groups, which initially believed that political change should be grounded on socialist ideals through the establishment of a proletarian democracy. However, during the *abertura* these groups began to value democracy by seeing it as a universal value (Araújo 2006:160) and, gradually, they united themselves with other segments of society in the struggle for democracy. The best example of this coalescence among these various groups can be seen in the series of protests known as *Diretas Já*⁹

that occurred in different Brazilian cities, in which civilians demanded the right to vote in the next presidential elections.

The general elections to select the Congressmen responsible for assembling the new democratic Constitution (the *Carta Magna* of 1988) took place in November 15th, 1986. Among the representatives elected, there were 32 Evangelicals, of which 17 were Pentecostals (Rolim 1995:75). The 1986 election, in a sense, did not only change Brazilian history, but it also defined a turning point within Brazilian Pentecostalism, in which political participation began to be gradually introduced into the lives of Pentecostals. One example of this is the existence of the Evangelical Parliament Bloc (formally *Frente Parlamentar Evangélica* or, simply, *Bancada Evangélica*), which is currently composed of 73 Evangelical politicians.

The prominent Pentecostal participation in politics in Brazil poses the question of what happened to the apolitical nature of Pentecostalism from 1986 onwards. How does an essentially apolitical movement, with even fundamentalist tendencies of withdrawal from society, emerge as a political actor? I believe the genesis of this participation is best explained if we consider two cultural frameworks: one coming from inside the movement itself (i.e. Pentecostalism) and the other from a broader realm, a larger culture shared among people who are circumscribed under the same sets of discourses and the same form of political governance (e.g. discourses of what is democracy, what it means, and how it works).

The shift Correa (2013) and many others note, in my view, was caused by a process of cultural appropriation in which Pentecostals adopted some of the national imaginaries surrounding democracy as a form of governance and reworked it through a

Pentecostal imaginary. The shift, in fact, is the emergence of a new model of democracy. A model that incorporates the imaginaries of democracy shared among a substantial portion of Brazilian society and combines it with Pentecostal premises, discourses, practices, and beliefs.

Here I understand democracy not only as a form of governance, but as a regime that “concerns the symbolic ordering of social relations” (Mouffe 2006:318). Democracy, then, does not only affect the political sphere per se, but affects the entire cultural system, enabling the creation of social imaginaries through processes of individual and group interactions with the democratic government and with fellow citizens, as agents all circumscribed in the just-reformed democratic territory (Hansen 1999:9).

In this way, the *abertura* (1974-1985), as well as all the historical factors associated with democracy, more or less, influenced the broader cultural realm. The implementation of a democratic system, as a form of social order, caused a major cultural change in Brazil. When the sovereignty of the Constitution was declared as “the way the world operates” for Brazilians, some aspects of democracy began to constitute the natural order of things. As such, some core features of Western democracy – the right to vote, the right to freedom, the right to equality, and the right to have rights – began to be appropriated and reproduced by a vast number of groups in Brazilian society. Democracy began to be seen as a system of social freedom that opposes forms of authoritarianism imposed by the military (i.e. dictatorship) or by the Church (i.e. theocracy). And here lies the core of the question regarding the Pentecostal political participation and the genesis of different (and often opposing) models of democracy developed by various groups in Brazil.

One of these models of democracy widely shared among people in the upper – middle classes links democracy to liberalism. In this view, true democracy depends upon the separation between church and state, religion and politics, public and private, and civil and religious law. In this model, religious discourses could potentially endanger democracy through the diffusion of “intolerant” discourses that threaten the democratic premise of equality and freedom for all. Models that contradict this view are usually seen as backward/authoritarian systems that represent a real impasse to progress. A clear example of this can be seen in an excerpt of Federal Deputy Erika Kokay’s speech published in the online version of an important Brazilian leftist magazine named *Carta Capital*. In response to Pastor Feliciano’s election to the presidency of the Commission for Human and Minority Rights, Kokay states: “today the Commission for Human and Minority Rights has to protect itself from itself [because this Commission] is being used in a government project that breaks [the commitment] of the state with secularism¹⁰”. For Deputy Kokay, Pastor Marco Feliciano’s election compromises secularism in Brazil because of the pastor’s stated influence of his Christian beliefs in his political participation as a federal deputy.

The conflict between the liberal model of democracy and the Pentecostal democratic model can also be seen in the ongoing discussions over the use of religious symbols in public spaces, the presence of Evangelicals in the National Congress, the criminalization of abortion, the legalization of marijuana, and legislation concerning gay rights. In these discussions, the Brazilian elite concern with the Pentecostal political participation, often portrayed as a threat to democratic rights, becomes apparent. In a Congressional debate over gay legal rights, Senator Marinor Brito argues

It is not because it is the project number 122, 123, 334, 998, 888...it doesn't matter. Intolerance is also here inside [the Senate] and we need to work to reverse this (...) to fight intolerance. To conclude, I want to say one more thing: our State, according to the Constitution, is secular. This was a victory...this is not a fight among religions, no. Because in all religions there are intolerant people [and] in all religions there are also people who defend human rights. This fight is not among religions.

When Senator Brito affirms that the secularization of Brazil is a “victory”, underlying her argument is the idea that state secularization is similar to the establishment of democracy in Brazil. Brazil was declared as a secular state with the Constitution of 1891 in the context of the emergence of a political structure inspired by the American republican model (Giumbelli 2002:241-242). Unlike the struggle for democracy in the country, that mobilized the masses, the process towards secularization was not “a victory” conquered by society, which gives the connotation that there was a movement that fought for this specific cause. Rather, secularization was an essentially elitist movement based upon the modern values of a small educated, nineteenth-century “enlightened” elite.

