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THE PARTICIPATION OF PAN-PROTESTANTISM IN THE PUBLIC ARENA IN BRAZIL. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS¹

Introduction: The Growth of Pan-Protestantism in Brazil

One of the first acts of the Portuguese when they arrived in Brazil in 16th century was the celebration of Mass, and shortly afterwards they named the new-found land “Terra de Santa Cruz” – “Land of the Holy Cross.” Thus, Brazil was born under the sign of the Catholic branch of Christianity, and for three and a half centuries the largest Portuguese colony in the world was under the religious monopoly of Roman Catholicism. It was only in the middle of the 19th century that Protestantism was allowed to be established in Latin American countries. At that time the governments of the new independent republics (a monarchy in the case of Brazil) had an interest in breaking the social and cultural power of Catholicism, because during their struggle for independence the Catholic Church mainly represented the interests of the European colonial powers.²

Since then, non-Catholic expressions of Christianity have experienced a steady growth. First to appear was what some Brazilian religious sociologists call “Immigration Protestantism” – Protestant Christians who came as immigrants and settlers, not as missionaries (e.g., Lutheran Germans). Later there appeared “Mission

1 This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the XXI World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, August 23–29, 2015, at the University of Erfurt, Germany. The author expresses his thanks to CAPES, of the Brazilian Ministry of Education, for granting financial support in attending the aforementioned conference.

2 See for instance Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Breve historia del Protestantismo en América Latina* (México City: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1986).

Protestantism” – those who came with the explicit aim of making converts (e.g., Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians).

The Pentecostals came at the beginning of the late 20th century, starting with Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg, Swedish missionaries who established the Assemblies of God (now one of the largest Pentecostal denominations worldwide) in Brazil, and Luigi Francescon, an Italian missionary who founded the Christian Congregation in Brazil, which today numbers millions of adherents. American missionaries from the Foursquare Gospel Church arrived in the middle of the last century, and during the 1960s Brazilians started their own Pentecostal ministries, with huge success and rapid increase in numbers. The latest chapter in the surprising story of the growth of what I call “pan-Protestantism,” an umbrella term under which every possible and imaginable kind of Protestantism are gathered, is so-called “neo-Pentecostalism,” which had its origins in the last two decades of the 20th century. Neo-Pentecostalism is represented by the mammoth Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, which is present in almost 200 countries;³ other large churches in this field include the World Church of the Power of God, and the International Church of the Grace of God.

As a result of the rapid growth of Brazilian Pentecostalism, Evangelical churches are now present virtually everywhere in Brazil. There is an enormous – and curious – creativity in the naming of their churches. One can find churches with names such as “The Assemblies of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,” “The Boat of Salvation Church,” “The Church of the White Dove,” “The Church of the White Robe,” “The Little Flower of Jesus Evangelical Church,” “The Evangelical Pentecostal Church I Believe in the Bible,” “The Pentecostal Church of the Blue Fire,” to name but a few.⁴

Viewed worldwide, the growth in recent decades of non-Catholic Christian groups, especially in the Southern hemisphere, has been observed by many students of the religious phenomenon, such as Philip Jenkins.⁵ One of the reasons for such exponential growth was and remains a strong commitment to evangelistic proclamation and witness, which according to historian David Bebbington has been a main characteristic of the Evangelical movement since its very beginning in 18th century England.⁶ Indeed, in this regard Brazilians have demonstrated that

3 See R7 Notícias, *Expansão da Igreja Universal pelo mundo já atinge quase 200 países*. <<http://noticias.r7.com/brasil/noticias/expansao-da-igreja-universal-pelo-mundo-ja-atinge-quase-200-paises-20120818.html>> [accessed February 25 2015].

4 See Jabesmar Aguiar Guimarães, *Nomes de Igrejas (Curiosos e Criativos)*. <<http://jabesmar.tempsite.ws/index.php/humor-saudavel/63-nomes-de-igrejas-curiosos-e-criativos>> [accessed 6 March 2017].

5 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity*. 3rd edition (Oxford: OUP, 2011).

