

The Body and Sexual Morality in Religious Groups¹

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Translation by the Author

One of the things that most impressed me on my first visit to a Charismatic community in Rio de Janeiro was the corporal expression of the women, gayly swinging their hips to the rhythm of the hymns, who at certain point began to develop a sort of choreography, sequentially marked by hand-clapping, crossing themselves, genuflection, and finally, on their feet with their hands stretched toward heaven. Composed for the most part by middle-class women of over 50 years of age, this community had managed to bring together approximately 1,800 people for a service at 2 PM on a Monday afternoon, who, for two hours actively participated in the service. Their spontaneity, freedom of movement and gestures were in total contrast to the cold ceremonies of more conservative priests and the contrition and rigidity of the more fervent Catholic women, with their slow, lamenting pacing in traditional processions.

Their emotional participation, spontaneous speeches and testimonials reminded me of scenes which I had witnessed at a revival

put on by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God² - UCKG - in a soccer stadium where predominantly lower-income believers were united. On that occasion, having read about the first Pentecostal churches founded in Brazil³ which not only segregated men and women, but also proscribed rules of behavior, emphasizing the use of chaste clothing - I was surprised not only by the style of the pastors and of the service itself, but also by the way women were dressed, and the happy intermixing and freedom of movement among participants during the mass meeting. Obvious change was underway that touched not only the Catholic tradition, but the Protestants as well.

Since the end of the 80's, studies of the growing number of "emotional communities" in European societies have called attention to the more corporal, rather than verbal, interaction they promote.⁴ In Brazilian studies⁵, however, one of the most

² This church was founded in 1977 and quickly rose to the third-place position among Evangelicals in number of temples in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan region - 191, according to the Evangelical Census of the ISER Research Center (CIN, 1992).

³ In particular on the Christian Congregation of Brazil and the Assembly of God, denominations founded in 1910 and 1911 through schisms in the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches, respectively. See ROLIM, Francisco Carfaxo. *Pentecostais no Brasil*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1985.

⁴ HERVIEU-LÉGER, D.. *Present-Day Emotional Renewals: the end of secularization or the end of religion?* In: SANTOS, W. (ed.), *A Future for Religion? New paradigms for social analysis*. London: Sage, 1993.

⁵ BITTENCOURT FILHO, J.. *Pentecostalismo Autônomo*. In: *Alternativas dos Desesperados: como se pode ler o pentecostalismo autônomo*. Rio de Janeiro: CEDI, 1991; VELASQUES FILHO, P.. *Sim a Deus e*

¹ The empirical data we referred on this paper were collected for two on-going research projects carried out in Rio de Janeiro State: *Adesão Religiosa e seus Efeitos na Esfera Privada* (MACHADO, M. D. C., doctorate thesis, 1994) and *Os Efeitos da Afiliação Religiosa no Exercício da Sexualidade e da Reprodução: um estudo comparativo dos pentecostais e carismáticos*, financed by the MacArthur Foundation.

frequently used criterion for differentiating Charismatics from Pentecostals has been the social origin of the former, which is at the root of their more contained body gestures. With that in mind, several questions arose: How were women of this social strata and advanced age able to break their ingrained restraints and appear so uninhibited and at ease with their bodies? Was this gaiety a special quality of the movement in Rio de Janeiro?

I had already been to Charismatic services in other states where the women were certainly emotionally involved, but it was nothing like what I saw in Copacabana. Could this festiveness have something to do with the carioca culture where dancing and the body are so present in the celebration of Carnaval? How does secular culture affect religion? I later saw a carnaval parade based on a samba praising Jesus, organized by a Pentecostal denomination, the Evangelic Community, which would show me that my questions were indeed valid, and that, even though they openly criticized the "festival of the flesh", Pentecostal believers had begun to incorporate the gaiety and some of the corporal expression of Carnaval into religious rites, giving it new meaning.

It is true that through the issues of death, sickness, procreation and even sex, the corporal dimension has in some way always been present in religious ethics.⁶ Nevertheless, there is a consensus among researchers that the theologies of salvation impose both a devaluation of the human body, as well as a regulation of believers' sensuality. We know that in the Christian universe, the duality established between the body and the soul in the early centuries of the church created a hierarchy of these dimensions, placing the first in an inferior position and in opposition to the spirit. "The body is the world of instincts which must be

controlled" and it is exactly this virtual potential of control which differentiates men from animals. Thus, "rational objectives should orient and even repress the appetites of the body", including sexual desire and pleasure.⁷ The consequences of this policing of the body are not restricted only to behavior in the religious sphere, but, depending on the historical circumstances, can be seen in the economic and even political spheres as well.

Weber, in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* showed us how, in the initial phases of capitalism, strong ethical precepts were employed to discipline the body through inner-worldly asceticism and the channeling human energies into labor.⁸ Contemporary studies⁹, however, affirm that the capitalist system itself would stimulate a redefinition of the use of the body as it became an object of consumerism. The growth of alternative therapies and ritualistic healing practices combining body and mind are, for some researchers¹⁰, a reflection in the religious field of these changes in contemporary societies.

In comparing these experiences to our observations in the field, we are led to hypothesize whether these Brazilian Neo-Pentecostal, Catholic and Evangelical

⁷ GUDORF, C. E., Redeeming Sexuality: shifts in christian understanding of moral good (mimeo). Paper presented at Working Groups on Sexual Behavior Research, Conference on International Perspectives in Sex Research, Rio de Janeiro, 1993, p. 4.

⁸ A similar mechanism can be identified in progressive Brazilian Catholic groups. According to Botas: "it is not overdoing it to say that the emotional upbringing of most Catholic Action believers was based on the **channeling** of their life potential, in other words, **erotic**, into the task of changing the world. This great discipline was composed of learning to suppress **sensuality, emotion, feeling and pleasure** - and of the esthetic of the sexual - for the creation of **virgin** and, in most cases, **heroic** workers". BOTAS, P. C., *Creio na Ressureição da Carne. Religião e Sociedade* nº 7, Rio de Janeiro, 1981, p. 54.

⁹ SIMPSON apud RIIS. Op. cit., p. 379.

¹⁰ MCGUIRE, M. B., Religion and Body: rematerializing the human body in the social sciences of religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 3, vol. 29, 1990.

Não à Vida. In: VELASQUES FILHO, P., and MENDONÇA, A. G., *Introdução ao Protestantismo no Brasil*, São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1990.

⁶ RIIS, Ole, *The Study of Religion in Modern Society*, *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 36, Stockholm University, 1993.

movements, which also stimulate corporal expression, are not following a similar tendency to rearticulate the body and the spirit, even though they may still emphasize the latter.¹¹ What are the limits to this new appreciation of the body for believers? Is it merely ritualistic? Do the changes we see in the use of the body in relation to Jesus, particularly in moments of praise, express changes in the exercise of female sexuality as well? How do Pentecostals and Charismatics deal with their own sensuality? These are some of the questions with which we will be occupied in this study, although we will concentrate on the examination of values relative to the sexuality and reproductive behavior of believers involved in the Movement of Charismatic Catholic Renewal - MRCC - and in Pentecostalism.