Suggestive examples bearing the same understanding of democracy can be seen in various discourses of Federal Deputy Jean Wyllys, a gay activist who is the most vocal opponent of Marco Feliciano and the Evangelical Bloc. When Pastor Marco Felciano was elected president of the Commission for Human and Minority Rights in March, 2013, Deputy Jean Wyllys gave several public interviews throughout the country and organized multiple seminars in which gay rights and secularism were the central themes. In a commentary posted on Deputy Jean Wyllys’ official webpage concerning the creation of the Parliament Bloc in Defense of Human Rights, it is written¹¹:

The Parliament Bloc in Defense of Human Rights was created in the Chamber of Deputies after the [political] regression that occurred in the Commission for Human and Minority Rights (CDHM). The Bloc [represented] by PSOL [Socialism and Liberty Party] participated in the construction of this space in defense of the social movements and the minorities that did not see themselves represented in a commission completely controlled by openly declared prejudiced Congressmen.

Under quotation marks, the same webpage presents the following texts and attributes it to Deputy Jean Wyllys, also commenting on the creation of the Parliament Bloc in Defense of Human Rights:

We reacted against religious fundamentalism. We did not cross our arms [and wait] and we built a network for protection and for the voice of human rights. The Human Rights Commission was, in 2013, legally constituted, but did not have legitimacy.

In all of these commentaries, the idea that religion should be separated from politics is as a central concern. Pentecostal political participation, for these Brazilians, represents a real impasse – and sometimes a threat – to secularism, which, in their view, is a constituent feature of democracy that necessarily opposes authoritarianism. This concern can be specifically seen in the use of expressions such as “religious fundamentalism” and “political regression” to describe the state of Brazilian politics when a Pentecostal pastor is allowed to assume a position of authority in a democratic congress. The political ascension of Pastor Feliciano and the growing influence of the Evangelical Bloc are unsettling for Wyllys and his supporters because they represent a break with Brazilian democracy’s commitment to secularism and progress.

This view, in fact, is not only shared by center-left politicians, but it is also widely spread among citizens who do not hold political offices. Examples of this latter groups’ preoccupation can be seen in the recent pro-secularism manifestations that occurred

throughout Brazil in public spaces, in the social media, and in the writings of Emir Sader, a prominent Brazilian political scientist and sociologist. In his blog post, published by *Carta Maior*, Sader writes¹²:

One of the most important democratic victories in the contemporary world is the separation between religion and politics. [I do not mean to say they are] not related, but political, social, and civic relations cannot be oriented by religious choices. Democratic states are secular. We should all be equal before the law, free of choices [guided] by our individual options about religion, sexuality, ethnical differences, etc. We are diverse in our life choices, but we should be equal in our rights as citizens. Religion and politics are different things. To mix of religion and politics, to have religious States – for example, Iran, Israel, and the Vatican – generates dictatorial views, or even, totalitarian views. Under democracy, the individual and collective rights must be guaranteed equally to all.

When Sader argues that democracy is a system that guarantees “the individual and collective rights”, he pinpoints the primary point of conflict between the Pentecostal and the liberal models of democracy. If democracy guarantees “individual and collective rights”, for the liberal view of democracy, it should not only guarantee individual’s religious freedom, but also guarantee the collective’s freedom from religious impositions of individuals. This translates to the relegation of religion to the private sphere, depriving it of any influence on political issues. However, for the Pentecostal model of democracy, if democracy guarantees “individual and collective rights”, the individual should be free to express his or her religious conviction in the political sphere. In this view, models that exclude religious convictions and expression from politics are anything but democratic.

The Pentecostal democratic model emerges from an imaginary diffused in Brazilian society in which democracy opposes forms of dictatorship and legitimizes equality and freedom. This imaginary resonates with Pentecostalism’s “democratic” beliefs such as salvation and baptism in the Holy Spirit which are accessible to all.

Combined with the appropriation of the Brazilian discourses revolving around democracy are core Pentecostal theological premises such as evangelization and the struggle against evil. The re-signification of a Western model of democracy through the insertion of religious premises is what enabled Pentecostals to become politically engaged and it is this re-signification of democracy as culture that makes this model distinct from other understandings of democracy.

The Pentecostal cultural appropriation and re-signification of Western democracy can be understood better in looking at the historical context in which Pentecostalism engages in these processes. Commenting on Pentecostal spirituality, Anderson offers an insightful commentary on Pentecostalism's interaction with social change:

Contextualization not only takes into account cultural values, but also tries to make the gospel relevant to the current situation of social change. It may be argued that some Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have attempted to do just this and that their success has had a profound effect on older churches (2004:203)

Applying Anderson's argument to Brazil, the case of Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD) figures as the perfect example of what the author discusses. As noted above, IURD influenced the Assemblies of God and, together, these two churches dominate most of the Evangelical Parliament Bloc in the Brazilian Congress. Perhaps, IURD was the first Pentecostal church to develop a model of democracy. Nevertheless, this is not an argument I wish to pursue here. What I wish to highlight is how the historical context plays an important role in actively affecting the Pentecostal agents circumscribed in a country reorganized by major socio-political changes.

The most compelling case of appropriation and re-signification of the classical Western model of democracy by Pentecostals in Brazil occurred on June 5th, 2013. On

this day, Pastor Silas Malafaia, from the church *Assembly of God Victory in Christ*, organized a mega “worship service-protest” in Brasília’s *Three Power Square*, where the buildings of the Brazilian Executive Power, the Judiciary, and the Congress are located. The purpose of the Pentecostal service/protest was to affirm the Evangelical position against abortion, to show its support for the traditional family, and to demand freedom of religious expression. At the event (see **Fig.2**), many well-known Pentecostal singers, pastors, preachers, and politicians participated by talking or singing to a crowd of approximately 40 to 70 thousand Christians¹³.

As *Figure 2* shows, this event encapsulates the defining characteristics of Pentecostal politics in Brazil. A Bible, the key symbol of Evangelicalism, is held above the heads of the participants and occupies the central focal point in between the buildings belonging to the Brazilian government, the place where people “do” democracy. The crowd stands in front of the stage, alternating between worshipers at a mega church service and citizens protesting in favor of their cause. This is a crowd of believers ready to worship Jesus and, at the same time, a crowd with echoing voices determined to impact society.