6 David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1930s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). See also National Association of Evangelicals, *What is an Evangelical?* <<http://www.nae.net/church-and-faith-partners/what-is-an-evangelical>> [accessed 25 February 2015]. In the North Atlantic sphere (USA, Canada, the British

they are rather good evangelists.⁷ Over the course of a few decades Evangelicals in Brazil, once a tiny and often despised minority, have become a large group with tremendous visibility, especially in the mass media, where they broadcast their message via radio and TV virtually twenty four hours a day every day of the year. There are now more Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians in Brazil than in any country in the world except for China. As a result, Evangelicals in Brazil now have considerable power and influence in society as a whole. All of this makes Brazil a laboratory for the study of these branches of Christianity, including their relationship with society at large, which is the specific point of this article.

There are some questions which arise from this scenario:

- What differences, if any, can be observed in society before and after such meteoric growth?
- What are the major concerns of the religious groups mentioned above regarding social-political questions in the public sphere?
- To focus on a specific test case, what role did Evangelical leaders play during the period of the last Brazilian Presidential elections in 2014?

These questions are concerned with the relationship between Christianity and society. To answer to those questions, it is necessary to consider the theology which informs and guides Evangelicals, as far as their relationship with society is concerned. I therefore begin this paper by presenting a brief typology of the theological orientations of pan-Protestantism in Brazil, with special emphasis on the relationship between various churches (movements) and society. I will divide this typology into time periods, related either to the arrival in the country of a particular form of missionary work, or with the rise of a national Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal church or movement.

The paper itself has two parts, followed by a conclusion. The first part presents the background of how Brazilian Evangelicalism became what it is today. The second part discusses the participation of Evangelical churches in the Brazilian public arena. The conclusion will attempt to present some possible alternatives to the complex mosaic that is Brazilian Evangelicalism, and to its equally complex relation to society as a whole.

Isles and continental Europe) there is a distinct, even sharp, difference between “Evangelicals” and “Protestants.” In Brazil, such a difference is by and large blurred. Perhaps the only true “Protestants” in Brazil, according to this North Atlantic conception, is the large Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), whose headquarter is in Rio Grande do Sul, the southernmost Brazilian state.

7 Concerning the growth of Presbyterianism in Eastern Minas Gerais State in the first half of 20th century, a growth conducted mainly by “lay” people, see Carlo Caldas, *Fé e café: um estudo do crescimento do Presbiteriano no Leste de Minas de 1919 a 1989* (Manhumirim: Didaquê, 1999).

The Origins and Growth of Evangelicalism in Brazil

This first part is subdivided into three parts, each with a brief narrative of the arrival or appearance of Evangelical groups, in Brazil and the main theological features of each periods.

The First Period: The First Missionaries and Their Theology

As has already been mentioned, the first Protestant missionaries to Brazil arrived in the middle of 19th century. Dr. Robert Reid Kalley, a medical missionary and Congregationalist pastor, arrived from Scotland in 1855. He was followed by the Presbyterians (Ashbel Green Simonton in 1859) from the United States, the Methodists (Junius Newman in 1867), the Baptists (William Buck Bagby in 1881) and the Episcopalians (Lucien Lee Kinsolving and James Watson Morris in 1890).⁸

There were, of course, differences in the theological understandings of all these groups. However, there was also a major point of convergence among them; they all conceived the mission of the church to be not only the conversion of individuals, but also to effect positive social transformation. They understood that education was a way of achieving such a goal. Therefore, they were responsible for founding several schools throughout the country, including the Granbery, and Isabella Hendrix (both Methodist schools), many American Baptist Colleges (scattered all over the country), Agnes Erskine, Gammon and Mackenzie colleges (all Presbyterian; Mackenzie eventually became one the largest private universities in the country, with more than 30,000 students).

In this context, it is worth mentioning that these first-generation missionaries had received a thorough theological education. For example, Ashbel Simonton was a graduate from Princeton Theological Seminary, and a former student of the famous theologian Charles Hodge. This first period lasted, by and large, from the middle of 19th century to the first decades of 20th century.