Sex and reproduction in Christian thought

If we go back in the history of Christianity we can see that from the second century until the middle of the 1900's, a negative perception of human sexuality predominated and was most radically expressed in the writings of Saint Agustin and Saint Jerome. Based on the previously mentioned separation of the body and soul, this tradition may be systematically presented in three main points: 1) the condemnation of sexual desire and pleasure; 2) the linking of the sexual act with procreation; and, finally, 3) the imputation of an inferior status to women in relation to men, which is expressed through the emphasis on her reproductive role. For these religious thinkers, sexual intercourse was only justifiable for human reproduction, and its practice, even in marriage, could be considered sinful, given that carnal

pleasure is so difficult to avoid. After Saint Thomas of Aquinas, an instinctive and bestial characterization of sex would predominate over the sinful qualification, but sexuality would continue to need a justification beyond itself: that of procreation. There is an unequal treatment of the sexual partners which underlies this entire tradition, awarding women an inferior status. It exalts the spiritual dimension of the masculine gender, presenting him as created in "the image and likeness of God", while it emphasizes the physiological dimension - "carnal" - of the feminine gender (thus the direct association between women and the idea of temptation), justifying her existence in terms of motherhood. In both Saint Agustin and Saint Thomas we see that it is the woman's place to assist man only in the task of reproduction, for in all other endeavors men are undoubtedly superior, and in no need of female aid.¹²

According to specialized studies, the religious reform movement of the middle ages, which repudiated the devotion of the saints, particularly the female ones, went far in reinforcing the importance of the masculine gender in the Protestant world. After all, if Catholicism emphasized the masculine qualities of God, there was also "the feminine alternative of the Virgin, to whom women could turn in moments of need".¹³ This imbalance in the treatment of the sexes by Christian theologians would be reinforced through the rise of Pentecostalism at the onset of the 20th century, which, in opposition to the most liberal tendencies of the Protestants¹⁴, would

¹² GUDORF, C. E.. Op. cit., p. 4.

¹³ DAVIS apud TARDUCCI, M.. Pentecostalismo y Relaciones de Género: una revisión. In: FRIGÉRIO, Alejandro (ed.). *Nuevos Movimientos Religiosos*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editora de America Latina, vol. I, 1993.

¹⁴ According to Evans (apud TARDUCCI, Op. cit., p. 84), one of the consequences of revivalism in the 19th century was to create opportunities for women to develop extra-familial activities, building an important ideological support for the feminist movement of the 1800's. Both in North-american and English societies, Protestant women participates in the

¹¹ In Latin America, progressive sectors of the traditional Churches, women and a few certain male theologians linked to Liberation Theology, attempt to question the body-spirit relationship, based on a "unitary anthropology" and not the patriarchal and hierarchical one preferred by most Christian religions. GEBARA, I.. *Corpo: novo ponto de partida da teologia. Tempo e Presença*, Rio de Janeiro, CEDI, 1988. This is, however, a very recent discussion in the Brazilian religious sphere.

restore the belief in the natural inferiority of women, placing women at the foot of a "divinely ordained hierarchy which awards power and authority to God and to men".¹⁵ Founded on the individualistic, but still patriarchal tradition of the nuclear bourgeois family in the United States in the early 20th century, this ideology would run into ambivalent and paradoxical consequences¹⁶. These would not be restricted merely to the internal structuring of religious organizations and the distribution of power between masculine and feminine members, but would also affect the private behavior of followers in these religious communities, as it reinforced masculine authority in the home.

However, while one line of questioning relating gender and religious conversion is being consolidated, contributing significantly to our understanding not only of the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America, but also of the changes in the model of the family for followers of this religious tradition, in terms of the first two pillars of the Christian sexual tradition there is still much to be investigated. On the doctrinary level, we know that both the devaluation of sex and the norm of "sex for procreation only" remained basically the same through the first few decades of this century, sexual abstinence being the only legitimate method available for birth control.

In 1930, Anglicans gathered at the Lambeth Conference defended the use of birth control methods in cases where there were "serious restrictions to procreation", thus paving the way for a rupture with the Christian insistence that reproduction be

the ultimate end for conjugal sex, and for the first time showing that sexual activity within marriage could be justifiable in and for itself. The use of artificial means of birth control was no longer linked to the notions of illicit sex, adultery and, above all, prostitution; but could be used by Christian couples, even if only for health reasons. Shortly thereafter, in 1931, the committee for marriage and the family of the Federal Council of Churches of the United States approved the use of contraceptives, transferring the decision-making responsibility to professionals in the medical area and to the believers themselves. The economic and social context, particularly the economic slump which followed on the heels of the Second World War and the global urbanization which took place during the middle of the century, favored the spread of these liberal and secular positions, as other Protestant churches recognized that the responsibility and definition of contraception usage belonged morally to the individual, and technically to science.¹⁷

However, when we turn our attention to the Catholics, we see that the process of revising values has been much slower and more difficult. In 1930, in direct response to the "birth control" movement, but particularly to the liberal position assumed by the Protestants in Lambeth, Pope Pius XI published the Encyclical *Casti Connubii*, reaffirming the link between sexuality and reproduction and energetically condemning abortion and the limitation of births by artificial means. It was only in 1950, in his speech to the Catholic Society of Midwives, that the High Magistrate of the Church admitted the legitimacy of birth control for the first time. In this document, Pope Pius XII recognized the "rhythm method" as in keeping with God's laws, finally accepting the natural technique discovered in the 1920's by scientists Ogino and Knaus.

battles for suffrage, for moral reform and in abolitionist movements, but when the revivalist spirit began to decline, women returned to the domestic sphere.

¹⁵ GILL, L. Like a Veil to Cover Them: women and the pentecostal movement in La Paz. *American Ethnologist* 17, n° 4, 1990.

¹⁶ BRUSCO, E. The Reformation of Machismo: ascetism and masculinity among colombian evangelicals. In: BURNET-GARRAND, V. and STOLL, D., *Rethinking Latin-American Protestantism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994; BURDICK, J., *Looking for God in Brazil*. The City University of New York, 1990.

¹⁷ PIERUCCI, A. F., Igreja: contradições e acomodações. Ideologia do clero católico sobre reprodução humana no Brasil. *Cadernos CEBRAP* n° 21, São Paulo, 1978, p. 40.