They hold signs in a similar fashion as secular protesters do in Brazil and almost anywhere else. On these signs, there are demands, things to be changed and to be fought for. Simultaneously, this is a crowd that, at moments, stops to pray, to sing to Jesus, and to engage with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a crowd that protests like real democrats and worships like faithful Evangelicals.



Figure 2: Evangelicals protesting in Brasília on June 5th, 2013. Photo by Sérgio Lima © Folha Press/UOL, 2013. Used with permission. “Evangélicos Protestam na Esplanada dos Ministérios”
<http://fotografia.folha.uol.com.br/galerias/16704-evangelicos-protestam-na-esplanada-dos-ministerios>

The apotheosis of the Brazilian imaginary of democracy, and its re-signification within a Pentecostal cultural framework is perhaps best illustrated in the video footage of this Evangelical protest in Brasília. Near the final moments of Pastor Silas Malafaia’s speech in the protest, he says to the crowd¹⁴:

Only the [protests known as] *Diretas Já*¹⁵ put more people in the streets than us on a regular week day. **Only [the *Diretas Já*!]**¹⁶ No [other] social movement put more than 50 thousand people in the streets on a week day. The [protest of the] *Diretas Já* was *ponto facultativo*¹⁷. Everybody was allowed [to go to the protest if they wanted]. **There are people here that will have to pay back [missing work to come to the protest] with 2 extra work days, 3 extra work days, 4 extra work days, or [maybe only] an extra day. [But], you know what? The only thing I will say to this is ‘a people, united, shall never be defeated!’**

In moments like this, the Pentecostal event takes on forms similar to democratic protests and is filled with political meaning. Pastor Malafaia rallies the crowd as other well-known Brazilian civilians (artists, politicians, and writers) rallied the crowds during the protests in the period of the *abertura*. He goes even further than mannerisms and he uses the phrase “a people, united, shall never be defeated”, one of the slogans used in the protests of *Diretas Já*, which was also re-used in the nationwide protests that occurred in June of 2013 against corruption in the government of Brazil.

When Pastor Malafaia finishes his speech with the famous phrase, the people began to shout it, again with their arms moving up and down, symbolic of political struggles in Brazil. They repeat “a people, united, shall never be defeated” four times, when they are interrupted by Pastor Malafaia, who suggests: “let us improve this little phrase [like this]: **the people, of God, united, shall never be defeated!**” At this, the crowd begins to shout the new phrase and it is repeated 9 times more, as Pastor Malafaia passes his microphone around so that many of the participants standing on the stage will also have an opportunity to shout part of the new phrase, leading the crowd.

Another significant moment in this Evangelical protest is when Pastor Silas Malafaia says the following: “listen, this [the protest] is a small [activity] to practice **the exercise of our citizenship**. We are not second class citizens [and] we are going to influence this nation. If we have to come back here, to Brasília, we will come back. And more: each of you will bring another person!” As he finishes speaking, he is applauded with fervor by the crowd that begins to cry out passionately: “we will come back! We will come back!” Pastor Malafaia immediately follows the clamor of the crowd and, in his microphone he repeats: “we will come back! We will come back!” This is significant

because it illustrates well the Pentecostal commitment to political participation not only in the present moment, but in the near future.

The incorporation of Western democratic discourses and practices, as I stated before, find their pivotal grounding in Pentecostal theology. One of the main Pentecostal ideas is that access to salvation and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are available to all the faithful. This means that the power of God can be experienced by anyone, independent of social class, country, language, gender, or any other physical or cultural differences. In Pentecostalism, all humanity is equal and has the same right to God's kingdom. When these Pentecostal ideas meet a political context in which democracy is also seen as the carrier of values such as equality and freedom against oppression, a new model of democracy, bearing these characteristics, begins to develop.

Along with the Pentecostal idea of equality, seen when Pastor Silas Malafaia passes the microphone around in his protest so that everybody will have a "voice", there is also the understanding that Pentecostals are in constant battle with evil forces, which represents the struggle between God and his creation with the devil and other evil spirits. This idea of battle against evil among Pentecostal believers ranges from battling against the self and its evil inclinations to do what is sinful to battling against people, groups, and institutions that are seen to embody evil. Some of these evils – as works of the Devil – are also manifested through physical and social conditions such as poverty, sickness, and addiction. As Anderson (2004:203) notes "the great attraction of Pentecostal spirituality is that it claims to provide answers to existential problems throughout the world. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches offer realistic solutions for these problems."

In Brazil, the Pentecostal movement – from the 1950's onwards – is very much engaged with the idea of healing (Freston 1995, 2001) and in providing solutions to earthly problems through exorcism and tithes. With the advent of Pentecostalism's second and third "waves", a gradual incorporation of worldly matters as legitimate Pentecostal concerns created a situation in which fighting evil – now seen mostly as a force that causes earthly problems rather than an obstacle to salvation – is meant to be controlled through action. The Pentecostal struggle against evil, when used within a political context, takes the form of the Evangelical need to act politically so that the evil inhabiting the political realm will not prevail. The use of these Pentecostal ideas in reference to politics can be seen in one of Pastor Marco Feliciano's sermons, when he says¹⁸ Satan inhabited the Brazilian Congress prior to his election, rendering his election a victory over Satan:

Our fight is against an invisible enemy. We should strike him, but not with our arms or legs, but with words of prayer. Before I begin [reading from] the Holy Bible and begin to preach, I want to explain why this protest [is going on]. This protest is happening because for the first time in the history of Brazil a pastor filled with the Holy Spirit conquered a space that, until yesterday, was dominated by Satan.