The Second Period: The Independent "Missions of Faith," Para-Church Agencies, and Their Theology

The second period began shortly after the Second World War. This was no longer a period of missionaries sent by ecclesiastical and denominational boards, who came equipped with a solid theological formation, but rather a period of missionaries sent by independent "Missions of Faith" and para-church agencies. By and

⁸ "Anglicans have celebrated their liturgy in Brazil since the beginning of the 19th Century, in many English chaplaincies throughout the country and under the guidance of the Church of England. Those were the first non-Roman churches established in these lands." See Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil, <http://www.ieab.org.br/ieab/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=19&lang=en> [accessed 25 February 2015].

large, they had not received a solid theological education. Their foremost concern was the “salvation of souls,” or “gaining souls for Jesus.” For those missionaries, the mission of the Church consisted in the founding of new churches and increasing the number of their followers. Everything which did not fit such a pattern was considered to be a waste of time, money and energy, and therefore should consequently be avoided.

The period after the Second World War was also characterized by international events, which reinforced a fear of anything that was in any way related to social matters. For instance, in 1949, just four years after Second World War, Mao Tse Tung came to power in China, and in 1951 all Christian missionaries, Catholic and Protestant alike, were expelled from China. As a result, many American missionaries returned to their own country. It was then that they “discovered” Latin America. Here was a mission field in their own backyard, much closer than China, which was on the other side of the planet, and they soon realized that learning Spanish or Portuguese was much easier than learning Mandarin or Cantonese. Subsequently, many of the missionaries who had previously been in China redeployed to various Latin American countries. However, because of their experiences in China, they brought with them a fear—almost paranoia—of issues related to social and political matters. Such issues were understood and referred to as “communist stuff,” “the red danger” or “the threat from Moscow.” These missionaries thus taught their Brazilian converts to think in the same way. As a result, Brazilian Christians came to believe that their responsibility was thus to support their government. This helps to explain what happened some years later, when a right-wing military *coups d'état* took place in almost all Latin American countries, with Brazil being the first in 1964.⁹ When this happened, Evangelical Christians gave their full support to those military governments, ignoring the numerous reports of the violation of human rights.

The Third Period: The Rise of Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil

The third (and final) period stretches broadly from the 1950s to the 1990s. During this period, the growth in what observers have called “the second wave” of Brazilian Pentecostalism resulted primarily from national initiatives, rather than the activity of outside missionary work, which was considerably diminished.¹⁰ The main representatives of this national Pentecostalism (as distinguished from the worldwide Pentecostal denominations founded earlier, such as the International

⁹ For a more detailed exposition of this period see, *inter alia*, Valdir Steuernagel, *Obediência missionária e prática histórica: em busca de modelos* (São Paulo: ABU Editora, 1993).

¹⁰ For an overview of the role of foreign Protestant missionary work in Brazil, see Carlos Caldas, *O último missionário* (“The Last Missionary”) (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 2002).

Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Assemblies of God, and the Christian Congregation in Brazil), were Brazil for Christ Evangelical Pentecostal Church (Igreja Evangélica Pentecostal o Brasil para Cristo), founded by Pastor Manoel de Melo (1929–1990) in 1955, and God is Love Pentecostal Church (Igreja Pentecostal Deus é Amor), founded by the “Missionary” David Miranda (1936–2015) in 1962.

Some years later there came what Anglo-Brazilian sociologist of religion Paul Freston¹¹ has called “Third Wave Pentecostalism.” This branch of Pentecostalism was quite different from the two previous ones. Its main emphasis was on the so-called “Health and Wealth” Gospel, an alternative expression of “Prosperity Theology.” The first of these churches, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, was founded by Edir Macedo in 1977 and is the largest of them all. Soon afterwards came the International Church of the Grace of God, founded by Romildo Ribeiro Soares, Macedo’s brother-in-law. In 1988 Waldemiro Santiago, who was formerly a worker in the UCKG (he was a missionary of that church to Mozambique), founded the World Church of the Power of God—the first successful split in the ICKG (there were several others but all of them failed). These new national churches have shown little concern with theological education or formal preparation for their ministries. It is common to find a kind of syncretistic practice in these churches, a mixture of Umbanda¹² and Pentecostal ways.