In the last thirty years, the behavioral revolution ushered in by the birth-control pill, the rise of feminist movements bringing to the political arena their demands for sexual liberation, and the development of new technologies in the area of reproduction have incited new debates within the Church hierarchy and among the more active lay workers, but have not been strong enough to force a revision of the ban on abortion nor of the traditional rejection of birth-control methods. The principal documents of this period reinforce the condemnation of birth-control methods, save natural ones, thus showing how difficult it is for the Papistry to accept the separation of sexuality and procreation, and to adapt to changes in reproductive behavior brought on by advances in science.¹⁸

In Brazil we find at least two different interpretations of the local reaction to Vatican directives. The first, frequently encountered in progressive Catholic spheres, points out the theological advances resulting from the doctrine of "responsible parenthood" (*Gaudium et Spes*, Pope Paul VI, 1965). The very existence of distinct interpretations of this doctrine within the Brazilian clergy, however, underlines a lack of consensus in terms of the absolute rejection of artificial means of birth control. The second, much emphasized by feminists, calls attention to the role of the National Council of Brazilian Bishops and other organizations in influencing public policy-making and public opinion in general by, at the same time, pointing out how the local clergy furthers the Vatican line on procreation and showing the authoritarian nature of the Catholic interference in discussions on reproductive rights and in AIDS-prevention campaigns.¹⁹

The Vatican's inflexibility has, in fact, not significantly influenced the behavior of the majority of Catholics. A recent study commissioned by the Church itself (*Jornal do Brasil*, 1994) reveals how disparate are the clergy's norms from the sexual mores of young Catholics. According to the data from this study, 90% of the Catholics between 18 and 30 years of age condone the use of contraceptives, 70% consider masturbation normal, 65% approve of sexual relations before marriage and 40% are in favor of abortion in special circumstances. In the Evangelical world, studies²⁰ of the participation of "believer" congressmen in the 1988 National Constituent Assembly, point out their "moralistic political activism", demonstrated by the creation of a multi-party block of Protestants who concentrated their efforts on committees dealing with the family, and the sexual and reproductive behavior of Brazilian citizens. Since the majority of representatives in this block were from neo-traditionalist denominations, their positions against homosexuality, abortion, feminism, drugs, pornography and even the dissolution of marriage predominated.

If, in the Catholic case, alliance to a confessional group may indicate different degrees of obedience to and assimilation of the values of church leaders, we should also confront the positions we have just pointed out with those of the leaders of other religious denominations and even with the conduct of members of these religious communities.²¹

²⁰ FRESTON, P., *Protestantes e Política no Brasil: da Constituinte ao Impeachment* (mimeo), Tese de Doutorado, Campinas, 1993; PIERUCCI, A. F., *Representantes de Deus em Brasília: a bancada evangélica na Constituinte. Ciências Sociais Hoje*, Rio de Janeiro, 1989.

²¹ Like the Catholics, Protestants have their own progressive group which attempts to discuss questions relating to sexuality and to abortion, defending its legalization. Within this group, we call attention to the theologians and pastors who try to show how the Churches, focusing their discussion on abortion on the fetus rather than on the pregnant woman, deny the difficulties millions of women face,

¹⁸ RIBEIRO, Lúcia, *Anticoncepção e Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*. In: COSTA, A. de Oliveira and AMADO, T. (org.), *Alternativas Escassas*. São Paulo/Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Carlos Chagas/Ed. 34, 1994.

¹⁹ ARAÚJO, M. J., *Aborto Legal no Hospital de Jabaquara. Revista Estudos Feministas*, Escola de Comunicação, vol. 1, nº 2, UFRJ, 1993, p. 425; RIBEIRO, L., *Op. cit.*, p. 403-4.

The Neo-Pentecostal movement in Brazilian religious sociology

In Brazil, where the rapid growth of neo-traditional groups of Protestant origin has begun to undermine Catholic hegemony and is beginning to constitute a true alternative to the more progressive tendencies of Liberation Theology, there is no tradition of quantitative research in the area of religion. Even qualitative studies on new affiliation to spiritual movements and family life are few, being that the effects of religious conversion in domestic relations are a secondary concern within the more extensive studies on the religious thematic. Further, there is a constant line drawn between Pentecostal groups, associated with the lower classes, and those called Charismatic, which researchers deem typical of the middle classes. Attention has been given basically to the former; there are few studies on Catholic Charismatics, and none which specifically deal with the so-called Evangelical Charismatics. Studies which deal with the Movement for Charismatic Catholic Renewal²² recognize the ecumenical origin of this movement and the Evangelical influences expressed in their renewed emphasis on the Bible, the belief in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the spontaneity and emotional involvement of believers during the services and celebrations. Nevertheless, they prefer to compare this to other movements within the Catholic Church, particularly those of the middle sectors, and to analyze its relation to the institutional structure. Thus, they identify a certain continuity between traditional Christian Retreats and Meetings of Couples with Christ, and Charismatic Renewal, concluding that this adjusts itself to the Church, and is not a movement in opposition to the Catholic hierarchy. Even

those researchers who emphasize the MCCR ideology which gives renewed importance to the family, they emphasize the function of the movement to preserve the religious institution, and fail to investigate the consequent changes in the attitudes and behavior of believers who adhere to such an ideology.

The results of a recent study on Syncretism and Religious Transit²³ suggest, on the other hand, a great proximity between Charismatics and Pentecostals, who are considered by the first, without any class discrimination, to be the religious group they most admire and with whom they most identify. This study showed that Charismatics simultaneously attend Pentecostal services as well as talks by Evangelical pastors, and even frequent renewed Evangelical churches. As to parallel attendance, it was found that this occurred basically during the conversion phase, before the religious option had been completely made. As for visits to Pentecostal denominations, quite frequent among the lower-income population, albeit present in middle-classes groups as well, these seem to constitute a decisive moment for the quitting of syncretic practice, particularly those related to Afro-Brazilian religious groups. The decision to include lower-income segments of the population in the study of Charismatics was important in order to verify the hypothesis of "adjustment" to the institutional structures of the Catholic Church, for it was seen that there were many in this population who abandoned the Church because of conflicts with its hierarchy, and thus turned to Evangelical groups. Further, even temporary visitations by Charismatics to Pentecostal communities shows that the line separating the two is neither as clear nor as strong as that which, until recently, divided the Protestant and Catholic universes, reinforcing the option for a comparison between them.

in particular those who live in conditions of poverty. See JARSCHER, Heidi. *Aborto: entre a fome e o desejo. Tempo e Presença* 256, Rio de Janeiro, 1988, p. 37-39.

²² BENEDETTI, L. *Templo, Praça, Coração - a articulação do campo religioso católico*. São Paulo, doctorate thesis, USP, 1988.

²³ MARIZ, C. e MACHADO, M. D., *Sincretismo e Trânsito Religioso: comparando carismáticos e pentecostais. Comunicações do Iser*, nº 45, Rio de Janeiro, 1994.