The Pentecostal view of democracy establishes that democracy is the doctrine in which equality and freedom are legitimized by the rule of law, which also makes the structures of power accessible to all segments of society. Democracy is not only a form of political government, but a form of government that should reflect the culture of the country in which is implemented; thus, it should not exclude the participation of Christians or the interaction between Christianity and politics. A good example of this

view comes from one of the public declarations of Deputy and Pastor Marco Feliciano, in which he says that¹⁹

Democracy is the beautiful doctrine where human beings have the right to go anywhere, to choose their representatives through voting, which is citizenship. Since ancestral times, politics and religion worked together (...) [and] politics could always work. In the country where we live, in Brazil, in a secular state, it is even easier...what people confuse is 'secular' with 'laicism'²⁰. 'Laicism' is the hatred of religion, but the secular state [actually] protects religious freedom. Thus, in a democratic country, religious segments have their voices and [have their] turns. In Brasília, we have the *bancada ruralista*, the *bancada evangélica*, etc. Each group of society elects their representatives...I represent the conservative portion [of society], a Christian portion...88% of the Brazilian population is Christian, but what we are living in is a dictatorship, in quote marks, of a minority.

Borrowing from the liberal model of democracy and from its idea of dictatorship as the main opposition to democracy, Pastor Marco Feliciano argues that religion and politics have been together since “ancestral times”, a fact that for him does not figure as a problem to democracy, as it does for Brazilian liberals. He argues that the attempt to separate religion from politics, as the two spheres have little or no connection, is a “dictatorship of the minority.” Following the same line of thought, Pastor Silas Malafaia in many of his television programs, in his *Programa Vitória em Cristo* (*Program Victory in Christ*), described the current antagonism between Evangelicals and gay activists as an Evangelical response to gay activism’ establishment of a “dictatorship of opinion.”²¹ In his view, this dictatorship forbids Evangelicals to express their beliefs and opinions against homosexuality without being classified or legally penalized as homophobic.

In another instance, also commenting on how religion and politics cannot be entirely separated because this is not how Brazilian culture works, Pastor Feliciano says²²

My dream is to bring God to school...I know that somebody watching me will say that our Constitution is secular...our country is secular...[but] how come on the money bills there is a phrase saying 'God be praised'?...if our country is secular, why does the Constitution begin by invoking God's presence so that he will be the center of attention?...so, let's leave [our] hypocrisy behind and let's assume our posture... that we believe in something stronger than us, which is God.

As both quotations illustrate, Christian values have always orbited within Brazilian culture, therefore, true exercise of democracy entails the acknowledgment of Christian values in society by preserving them in all societal realms. For these Pentecostal believers, excluding religious ideas from the political sphere configures a type of authoritarian censure caused mostly by a minority of the population who wants to impose their own views of the democracy and secularism on other people. According to Pastor Feliciano, this position is threatening to democracy because it becomes a form of "dictatorship". In this conception, democracy is understood as a form of government that legitimizes battles against non-Christian values that have a potential to change society and impact its Christian believers through debates in the public and in the national congress (Machado, 2006), both in the name of religion and in the name of politics. Here we see a merging of core aspects of two spheres: the religious becomes political and the political becomes religious.

In the next section, I shall examine how the Pentecostal view of democracy became a political theology within Brazilian Pentecostalism by shaping the discourses and practices that occur both in the political and the religious (private) sphere.

A Pentecostal Political Theology

Marshall (2009), studying the Pentecostal Born-Again movement in Nigeria, argues that these Pentecostals hold to a political theology which leads them to engage in a nationwide conversion project in order to liberate politics from “the works of Satan” (i.e. corruption). As the author notes, “political theology, as opposed to classical political philosophy, presumes that humanity is not self-sufficient (...) and that an immanent rational framework for the founding of human collective life is impossible” (2009:206). This quote presents the largely accepted Pentecostal view that mankind cannot successfully run society without God. Consequently, the Pentecostal involvement with politics must account for the “weakness” of mankind and acknowledge God’s almightiness through theological premises and discourses that embody the movement’s political agenda.

I understand political theology as the ensemble of religious discourses and practices that, based upon theological premises, legitimizes the use of religion in the political sphere and the use of politics in the religious sphere. The formation of a Pentecostal political theology allows politicians to engage in religious agendas as part of their work in the Congress and vice-versa; it allows pastors to forward political agendas inside the church. An interesting example of the Pentecostal political theology at work comes from a sermon Pastor Marco Feliciano delivered at a Pentecostal congress in 2012²³, when he says

the church needs to follow politics ... you need to go online (...) those of you spend all day on the internet ... **those of you who spend all day disgracing your brothers on the internet, do something for the kingdom, you wretched ...do something for the kingdom (...)** I have **100 thousand followers on my tweeter...every time I type the word**

“homosexual”, 10 thousand gays enter on my twitter to curse at me. They threaten my daughters (...) they threaten the family and do you know what the people do, the believers? They stay quiet! (...) they stay quiet...they seek holiness in their churches, but they don’t have the courage to do a symposium to teach their children about this trick ... if the church is silent , we will not have the church tomorrow ... “Oh , pastor , the church won’t fail” ... the church won’t fail? Go to Europe!...go to Europe!... try to find a church in Europe (...) last week the Brazilian Minister of Health equipped 65 hospitals preparing them [to perform] for abortion and [he] declared that, by the end of year, 30 more hospitals will be built [for that purpose]... why so much serenity on this issue? ...why so much hurry on this issue?...to impress the UN?...to impress a group of people that wants to limit the number of people that are going to be born? They confront Christianity...they laugh at our face, they vomit on us and the church does little or does nothing at all...“but pastor, you by yourself will not be able to take care of all this” (...) [one time there was] a forest that was burning and the fire expelled all the big animals from the forest ... then suddenly (...) a hummingbird with a drop of water (...) in its beak and, when he passed by an elephant, the elephant stopped and screamed “ where are you going?”... [the hummingbird replied] “I’m going to put out the fire” and the elephant said: “are you crazy?...you’re going to die ...that drop of water is not going to do a thing ... get out of here” ... and [the hummingbird] said “I , mister elephant , at least I’m trying and you, what are you doing ?” **Tonight God will put in your hands a candle snuffer, we will unclog this shit²⁴ that oppresses the church...the church will be militant and the church will be active (...) let’s grab the devil by its horns and rub his face on the ground. It’s time to rise!**