In summary, all these efforts taken together helped to produce an impressive numeric growth in pan-Protestantism in Brazil. But the main question—which is the point of this essay—remains to be unanswered: how have Brazilian Evangelicals understood their participation in public life?

The Participation of Evangelicals in Brazilian Public Life

After presenting a brief historical sketch of Brazilian Evangelicalism, it is now time to show how these groups have been involved in Brazilian public life, with special emphasis on political matters. Almost forty years ago, Esdras Borges Costa, a Brazilian sociologist of religion, made this observation in his doctoral dissertation at the University of California in Berkeley:

the political activities of [Brazilian Protestants] and their concern with social problems have been kept within bounds by a strong pietistic, otherworldly orientation. Their ideals and projects for a modern society have been marked by a belief that a puritanical personal conduct is essential as an expression of faith and as a source of social reform, progress and democracy.¹³

11 Freston was responsible for popularizing the ‘wave’ terminology in referring to the different stages of Pentecostalism in Brazil.

12 Umbanda, a kind of Afro-Brazilian religion, is highly syncretistic itself, as it is a combination of traditional African religions combined with folk Catholicism and some elements of French spiritualism.

13 Esdras Borges Costa, “Protestantism, Modernization and Cultural Change in Brazil”, Ph.D. diss. (University of

As a result of the theological concepts they received from American missionaries, Brazilian Protestants' understanding of the Christian mission was often identified with a right-wing politics as represented in the United States by the Republican Party. Consequently, Evangelicals in Brazil have generally not developed a view of mission that includes social justice as an integral part of their Christian calling. Instead, they commonly understood all forms of political participation and involvement to be sinful. As early as 1984, the late Antonio Gouvea Mendonça, a famous Brazilian sociologist of religion, demonstrated this trans-worldliness of the Brazilian Evangelicals.¹⁴ On the other hand, for some time prior to the publication of Mendonça's *O celeste porvir*, the Brazilian Protestant ecumenical movement had already defended the opposite view, i.e. that Christian involvement in social and political areas is an important element of the Christian mission in the world. Despite the presence of this alternate voice, over the years the Ecumenical movement in Brazil has had limited influence on the majority of Christians in pan-Protestant Churches.¹⁵ Instead, fundamentalist Evangelicals, as well as almost all Pentecostals, have tended to see ecumenism and the ecumenical movement as instruments of Satan in the world.¹⁶

Nevertheless, since the beginning of the 1980s, one can observe among mainline Evangelicals the influence of a movement which has begun to make them aware of their social and political responsibility in the world. This is the Lausanne Movement, which produced the Lausanne Covenant, the main expression of what has been called the Theology of Integral Mission. This is theological confession, also conservative in tone, displays a surprising openness, encouraging the involvement of Christians in all spheres of society, not just a participation in "spiritual" matters. According to the Lausanne Covenant, the mission of the church consists of both evangelization *and* social action in society. In Paragraph 5 we read:

5. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having

California, Berkeley, 1979), 5.

14 Antonio Gouvea Mendonça, *O celeste porvir. A inserção do Protestantismo no Brasil* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1984).

15 As for the Ecumenical Protestant movement in Brazil in the last three decades of 20th century see, *inter alia*, Agemir de Carvalho Dias, *O movimento ecumênico no Brasil a serviço da igreja e dos movimentos populares (1954–1990)* (Curitiba: Instituto Memória Editora, 2009); Raimundo Barreto Jun., "The Church and Society Movement and the Roots of Public Theology in Brazilian Protestantism," *International Journal of Public Theology* 6 (2012), 70–98.

16 Regarding to such a biased view of the ecumenical movement in Brazil, see Rubem Alves, *Protestantismo e repressão* (São Paulo: Ática, 1979). This book was republished by Loyola, a Jesuit academic publishing house in Brazil in 2005 under the title *Religião e repressão*. From the same Alves, see also *Dogmatismo e tolerância* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1982).

sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ, they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.