In the Pentecostal world, despite a vast bibliography on these religious communities and even on the public behavior of believers, there are few studies which include the influences of their beliefs and religious affiliation on the private sphere and, particularly on gender relations²⁴. Further, the lack of a tradition of attitude studies in Brazilian sociology has resulted in a deliberate emphasis on the valorative dimension, making the analysis of Pentecostal doctrine the central issue. Some case studies manage to confront these two dimensions, but suffer the inherent limitations of studies of this nature, which cannot generalize their results to the Pentecostal movement as a whole. Beyond this, the majority of studies call attention to the asceticism which follows conversion and restrict themselves to investigating the effects of the religious option on the alcohol consumption and sexual behavior of the husband, while failing to investigate what may be the consequences on the sexual orientation given to children, on the reproductive behavior of the couple, and even on female sexuality.

Pentecostals and Charismatics: socio-economic data and sexual morality

We interviewed thirty-seven married women, three who were living with men, six who were single, two who were separated, and four who were widowed. Of these, twenty-six were of middle-class origin and twenty-six were from the lower-income sector, being divided equally between Charismatics and Pentecostals.²⁵ The

Charismatics had an average age of forty-two and showed the highest educational level - five of those from the middle sectors were college graduates, while those from the second religious group²⁶ were slightly younger, having an average age of 39.6 years, but with fewer years of formal education - only two from the middle sectors had completed their university studies. Among those from the popular sectors, the differences between the two religious universes are negligible, being that half of those interviewed from each religion had completed grade school, two or three from each had finished high-school, and the rest had had less than a first-grade education. There were three women who had had at least one previous union; one was a middle-class Charismatic, and two were Pentecostals - one from the middle and one from the popular class. After leaving their previous unions, the two Pentecostals were married in the Church of which they are now members. The Charismatic, who was divorced from her first husband, has lived together with a divorced man for twenty years.

As for the men, we spoke with twenty who are currently married, ten from the middle classes and ten from the popular classes, equally distributed between the Charismatic and Pentecostal groups. Their average ages were, respectively, forty-five and forty-one. The Charismatics showed the same tendencies found in the female sample, the male group having a greater level of formal education - four from the middle class held college diplomas - but here the difference in relation to the Pentecostals practically disappears, for three of this group had also finished their

²⁴ BURDICK, J.. Op. cit.; MARIZ, Cecilia, C.. *Coping With Poverty*, Philadelphia Temple Press, 1994; NOVAES, Regina Reys. *Os Escolhidos de Deus. Cadernos ISEB nº 19*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora Marco Zero, 1985; PAGE, John J.. *Brasil Para Cristo: the cultural construction of pentecostal networks in Brasil*. New York University, Dissertation, 1984; WILLEMS, E.. *Followers of the New Faith: cultural change and The rise of protestantism in Brazil and Chile*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967.

²⁵ The Pentecostal women (26) belonged to the following denominations: UCKG (9), Assembly of God (4), New Life (3), Calvary Baptist (2), Maranatha

Evangelical Missionary Association (2), International Evangelical Center and Support Front (2), Evangelical Church of God in the Last Days (2), Church of Christ (1), Christ Renews (1).

²⁶ The distribution of the men (15) in Pentecostal denominations was the following: Assembly of God (4), UCKG (2), International Evangelical Center and Support Front (2), House of Prayer (2), Maranatha Christian Church (1), Christ Lives (1), Methodist Wesleyan (1), Christ Renews (1).

university studies. Within the lower-income Pentecostal and Charismatic segments we find a similar internal distribution where the vast majority of the men claimed to have finished only grade school, and the remaining two - one from each religious group - stated that they had dropped out before completing it.

Sexuality: values and experiences

Nearly all of those we interviewed from both communities revealed they had received no sexual orientation from their parents. Friends and schoolmates had been responsible for furnishing information, be it about menstruation and masturbation, be it about sexual intercourse and contraceptive methods. Besides feeling ill at ease with the subject, these parents, described by our informants as "traditional", seemed to hold a negative view of everything having to do with sexuality. It is here that gender differences begin to show up. Whereas men, who had always had greater access to literature or to group conversations between adults where the sexual question was always present saw no problem in this, the women regretted the lack of information, and the more educated among them were critical of this family attitude, some of them even relating this fact to difficulties they had with their own sexuality.

Considering the fact that one of the things that most clearly distinguishes Catholics from Protestants in Brazil has been the moral rigidity of the latter, our examination of the sexual education received by our sample population took us back to their parents' religion, and for this reason we looked into their religious upbringings. The Charismatics unanimously declared their parents' religion to have been Catholic, and had long considered their membership in this church as "inherited", but had not considered themselves to be "practicing Catholics". It is interesting that in the popular classes we found a significant number of Charismatics who claimed to have begun their religious involvement in Pentecostal denominations. Of the ten married women from this social segment, for example, six had been

members of Pentecostal churches before joining the MCCR. Two of the five married men had the same story to tell. All of them, men and women both, had come from non-practicing Catholic homes when they began their religious search, initially in Evangelical temples, finding their way into the following denominations: three were "Renewed" Baptists; three were from the UCKG; two were from God is Love; and two were members of the Assembly of God.

Of the twenty-six female and thirteen male Pentecostals we interviewed, five and seven, respectively, had come from Evangelical backgrounds. The Assembly of God came out as the denomination with the most staying power, that most able to pass on its values from one generation to the next, being particularly true in the case of the males. Most of these men whose parents were Assembly of God believers had either remained or had returned to the church after a period of absence, usually during their youth. As for the females, those young women who found the church's strict codes of dress and behavior to be unbearable had moved into other less strict denominations. A large number of Pentecostals, however, had come from Catholic homes and spoke both of their family's and their own syncretic religious practices before conversion to their present church. In these cases, the moral orientation they received differs little from societal norms and those of the hegemonic religious group. That is to say, the encouragement or at least tolerance of the awakening and development of sexuality in the boys, and the severe control of sexuality in the girls, and the frequent passing-on of a negative perception of sexual contact. M.H.Q (36 years old), daughter of middle-class Catholics, but a current member of Calvary Baptist Church, claimed that her mother taught her that "sex was disgusting, horrible and rotten. When, as a adolescent, I found out that she did it, too, I really thought her vulgar. After I tried it myself, I was angry at what she had done to me. I'm not doing the same thing to my daughters." Here we must call attention to differences

in male and female interviews. While many women were willing to talk of their sexual lives and even, spontaneously, of their discontentments in this area and of their early ignorance in relation to their sexuality, none of the men revealed any sexual dissatisfaction, even to the male assistant interviewer. Even those who admitted to extra-marital relations claimed no link between this and any sexual difficulty within the marriage. Their arguments fall into the usual line of moral deviance and the noxious influences of a secular and "macho" culture. It is also curious that most of the women who experienced difficulties with their sexuality did not relate these problems to the sexual performance of their partners. At this point social differences come into play; women from the lower-educational strata blame themselves for their lack of sexual fulfillment and feel guilty for the excuses they give to their partners. Furthermore, when they shared with us the orientations they had received from church-sponsored classes, lectures, and sermons we saw that these seem to encourage their conformity to the sexual patterns established by their partners, and deal with sexuality as a matrimonial responsibility.