Pastor Feliciano’s sermon is a call for action. The pastor emphasizes that the believers should follow politics and should take their time to “do something for the kingdom” by doing essentially two main things: organizing activities that promote Christian activism and Christian values (i.e. a symposium to teach the children about the “tricks” of gay activism) and defending both Christianity and the Christian brothers, under attack, in public. The pastor affirms that “staying quiet” is what eventually lead Europe to be without churches and, if Christians continue to be quiet in Brazil, Brazilian Christianity will be doomed. In this call for action, Pastor Feliciano teaches the crowd

through a parable in which the “big elephant” – the church – does not have courage or motivation to help the hummingbird – the pastor himself and other pastors, who, like him fight for Christian values in public and in politics. If the “big elephant” was to rise, the fire that threatens the “forest” (Christianity in Brazil) would be under control or gone.

At the moment the pastor begins his *call for action sermon*, an intertwining between the religious and the political takes place. This intermingling I call *Political Evangelization*. The religious pulpit becomes a place where political issues are to be presented as one of the Christian teachings of the pastor. In this way, the call for action delivered as a Christian sermon transforms itself in a Christian value to be pursued by the faithful. To follow politics, to defend Christian brothers who are under attack because of their Christian convictions, to be militant and active then becomes part of the duty of being a Pentecostal believer in Brazil because, as the pastor teaches, the church is under the risk of being vanquished in the country. However, without becoming political and developing political action, the church will not be able to handle “oppression” and the “fire will entirely consume the forest”. *Political Evangelization* occurs in private religious spheres (e.g. church services, preachings at Evangelical conferences) in which the faithful are instructed by church leaders about the political sphere and are convoked to actively participate in it as part of their Christian duty.

Political Evangelization is applicable both to the regular churchgoer and the preachers themselves. The call to be politically aware and militant about Church issues in society is extended to pastors and preachers who, according to pastor Feliciano, have the obligation to teach citizenship in their congregation. In this respect, he says²⁵

I challenge these preachers that are [here] on this stage...**I challenge those men on their pulpits to begin including in their agenda these [type of] preachings....to begin to denounce...** “Ah, pastor, but I’m going to look bad with society...the mayor are not going to want to pay my commission”...**what is that?....are you a prophet or what?... an upheaval is going to occur in this Brazilian nation..an upheaval is going to occur in this land...we’re going to live to see the day when the believers will come to church and,** who knows, in the *Gideões* [Evangelical Congress] of a few years, the believer [might not] come with a little radio on just to hear ‘*A Voz do Brasil*’, that now nobody listens to because everybody is disgusted with politics, **but the day will come when the people will have pride...we will hear a journalist say “with a word his Excellency the president of the Federal Republic of Brazil”...and the president is going to begin his speech saying “I greet my Brazilian compatriots with the peace of the Lord”**

The pastor’s standpoint is that if citizenship is taught within the church, the believer will eventually engage in “political behavior”. This can only be achieved through the *Political Evangelization* of the church, in which the encouragement to engage in political participation will affect the church in its discourses and praxis. Consequently, those who were initially “disgusted with politics” will voluntarily incorporate political practices, such as listening to a political program on the radio, into their religious life.

According to Pastor Feliciano, the political evangelization that will affect the church will also affect (and change) Brazilian politics. It is a change that will leave the faithful proud of politics because this change will ultimately lead to having a Pentecostal president who will be able to begin official pronouncements to the nation with a Christian greeting. In the pastor’s political and religious vision, this nation will be a place where a view of politics that blurs the political and the religious will be allowed.

The engagement with political issues within the church has a double axis. It must come from the people learning that citizenship also belongs to the realm of religion and is

part of “being a good Christian”; it is part of the Christian moral code. The engagement with citizenship must also come from above, from the church leaders, who are challenged to evangelize the people politically. To Pastor Feliciano, this is how people will change Brazil. The understanding that *Political Evangelization* is a solution to the current political situation of the country comes from a ubiquitous Pentecostal view that mankind is not powerful enough to correctly manage society without God (Marshall 2009:206-207) because it is human weakness which may enable demonic forces to operate within politics.

Now I’m going to talk as a prophet, a preacher and as a congressman of the Brazilian nation...it terrifies me to (...) enter in the Chamber of Deputies of this country...and know how the devil...Satan has infiltrated the Brazilian government and not just the Brazilian government, but the governments of the world...Satan has raised men and women...and the church has not paid attention to this...while the church is preoccupied with its internal issues (...) while believers do not go out into the streets to evangelize...to hold a church service outdoors and not even to talk about Jesus anymore...Satan raised his activism in this country...ladies and gentlemen, there is an action of Satan against the sanctity of the Brazilian family ... (...) the problem is gay activism... the problem is that people have in their heads demonic ideas (...) where did all these gays come out from? I’ll explain it: in the last 20 years, gay activism has been able to silence the church...not only the Evangelical church but...the Catholic church must also be called to be responsible [for this] as well...(...) They took religious education out of the schools (...) and do you know what the church does?...the church cowers...the church shrivels...it retreats into a small corner...[but] the pastor is there in the service preaching “adultery not here”...(...)but they leave our children on those schools to learn these disgraces and miserable things...the church needs to rise! ²⁶

The engagement with politics then is expressed through the Pentecostal view of Christians battling against evil – sometimes portrayed as the Devil himself – in the world²⁷. This process of identifying a place (a body) in which the devil takes control legitimizes the urgency for Pentecostals to become politically aware and to participate

directly in politics: to fight the devil in the world. At this moment, the political agenda of *Political Evangelization* becomes fully grounded on a theological premise, making the political discourse a pertinent religious issue.

Marshall (2009:209) argues that Pentecostals admit

the possibility of chaos “from above” – in the form of the “lawlessness” of the liberal state and liberal humanism, considering that the community of the saved must counter it “from below” – as the possibility for the chaos “from below” in the form of a rampant of immorality (homosexuality, alcohol and drug, abuse, fornication, adultery, hedonism, atheism, and disregard to the sacredness of human life (the abortion debate).

In the Brazilian context, one of the manifestations of “chaos from below” seems to be the “serenity” in which the Christians – especially the Pentecostals – are too complacent to defend Christianity and fight against the infiltration of the devil in society. Similar to the Nigerian context is the idea of the “chaos from above”, with the rise of a liberal democracy that despises fundamental Christian values. In a similar process to the increased presence of political discourses in church services, the presence of Pentecostal in the Brazilian National Congress is also infusing the political sphere with religious discourses. I call this process *Evangelical politics*.

Evangelical politics refers to the ensemble of religious discourses and practices diffused by Evangelical politicians at the Brazilian national Congress with the aim of evangelizing the political realm. This process is also grounded upon theological discourses and Evangelical core activities such as missionary work (conversion, spread of the Gospel), church planting and defense of Christian values. The main examples of this are the officially scheduled Pentecostal services that take place every Wednesday – the day of highest circulation of people – at the Chamber of Deputies (Duarte 2012).

According to Baptista (2009) and Duarte (2012), the establishment of a weekly service in the Congress has a dual purpose: to promote a ‘strategic mobilization’ in which the goals of the *Bancada Evangélica* can be discussed and to promote evangelization and conversion in the Congress – that is, missionary work through conversion of new souls. In addition the work of conversion, *Evangelical politics* also works through church planting. Pentecostal services in the Congress are parallel to the reunion of a regular Pentecostal congregation that gathers their believers in the name of Christ to pray and to discuss important issues regarding the community. In a similar fashion to church planting in the private sphere, the *Bancada Evangélica* forms a church inside the Congress; not only by reconstruction the religious rituals of a church service in the private sphere, as Duarte (2012) notes, but also in other aspects of church formation such as emphasis in conversion, healing, and transformation – both on the individual scale as well as the group scale (us, the Evangelicals inside the Congress, *versus* them, the other non-Evangelical groups of the Congress).

Evangelical politics as a form of missionary work can also be further elucidated if we consider the basic definition of what it means to be a pastor within Pentecostalism and the role it entails. In one of Pastor Feliciano’s official pronouncements on his Legislative project to make religious instruction compulsory in all public schools in Brazil, he affirms²⁸

I was elected by a people who, by electing me, did not elect me just to be a congressman here in this place, but also to be a pastor. Thus, [that is why] I carry the title [of pastor along with the title of federal deputy] in my name. [This is why I am called] ‘Federal Deputy Pastor Marco Feliciano’ [and not only Federal Deputy Marco Feliciano]. I am not ashamed of that name because this is what I am [a pastor]...and I ‘am being a politician at this moment, but I am a pastor because to be a pastor is a vocation.

From this speech, we can see Pastor Feliciano's commitment to his pastoral vocation also in the political sphere. When he differentiates a temporary state of being (i.e. being a federal deputy) with a more definite state (i.e. being a pastor), the pastor is not only manifesting his own views of what is the place of religion in politics but also modeling for other congressmen who are pastors how they should function in the Congress.

In regards to *Evangelical Politics* as the work of Pentecostal politicians to defend Christianity, Feliciano epitomizes the concept of countering the chaos coming "from above", by encouraging the church to take action "from below", as Marshall (2009) demonstrates in her study. In addition, he also unites himself with the *Bancada Evangélica* to "control" or change the chaos within the political sphere (i.e. the Brazilian government). In one of the Pentecostal services held in the Congress in 2011, he prays²⁹

Father, now I want to pray for my fellows, for this Evangelical parliament...for these men and women elected by your people...lord, this house is being flooded with your presence...and may each Evangelical congressman that is here be filled with the Holy Spirit, that they receive the wisdom of Daniel, the inspiration of Joseph...[the pastor speaks in tongues at this point]. May a great wisdom come over us, so we can make a difference and [we will be able] to testify with our life, that different people do exist...in the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarean...Amen!

The arrival of an Evangelical parliament to power enables God's presence" to flood the "House of Laws"³⁰, thus emptying it of Satan's influence. They pray to acquire the same gifts that other Biblical politicians had because these gifts will help them to "make a difference". What is interesting here is the use of inspirational Biblical figures like Daniel and Joseph, who were considered the second most powerful people in the nations in which "they lived" and were able to highly influence their governments. The

association of the Evangelical members of the Congress with Daniel and Joseph illustrates the type of transformative power of the *Bancada Evangélica* in influencing the government. This association does two things: it reaffirms the special relationship these political Pentecostals have to God and his powers; and it sets up a dichotomy between those politicians who are followers of God and those who are not³¹.

Evangelical politics as defending Christianity and Christian values are best illustrated through the increased mobilization of Evangelical politicians to elaborate and approve projects that promote the valorization and the maintenance of Christian values, which are understood by Pentecostals to be universal values for humanity. Defending Christianity, among Pentecostal politicians, also entails political antagonism towards projects and political positions that promote liberal values such as humanism, which, according to Pentecostal believers, can be extremely noxious to the two most important ordering structures of society: morals and the family.

When Evangelical politicians begin to work with a model of Evangelical politics as I described above, we begin to wonder if the Pentecostal political theology deepens democracy or promotes authoritarianism. According to Robbins (2004:134-135), there are “two primary positions on this issue (...) based on judgments of the relative novelty of P/c [Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity] church organization in relation to political structures of the surrounding society”. These two positions Robbins refers to are the arguments defended by the study of Willems (1967) on Brazilian and Chilean Pentecostalism and the study of D’Epinay (1969) also on Chilean Pentecostalism. Willems (1967) argues that Pentecostalism enables a resignification of the social order through egalitarianism, breaking the traditional systemic structure; in the latter study,

D'Epinay claims that Pentecostalism reinforces the authoritarian structures of patronage operative in the former structure of the *hacienda*.