A positive attitude toward sex in marriage seems to be something shared both by Pentecostal, as well as Charismatic leaders, but the orientation they give does not always aid women in questioning the performance and responsibility of their partners in relation to their insatisfactions. Charismatic leaders follow official Church doctrine, which, though still behind society as a whole, already in *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) viewed procreation not as an end to itself, but as the result of conjugal love. Certainly, though, their condemnation of non-natural methods of contraception shows the ambiguity of this position, and paves the way for very different orientations and perceptions of sex. At retreats and encounters, as well as at the weekly Charismatic meetings which we attended during our two-year study, we saw that when the issue of sexuality appeared, it was accompanied more frequently by

moralizations such as the denunciation and censorship of the "depraved behavior" of homosexuals, unfaithful spouses, and sexually active singles, than by discussions of the difficulties normally encountered by men and women in their intimate relationships. From interviews with members of this movement, we concluded that questions of this nature are dealt with either by seeking the counsel of elders, or by going outside the church to other sources or family-oriented movements parallel to MCCR such as: the Encounters of Couples, the Group of Our Lady, the Encounter of Dialogues, etc... Now, in the Evangelical world, as Reverend Caio Fábio, president of the Brazilian Evangelical Association told us, "the great moment of change in the evaluation of sexuality came about nearly fifteen years ago, with the explosion of books on the market dealing with sex and pleasure" and the intense, subsequent discussion of the issue among religious leaders. Among the women we interviewed, those who were members of the UCKG were most able to share the orientations received through their religious community, pointing out the availability of assistance, either in the form of private counselling by the pastor or his wife, or in vigils and lectures on the importance of sexuality in the preservation of the family. This denomination holds emotional vigils and in its sermons, encourages believers to be more affectionate with their sexual partners in their daily lives. Other denominations deal with the issue in a more discrete fashion, promoting Encounters of Couples, Courses for Newlyweds, or, in the case of the smaller denominations, through informal talks with older women from the religious community. Within the middle classes we saw that the Pastor's Office was an important place for consultation, though most of the women sought the counsel of the pastor only in extreme circumstances. In the more popular groups, information was more frequently gleaned from the informal conversations occasioned in Women's Meetings.

In the case of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, despite the great

creativity on the part of its leaders, who, in their all-day-Thursday family encounters offer a "chocolate kiss", a "rose of happiness", or some "holy oil" to be given to one's spouse as a token of affection, the lack of sexual preparedness and the low educational level of pastors and lay workers constitute a real limitation to any true aid the church might be able to offer to women with problems. By presenting sexual difficulties many times as the "frigidity of the wife" or as a problem "basically of the woman", religious orientation seems to run on the line of a greater understanding of men's sexual needs by women. The person who clearly explained this orientation was N.M., a forty-three year-old housekeeper and UCKG member who stated that before entering the church, she didn't want to have sexual relations with her husband and that, in her own words, "only after hearing the pastor from IURD say that a woman should not run away from her marital obligations" that she stopped trying to avoid him. The informant also stated "I'm getting better at it" and added "before I didn't feel any pleasure and would run away. Today I ask God to help me accept these things, but, to tell you the truth, I don't feel very happy when he comes to me".

This woman, who didn't finish her elementary school education, explains her sexual lack of interest for her husband in terms of her "faults" and "selfishness", which she is now working on. In middle-class sectors, however, at least two educated women reported to have sexual problems, expressing them not in terms of the difficulties in satisfying the needs of their husbands but rather as their inability to attain pleasure with their partners. M.M., 44, from the upper-middle class, a graduate of journalism and currently separated, told us she had had extra-marital relations before converting to Pentecostalism and becoming a member of the UCKG, because she "couldn't have an orgasm with her husband". She was the only one of all those we interviewed who used this expression, but despite her liberal behavior and language, she had been sexually

inactive since her husband left her three years ago.

Testimony such as this shows that more than religious affiliation, age or educational level influence the way women feel about their sexual activity, though once joined in one of these Pentecostal movements, they have little choice but to deal with their sexual insatisfactions by trying to make their partners more sensitive to their needs. The possibility for dialog is greater when both partners share the same religious values. According to Gill²⁷, one of the consequences of male conversion to Pentecostalism is that men are led to cultivate virtues traditionally allocated to women, such as humility, which to a certain extent facilitates understanding between partners and helps them to overcome some of the male chauvinist behavior so present in Latin-American culture.

Another important point is how believers who had received no sexual education from their parents were dealing with the issue in their own families. In both religious universes, we saw that for both sexes, conversion leads to a greater preoccupation with the sexual orientation of the children. When we compared the testimony of women who had joined Pentecostal movements without their husbands (25) with that of women who had been successful in converting their spouses (16) we found that in the first case the women, more than the men, were concerned with preparing their children and with not repeating their own parents' pattern of neglect. In the case of couples who had both converted, this became a shared concern, showing that men had become more involved in the raising of the children.

On the whole, we found that parents end up orienting their offspring according to the questions the children themselves pose. In other words, education means establishing rules of behavior and answering questions asked by youngsters. If they neither contest nor question, the parents need not touch on the issues of sexuality.

²⁷ GILL, L., *Op. cit.*, p. 717.

One woman of thirty justified the fact of her mother's never having spoken to her about sex, by her own early pregnancy, leading her mother to assume that she already knew all there was to know, since she was already obviously sexually active with her boyfriend. As for the Charismatics, where a greater number of women join the movement on their own, we find the typical Brazilian double standard of control over female sexuality and tolerance of male incapacity to remain chaste. AIDS, though a strong motive for conversation between parents and children, served this religious group to reinforce the double standard, strengthening the defense of virginity for girls, and guaranteeing the right to sexual activity for boys, as long as it is not promiscuous and includes the use of condoms. "After all, men can't make it without sex", one Charismatic woman of thirty-eight put it. Although she had herself been an "expecting" bride, her advice to her daughter was to "save herself for marriage", while at the same time reminding her son not to forget to take condoms with him on a date, "just in case he and his girlfriend decided to stay out late". Pentecostals, for the most part, follow traditional Protestant guidelines for sex, countering looser Catholic ideals; they encourage chastity before marriage for both males and females and extend the vow of fidelity to both spouses. Thus, the more radical group becomes the more egalitarian as well in terms of gender, denying both partners any extra-marital dallying. Their advice runs from the warning to boys that they "not even converse with certain girls, certain women of the streets" to the suggestion that they respect their girlfriends, treating them as they would a sister. G.A., a seventeen year-old middle-class student and member of the International Evangelical Center told us that "love between believers lasts because before calling a woman your wife, you call her your sister and before any carnal embrace, any carnal love, there is spiritual love". It is interesting that among women who confessed to having gotten married after

becoming pregnant - fourteen out of the 40 who were married - ten currently belong to Pentecostal groups and three came from Evangelical homes, meaning that they had received the kind of orientation described above. All these were daughters of Assembly of God members, one of the most traditional Pentecostal denominations. S.N., 34, had been baptized in the church at thirteen, but had shortly thereafter gone with her parents and siblings to a "renewed" Baptist church, where the younger members of the family felt more at ease. She is currently a member of the New Life Church, M.N., 29, attended Assembly of God services and celebrations with her family until the age of fourteen when she abandoned the religious community, returning to religious life only after marriage, joining the Christ Lives Church. Finally, we have R.S., 26, who, in conflict with the strict Assembly of God rules of behavior, was baptized in the Congregational Church at fifteen and has been there ever since. With her pregnancy she was temporarily suspended from the church, but shortly thereafter found support and aid which eventually led her into a religious marriage. She, like the others who had married while pregnant, today preach chastity for singles, and speak of the guilt of having betrayed God as an obstacle to true happiness after marriage.

The fact that these young women went against their religious communities' rules of behavior demonstrates the difficulty many believers of both sexes have to juggle conflicting norms "with the attitudes and behavior socially expected for this phase of life".²⁸ Adolescence and the beginning of adult life are tense times. Restrictions on drinking, smoking and dancing, the control of dating and strict dress codes put off a good number of those whose parents belong to more radical denominations, and even those who continue in the religious community show occasional dissatisfaction with the moral strictness of the group. We heard from the Coordinator of the Youth

²⁸ NOVAES, R. R., Op. cit., p. 76.

Group in one Charismatic church, that the majority of requests for counsel stem from young people's uncertainty as to how to deal with sexuality while dating and contemplating marriage, and that her advice to both boys and girls was to remain chaste until marriage. It is a position similar to that of the Pentecostals, but need not necessarily apply to one's own son or to non-Charismatic young people, as we saw a few pages back.

Infidelity: moral deviance answered by prayer and deliverance sessions

Specialized literature on the subject has emphasized²⁹ the emotional, and at times material, support that conversion to Pentecostalism offers women who face problems, be they adultery or the consumption of alcohol, with their spouses. Within our sample study, drug use and particularly alcohol dependence, was mentioned by both male and female respondents more frequently than infidelity as a source of domestic conflict. Nevertheless, several of the women interviewed told us that their first visits to religious communities had been brought on by the extra-marital affairs of their husbands. Again, there were a greater number of Pentecostals who were able to speak of their husbands' deviant behavior. Of the seven women who claimed to have gone through, or were currently dealing with such a situation, five were Pentecostals and only two were Charismatics. Most of the first group were from lower-income backgrounds, while the Charismatics had middle-class origins.

Although the number of Charismatics who admitted having this kind of problem or having had pre-marital sex was smaller than that of the Pentecostals, this doesn't mean that their husbands were necessarily more faithful, or that they themselves had married as virgins. Whereas there were only two male interviewees who admitted having been unfaithful to their wives before converting to the MCCR, in later interviews

with their wives, this fact was never mentioned as a motivating force leading to their joining the movement (one said she had been depressed for several years and the other said she could no longer get along with her husband). By the same token, during one interview, a woman was scolded by her husband because she admitted to having had sex before getting married. This is an indication that the Catholic tradition of censorship and condemnation of deviant moral behavior remains strong, even among followers of the MCCR, and that Pentecostals are more at ease talking about the problems, even very intimate ones, they had faced before conversion. In Gill's view, one of the advantages of Pentecostal beliefs is that it offers an alternative for women to interpret "their experiences under a new light of changed social identity". This perhaps explains the fact that in this group we found a greater number of women who spoke of having had abortions, as we will shortly see - a highly condemned practice in the eyes of neo-traditionalist Christian groups. M.M., 44, a middle-class housewife and worker for the UCKG who attended services at least twice a day, spontaneously told us that she had begun her sex life at fourteen, had had three abortions before getting married and two more after, and had been involved in extra-marital affairs. Hers was the only admitted case of female infidelity within our sample study.

Through both the men who spoke of a polygamous past and the women whose husbands had behaved in such a manner, we came to realize that most men had given up extra-marital relations only at an already advanced age, in general after 50, and only two had been motivated to do so by their own conversions. The more commonly cited reasons of the husband's inability to keep up two relationships, his abandonment by the female lover, and the financial difficulty of maintaining this type of situation were to reinforce the wives' efforts to reestablish the marriage.

We must here call attention to the distinct ways in which Charismatics and Pente-

²⁹BRUSCO, E., BURDICK, J., MARIZ, C. C., PAGE, J. J. and WILLEMS, E., *Op. cit.*

costals explain moral deviance. On the one hand, believers predominantly cite religious arguments to explain the probable reasons for infidelity, homosexuality, and deviant sexual behavior, while, on the other, reveal the influence of social origin and level of schooling. Arguments such as "absence of God", "lack of prayer", and "lack of religion" came up independent of gender, class or educational level. However, answers such as "the influence of demonic forces", "the devil's work", etc... appear more frequently in the popular sector and were much more common among Pentecostals. Explanations based on antagonistic supernatural forces - God and the Devil - are not mutually exclusive. In the Pentecostal view, evil spirits interfere in conjugal life when there is a lack of prayer and dedication to God. However, the lack of a Christian religious life does not necessarily imply that there is a belief in the existence of the devil.

Pentecostals, despite differences in emphasis on one or another of the powers of the Holy Spirit - speaking in tongues, healing, and exorcism - consider deviant behavior, be it sexual or some other vice, as symptomatic of a "spiritual crisis". "Evil spirits" or "demonic forces" act on the individual, destroying the personality. Without being aware of what is happening, this individual begins to lose control, becomes involved in extra-marital relations, spends money and distances himself from his family; or he experiments with promiscuous and "depraved" relations which also place the institution of the family at risk. It was exactly among the more popular groups, where the level of schooling was lower for both sexes, that we found a greater tendency to "blame the devil" for episodes such as extra-marital and homosexual sex. Some middle-class believers also link infidelity and homosexual practice to the devil, but given their higher level of education, it is less common explanation than for those from the lower-income group.