As Robbins (2004:134) illustrates, the debate initiated in Willems (1967) and D'Epinay (1969) were revisited in the 1990's by Martin (1990) and Bastian (1993). Following arguments developed by D'Epinay (1969), Bastian (1993) argued that Pentecostalism "embraced the authoritarianism of traditional popular religion (...) that supported corporatist political structures" (Robbins 2004:134). Following a similar view to Willems (1967), Martin (1990) argues that Pentecostalism enhances democracy and democratic participation.

In this work, I adopt a view of Brazilian Pentecostalism somewhat similar to Rowan Ireland (1991) in his study of Brazilian grassroots religious movements and their political behavior in Brazil. I agree with Ireland's argument that Brazilian Pentecostalism promotes both authoritarianism and democracy depending on the sphere in which it is manifested.

I believe political Pentecostalism, through its political theology of *Political Evangelization*, practiced in the church setting (private), is authoritarian and increases an authoritarian view of politics in which the present state of the National Congress is presented as if the devil is at work in the government, as Pentecostal theology understands the matter, and needs to be destroyed without mercy. In this way, there is no middle ground: if the government – or rather, groups inside the government – represent or carry the work of the devil, they need to be vanquished by God's people. On the other hand, political Pentecostalism exercised in the political sphere, through the actions of Evangelical politicians, seems to deepen the democratic structure of the government and

the democratic institutions. In the public debates and official speeches of Pentecostal politicians, there is constant reference, by these political believers, to the right of the citizens to express their opinions, to exercise political power through electoral votes and to warrant the superiority of the Brazilian democratic *Carta Magna*. In this way, I argue that the apparent ambivalence within political Pentecostalism demonstrates the understanding Pentecostals have of their own role in this post-secular society: they are mediators between the French model of liberal democracy, which presupposes total suppression of religious affairs within politics, and forms of religious authoritarianism within the state (i.e. theocracy)³².

Conclusion

In this work, I have explored the intermingling between the political and the religious spheres occurring in Brazil. I have tried to demonstrate how the establishment of a democratic government in the country after 21 years of military repression enabled the creation of a Pentecostal model of democracy that is based upon an imaginary that is both Brazilian – as a nation state; as a cultural continuum shared among all people living in the country – and Pentecostal. In this model, democracy is understood as a form of government that allows for moments in which the boundaries between religious and politics are not clear. In this view, the Pentecostal presence in the Brazilian Congress, its ascension to political power and its interference in the matters of the state, often grounded on religious beliefs, figure as a constitutive part of democracy. Religion is also a government issue because it encompasses a realm of society; thus, it should not be

excluded from the political and any attempt to do so is understood as a non-democratic approach to politics (i.e. anti-religious authoritarianism).

I argue that political Pentecostalism in Brazil develops a political theology in which two main political actions are cultivated in order to transform Brazilian society. One set of actions comes from the church setting and consists in evangelizing the faithful politically, by increasing citizenship and political awareness in the scope of the church. The other set of actions comes from the political sphere, where politician pastors work through evangelizing Brazilian politics. This consists in developing in the National Congress religious activities with the aim to evangelize people in the political setting.

The political engagement of Pentecostals in Brazil embodies the pivotal ambivalence of Pentecostalism seen in different parts of the world: Pentecostalism's commitment to break with the world by denying worldly practices, and the commitment to engage in worldly issues so that believers can build and strengthen the kingdom of God on Earth. The Pentecostal political participation in Brazil is an emblematic case of such paradox because at the same time Brazilian Pentecostalism engages in politics – a worldly realm – once in it, it tries to differentiate itself from all other types of political participation by incorporating religious beliefs in the political discourses and practices performed in political settings.

In this way, the recent political awakening of Pentecostals in Brazil seems to demonstrate a change within Pentecostalism from a movement concerned with apartness and the benefits of world distancing towards salvation (Ireland 1991: 105) to a concern towards political participation that leads into social transformation.

Endnotes

¹ Refers to José Luiz Datena, a Brazilian journalist and TV host, famous for his television news shows in which he reports the latest acts of violence in the city of São Paulo and provides a critique of the government's failure to ensure the public's safety in that city.

² Excerpt translated to English by the author from Pastor Marco Feliciano's official pronouncement in the Senate on April 12th, 2011. Available on *Youtube* at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3LVqH899z4>>.

³ The Assembly of God church is a "Brazilian" church founded by two Swedish missionaries in 1911 in Belém, Pará State (Amazonian Region). I use the term Brazilian in quotation marks here to make reference to the debate that exists surrounding the genealogy of the Assembly of God church in Brazil. Paul Freston, for example, considers the Assembly of God to be a purely autochthonous church, since it was founded in Brazil and continued to develop in the country independently from the international community. Paula (2010:125, 135), however, argues that the Assembly of God in Brazil cannot be considered fully Brazilian until the 1930's, when the church indeed became more Brazilian in the sense that it stopped importing and reproducing religious ideas and practices from the United States, especially those transmitted by the American Assemblies of God church (known currently as an international fellowship grouping of Assemblies of God all around the globe). In any case, what is important to note is that the Brazilian Assembly of God church is not in any way affiliated with the Assemblies of God born in the United States (Paula 2010:135).

⁴ On March 20th, 2013, approximately two weeks after the election of Pastor Feliciano as president of the Human Rights Commission, a group of deputies, who refused to accept Feliciano's election, organized the "Parliamentary Bloc in Defense of Human Rights" (*Frente Parlamentar em Defesa dos Direitos Humanos*) to work in parallel to the Commission for Human and Minority Rights presided by the Pentecostal pastor. <<http://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2013/03/20/deputados-lancam-frente-de-direitos-humanos-paralela-a-comissao.htm>>.