It is important to point out the consequences of this "blaming the devil" for

these types of "moral deviance" for the believer and for the religious institution. On the one hand, the believer need not carry all the blame for his actions, allowing for greater understanding and tolerance on the part of family members and the religious community itself. On the other, it makes the strongness of the institution even further, for if the problem is spiritual, only religion can help to solve it; moreover, it can only be a religion which guarantees deliverance - a religion which can exorcise occult forces. Currently, the denomination which gives most emphasis to the power of the Holy Spirit is, without a doubt, the UCKG. However, we should point out that in the competition for converts, other denominations are now adopting such rituals as the public exorcisms common to the UCKG. Among denominations which have appeared since the UCKG we also see the tendency to liberalize the rules of "classic Pentecostalism" dictating behavior, particularly concerning dress and hair, as well as an effort to institutionalize charisma through the creation of preparatory courses for religious leaders. In other words, the competition between Pentecostal denominations has undermined the academic differentiation between "classic" and "autonomous" Pentecostalism.

In the Charismatic world, where there is less influence from Afro-Brazilian religions, explanations of deviant behavior emphasize the absence of religious values or the submission of these values to those of the secular world. Many of those we interviewed added psychological and sociological arguments to their religious discourse, citing "the individualism of modern societies", "Brazilian macho culture", and "the lack of understanding" of other family members. Of course, just because most of these participants didn't explicitly mention evil influences doesn't mean that Charismatics deny the existence of the devil. Nevertheless, the mere mentioning of the devil when referring to deviant behavior did not eliminate the individual's responsibility for his actions, and was accompanied by a value judgement.

The forms of family planning

The ways in which participants dealt with birth control is also an expression of how the questions of desire and sexual pleasure are addressed by believers in these religious movements. Among our Charismatics, the married women of fertile age and the men whose spouses were in this same phase were, respectively, fourteen and eight in number. Of this total, half claimed to use natural methods, according to Catholic doctrinal orientation and avoided the use of artificial contraceptives. This was the overwhelming preference for men from the popular classes, a fact which may be understood in part by the material difficulties they face which make the limiting of births a necessity; and, in part by the fact that these methods require a period of abstinence which is more easily tolerated by husbands who share the same religious values as their wives. S.V., a thirty-six year-old systems analyst who used the Billings method justified this choice of birth-control thus: "the same problem you have with drinking you have with sex. It's who controls who. Either you are a puppet to your own needs, or you learn to control your own sexual functions. **You just can't be controlled by your own sexual desire.** When you control it, you can use the natural method."

In general terms, participants who employed natural methods of family planning related their choice to the orientation of the Church, making it clear that they were concerned with following the directives of religious leaders, in particular, of the Pope. The similarity between the period of time they had participated in the MCCR and the use of this method appears to confirm the relationship between belonging to a religious group which encourages sanctification - therefore requiring observance to established rules - and the option for this birth-control method.

However, while half of those interviewed who were in the fertile period of life demonstrated this type of concern, there were a significant number who opted for feminine sterilization: no fewer than ten had chosen to have their tubes tied. These

sterilized women were in the 33 to 46-year-old age group and the great majority claimed to have made the decision before joining the MCCR, and after the prolonged use of the birth-control pill, this being the most common of the artificial methods, particularly among members of the middle class. C.P.R., a thirty-eight year-old housewife and mother of three, told us that since she had married, she knew the Church disapproved of artificial methods, but her difficult financial situation forced her to resort to the pill and condoms. It was only when she decided to undergo sterilization that she felt uneasy for disobeying the Pope. She consulted various priests before undergoing surgery and at least three told her that "she ought to be aware of how many children she wanted and could have and that if she wanted to have the operation because of them, there would be no problem." She had the sterilization surgery done before entering the MRCC, but she claims that she feels at peace for having heeded the counsel of the priests. Here we become aware of two levels of orientation within the Catholic Church: official and pastoral discourse, which result, at times, in contradictory positions and concurrent clerical ideologies in relation to birth-control practices. According to specialists³⁰, the doctrine of "responsible parenthood" affirmed in papal documents in the 1960's, particularly in the *Humanae Vitae* (1968) opened up the possibility for members of the Church hierarchy, when counselling individuals, to approve the limitation of births, to a certain extent responding to pressures from believers. The ambivalence of a family theology which, on the one hand tells parents to have only the number of children they can adequately educate, feed and raise with dignity, meaning, of course, to limit the number of births, while at the same time condemns the use of artificial contraceptive measures

³⁰BINGEMER, Maria Clara. Família e Instituição Religiosa: tensões e perspectivas. Paper presented at XIV Encontro Anual da ANPOCS, Caxambu, MG, 1992; PIERUCCI, A. F.. Op. cit.; RIBEIRO, L.. Op. cit..

exhorts priests into greater understanding and mercy toward those who cannot follow these instructions. This, according to Pierucci³¹, results in a casuistic application of the rules on the part of most of the lower clergy, who assume a "liberal and permissive posture" in relation to birth control, principally in the case of the Brazilian poor.

To a certain extent, our research can confirm the pressures put on the clergy who minister to these segments of the population. Among those we interviewed, the only Charismatic women who seemed dissatisfied with the official positions of the Catholic Church were those of lower-income background, confirming the importance of the class variable. The other women who used artificial contraceptives were able to justify their option either because they made it at a time when they were distanced from the Catholic community, or even before entering the MCCR. Exposure to poverty and violence, however, led participants from the popular groups toward opposition and even criticism of the church hierarchy. T.S., wife of an alcoholic and mother of a daughter stated that she had three abortions and that she thinks the Church's disapproval of the pill - which in her opinion is the best birth control method - is out of date. In her own words, "the way things are today, there is no way you want to have a house full of kids. And the sin is that: a house full of kids you can't feed". One other woman besides this one, also from the popular sector, mentioned abortion as an option for avoiding having an unplanned-for child, and according to her testimony, it was just this guilt-laden experience which led her to have her tubes tied. Confession after the decision to use such methods and the search for forgiveness was common among women who were searching to alleviate their feelings of guilt; and, with the exception of abortion, priests proved understanding to the situation of women from this segment of society.

In the Pentecostal universe, the use of artificial contraceptive methods was seen to be much more frequent than among Charismatics. A sole informant, a man affiliated with the Assembly of God Church, was against any form of birth control because of the Biblical passage "suffer the children to come to me" which supposedly exemplifies "the law of God" regarding this matter. Statements from other Assembly of God church-goers show, nevertheless, that at least as far as contraception is concerned, a literal reading of the Bible doesn't seem to be a rule, neither among the leaders nor their congregations. P.P., a deacon age 38, told us that his wife had taken the pill until eventually deciding upon sterilization, and R.D., a 22-year old believer, stood out as the youngest woman we interviewed who had opted for this type of surgery.

The interpretation of the Bible in other Pentecostal groups also tends to be more historical than fundamentalist when the issue is family planning. J.C., a doctor of 44 declared that the pastors and even Bishop Macedo of the UCKG "think that the best thing for a couple is to have two children... First, because the world is over-populated, and secondly because the commandment to grow and multiply came at a time when there was nobody in the world - just Adam and Eve...". The position of leaders of this church, recognizing the financial difficulties of the majority of its believers and respecting the scientifically established differentiation between abortion and contraception, is, according to J.C. quite progressive since "it's much closer to the values of modern society than those of the Catholic Church." In addition to the generalized use of artificial contraception methods, we also found among Pentecostals, evidence of a greater masculine participation in family planning. The only two cases of male sterilization found in this study were among the UCKG believers. Likewise, the majority of informants who mentioned the use of condoms were members of that church. Whereas only one of the married Charismatic women cited the use of this method, among

³¹ PIERUCCI, A. F., *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

Pentecostals, four women and one man affirmed having used them at some point, and in one case, they were the only method ever employed.

Female sterilization surgery also seemed more common in this religious group when we looked at the middle-class segment. Six out of a total of ten women and two out of five men had opted for this method. Of this group only two were no longer fertile at the time of the interview and both had had the operation before their religious conversions. The remaining women were in the 34 to 46-year-old age group. M.H.Q., a 36-year-old housewife, claimed that, contrary to people think, the "believer has a very open mind toward sex" and that it isn't through that "they have sex through the hole in the sheet". Furthermore, she says, "they know that sex is a gift from God... and they use the pill and condoms. Even I had my tubes tied by a doctor from my church."

It is interesting that even when the decision to have children or not was made independent of religion, or was made prior to conversion, all of our participants justified their option by citing the orientations of the Church. In other words, we found here none of the tension between the concrete practice of these believers and orientation of the religious institution that was so present in the case of the Charismatic Catholics who, though having used different forms of birth control, were nevertheless unable to shake their feelings of unease at not being completely in line with church doctrine. In the lower-income group, the number of women with their tubes tied dropped to levels comparable to the Charismatics, though this was certainly due more to the cost of having the operation done than to any negative feeling about it. One of our participants, who was not sterilized, considered it "a blessing from God that" a doctor had tied her granddaughter's tubes free of charge. In this group, the age of sterilized women fell to between 22 and 36 years of age, which calls our attention to the fact that some Pentecostal communities not only orient believers as to family planning, but also, through the solidarity of

the brothers and sisters in faith, often help to raise the necessary funds for the operation.

In the popular segments where average time since conversion was the lowest among all the religions, we also found a greater number of women who had had abortions. Half of the Pentecostals in this social group admitted to having had at least one. They all claimed to have had the abortions prior to their conversions and expressed regret at having done so. Their motivation was always the financial situation they faced, either the unemployment of the spouse or his inadequate salary, and two claimed to have been forced into the decision by their husbands and mothers-in-law, with whom they lived. No male interviewed admitted to his wife having had an abortion.

Conclusion

We began this paper by recounting the feeling of surprise and wonder the researcher felt at the freedom and gaiety of Charismatic women at a worship service in the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro. Our central question would be to investigate to which extent this appreciation of corporal expression in celebrations and religious services, evidenced in both Charismatic as well as Pentecostal circles, was evidence of a change in the evaluation of the corporal dimension of believers and, consequently, in human sexuality itself.

A comparison of Neo-Pentecostal movements within distinct religious traditions - the Charismatic within the Catholic world and the Pentecostal in the Protestant tradition - has shown us that, in spite of the historical hegemony of the Catholic Church, there has been a growing process of "Pentecostalization" in the Brazilian religious arena, where believers have been adopting the practices and forms of religious celebration common to this group. Observations of denominations which are able to fill football stadiums and deactivated movie theatres have turned up changes in the Evangelical universe itself, encouraging criticism from both progressive

Protestant as well as "classic Pentecostal" leaders. The first tend to consider these denominations as "agents of healing", while the second criticize the more liberal, and less restricted ethic they promote. In any case, changes as to dress - tolerance of commonplace clothing used by young people in general: exercise outfits, shorts, sleeveless shirts, etc... - or even a happier and more spontaneous climate in the services are obvious throughout the Pentecostal world.

Our observance of religious services and our interviews with believers made it clear to us that competition in the Brazilian religious field has closed the gap of differences between religious communities, who scramble to copy the elements which attract believers to their competitors, thus reinforcing the tendency toward a homogenization of Christian religious groups. Nevertheless, we also found that for Evangelicals, anybody who goes off the moral track must be suffering from some form of demonic influence over their personality, a view which serves both to promote a more tolerant attitude from the group and to lower the tension and suffering of the transgressors and their families alike. Here, the variables of class and educational level come into play, being that among the more needy and less educated, this ideology holds greater swaying power, causing this population to resort more frequently to the practice of exorcism.

In the case of Charismatics, we found that the Catholic tradition is a weighty one, which forces followers of the movement to deal with the tension between Pentecostal beliefs, and the norms and doctrine of the Catholic Church. In the middle strata, a greater degree of schooling goes hand-in-hand with a desire to preserve status and Catholic identity, making MCCR participants leery of questioning church hierarchy, and causing them to reject demonic influences and public exorcisms. Deviant behavior is strictly reprimanded, and in this sense, Charismatics differ greatly from Pentecostals.

The fact that the Catholic church still won't

condone the use of contraceptives creates another type of tension for followers of the MCCR. Its rejection of birth-control methods expresses the difficulty of the Catholic hierarchy to separate sexuality from procreation, and to consider desire and sexual pleasure in a more favorable light, a position directly opposed to changes in secular culture and advances by minorities. Highly-educated, middle-class Charismatics, though concerned with obedience to the Pope, are torn between following institutional norms on the exclusive use of natural methods of birth control, or to ignoring them, being that this second option normally brings on feelings of guilt. Here, the principle of authority seems to weigh more heavily than the educational level of the believer, who to a certain extent has access to information as to how contraceptives work. The variable of both spouses being active participants in the religious group is also important to this issue, being that the exclusive use of natural methods is more frequent among believers who share religious values with their spouses. For their part, Charismatics from popular segments, though less exposed to information about contraceptives, not only use those that are available to them, but are more willing to criticize the doctrinary positions of the Catholic hierarchy.

Finally, if we are truly witnessing changes in the rituals and celebrations of both Catholic and Evangelical Neo-Pentecostal groups, reflecting a renewed appreciation of gestual and corporal expression, we do not yet believe we can extend these changes to the sexuality in general of these believers without further investigation. For the time being, we can only state that sexuality seems to be stimulated in the second group, where a positive attitude toward sex within the marriage is more evident and less ambiguous than in the Catholic universe. We observe, however, that both groups hold to their condemnation of sexual activity for singles, widows and unmarried persons in general.