⁵ Protests occurred in 27 cities in Brazil and 3 cities around the world. Available at <<http://noticias.gospelmais.com.br/ativistas-gays-organizam-protestos-contra-feliciano-27-cidades-51429.html>>.

⁶ Examples of this line of thought can be seen in the discourses of protesters in which Pastor Feliciano's presence in the Congress is seen as a violation of Brazil's secular tradition. Photos of the protests against Marco Feliciano often depict protesters holding signs with phrases such as "State ≠ Religion" (at <<http://fotografia.folha.uol.com.br/galerias/14387-manifestacao-contra-feliciano-e-renan-em-brasil#foto-251907>>), "The National Assembly is not the Assembly of God" (at <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-54p6z_mbn-s/UsH25IXfPI/AAAAAAAAAo0/5creLhDNQXc/s1600/estado-laico-brasil.jpg>), "The secular state is a victory, no to the fundamentalist regression!" (at <http://memoria.ebc.com.br/agenciabrasil/sites/_agenciabrasil/files/gallery_assist/24/gallery_assist717838/ABr080413_ANT2915.jpg>), "No to the religious dictatorship" (at <<http://www.leijaja.com/noticias/2013/movimentos-protestaram-contra-marco-feliciano-em-salvador/>>), and "The secular state is democracy" (at <<http://noticias.uol.com.br/album/2013/03/09/manifestantes-protestam-contra-eleicao-de-marco-feliciano-para-comissao-de-direitos-humanos.htm#fotoNav=57>>).

⁷ The Evangelical Parliament Bloc (*Frente Parlamentar Evangélica* or, simply, *Bancada Evangélica*) is a parliament bloc in the Brazilian National Congress currently constituted by 73 Evangelical members of Congress. One of the main goals of the Bloc are to defend Christian values in the political sphere.

⁸ Baptista 2009, Burity and Machado 2005, Campos 2005, Chestnut 1997, Fonseca 2008, Freston 1993, 1995, 2001, and Machado 2006.

⁹ The *Diretas Já* (Direct [Elections] Now) was a series of protests that occurred throughout Brazil from March 1983 to April 1984. The April 16th 1984 protest united 1.5 million people in the streets of São Paulo and it is considered the largest protest in Brazilian history. Since then, the *Diretas Já* protests became iconic for the struggle – and popular union – towards democracy in Brazil.

¹⁰ Available at <<http://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/201ca-perspectiva-e-de-resgate-da-comissao-de-direitos-humanos201d-diz-a-deputada-federal-erika-kokay-4578.html>>. Original quote in Portuguese can be found on the website.

¹¹ The passage was collected from the official webpage of Deputy Jean Wyllys and it is available at <<http://jeanwyllys.com.br/wp/com-participacao-do-psol-frente-parlamentar-tem-forte-atuacao-nos-direitos-humanos-em-2013>>. It is not mention on the website who is the author of the text. However, because it is published in the deputy's official page, we believe the information presented in the website to be true and in accordance to the deputy's ideological convictions.

¹² Entire text available at <<http://www.cartamaior.com.br/?/Blog/Blog-do-Emir/Politica-e-religiao/2/23868>>.

¹³ The official size of the crowd could not be verified. Statistics from the Evangelical news website *verdadegospel.com* places the number of attendants at 70 thousand, while other news sources such as *Globo.com* (G1) places the number closer to 40 thousand.

¹⁴ Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEWxByn-NqM>>.

¹⁵ See note 8.

¹⁶ In this thesis I use boldfaced words or sentences designate moments when the speech is being shouted.

¹⁷ This term refers to the practice of business and universities allowing workers and students to participate in political actions without having to make up time lost at work or school.

¹⁸ Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OHym2a9dB0>>

¹⁹ Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkWJPShwZpw>>.

²⁰ Pastor Feliciano makes a distinction between *estado laico* (secular state) and *laicismo*, a term that comes from French *laïcité*.

²¹ Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RydvEZMV1IY>>.

²² Aavailable at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfSJYMRymzA>>.

²³ Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXWTL0mN8CI>>.

²⁴ While this language might seen inappropriate for a church setting, one thing that I find interesting about Brazilian Pentecostalism is the use of informal language during preaching. In this context, Pastor Feliciano was speaking very passionately and this might have slipped out by accident due to his emotion and to the similarity in sound the word “shit”(*porra*) in Portuguese has with the word “rubbish” (*porcaria*).

²⁵ Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXWTL0mN8CI>>.

²⁶ Excerpt from Pastor Marco Feliciano's sermon at the 2012 Congresso Gideões Missionários da Última Hora and available at < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXWTL0mN8CI>>.

²⁷ Marshall (2009, p. 204-209) provides an insightful observation: "the power of God, and indeed of Satan (...) are understood as being potentially embodied within each and every individual and at large in the world, through either the Holy Spirit or a host of demonic forces." The following speech of Pastor Feliciano illustrates a similar Pentecostal understanding, in which the pastor argues that Brazilian government hosts Satan and his plans in the minds of politically engaged people.

²⁸ Excerpt from Pastor Feliciano's official speech in the Senate on April 12th, 2011. Available at < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdZc5ypPGhc>>.

²⁹ Excerpt from Pastor Marco Feliciano's preaching at the First *Evangelical Service of 2011 in the Brazilian National Congress*. Available at < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vkoHRj5SYw>.

³⁰ This is a popular Brazilian expression to refer to the National Congress, which is composed by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, the two "houses" in which Brazilian legislation is elaborated and voted upon.

³¹ This dichotomy seems to resolve the former Pentecostal view in Brazil that politics should be avoided because it is a realm of the world, filled with Satan's traps. Satan's work in politics is now relegated to those who oppose the Evangelical political agenda.

³² See discussion in Habermas (2006).

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