(Acts 17:26,31; Gen. 18:25; Isa. 1:17; Psa. 45:7; Gen. 1:26,27; Jas. 3:9; Lev. 19:18; Luke 6:27,35; Jas. 2:14–26; Joh. 3:3,5; Matt. 5:20; 6:33; II Cor. 3:18; Jas. 2:20)¹⁷.

Nevertheless, the influence of the Lausanne Movement has not been well received by the majority of Brazilian Evangelicals. In the last few years, some fundamentalist Protestants have attacked the Theology of Integral Mission, going so far as to label it a “Marxist Theology.”¹⁸ This is a complex scenario, and one which is difficult to understand for those on the outside.

Brazilian Evangelicals have gradually begun to participate in the public life of the nation in a more active way. The late Robinson Cavalcanti, an Anglican Bishop in Brazil, was the editor of a bi-monthly column in *Ultimato*, a kind of Brazilian *Christianity Today*, in which he defended Christian involvement in social and political issues. Furthermore, in 1986 Cavalcanti published *Cristianismo e política*¹⁹ (*Christianity and Politics*), the very first book written by a Brazilian explicitly defending the participation of Evangelicals in the political arena. This book, which contains a strong biblical component, presents an overview of Church history from the perspective of political involvement in society, along with a theological analysis of political participation. Paul Freston (already mentioned), who is very well known to Brazilian Evangelicals, also published several essays in *Ultimato*, defending a sort of leftist Christian participation in politics. In 1990 the MEP – Movimento Evangélico Progressista (Progressive Evangelical Movement) – was organized as a means to raise the political consciousness of Brazilian Evangelicals. Instead of a view of mission dominated by a platonic “spiritual” view of the “salvation of souls” as the only concern of Christians, MEP stressed the importance of a holistic comprehension of the mission of the church, which also gives importance to what is “material.”

17 Lausanne Movement, *The Lausanne Covenant*. <<http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>> [accessed 12 July 2015].

18 Those who say this show that they never understood the many differences between Liberation Theology and the Theology of Integral Mission.

19 Robinson Cavalcanti, *Cristianismo e política. Fé bíblica e prática histórica* (Campinas: CEBEP, 1986). This book has been republished since then, most recently by *Ultimato* in 2002.

The contributions of Cavalcanti and Freston in *Ultimato* magazine, the work of the MEP and others, such as World Vision,²⁰ helped to open the eyes of some Brazilian Evangelicals and Pentecostals to the importance of a broad, this-worldly understanding of the mission of the church. These efforts were oriented by a conservative theology, which at the same time one is sensitive to social matters. This openness led to a theology very distant from fundamentalist theology in Brazil, which tends to be right-wing, and which never allows for involvement in political and social issues. The work undertaken by Brazilian Evangelicals of problematization and conscientization (to use the famous categories of Paulo Freire in his *magnum opus*, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*²¹), by thinkers such as Freston and Cavalcanti, was thus met by strong resistance and opposition from extreme right-wing Evangelicals, who labeled them as “socialists,” or even “Marxists,” in order to diminish the influence of the theology of a mission open to social and political matters. This kind of behavior, typical of the fundamentalist ethos, argued that the Theology of Integral Mission and Liberation Theology are simply minor variations of each other, and that both are instruments of a Marxist conspiracy to eradicate Christianity. Many of these critiques are very harsh, and they are conducted without observing the basic steps of legitimate academic procedures.²²

The main fundamental group of these Christians, formed by some Mainline Protestants (especially Presbyterians) and some Evangelicals (mainly Baptists), who identify themselves as “neo-Calvinists,” represents a new actor on the stage of the already complex drama of non-Catholic participation in Brazilian society. Their unofficial headquarters is in São Paulo, but they have “spearheads” in other important cities such as Belo Horizonte and São José dos Campos. They present themselves as the only ones with a true and orthodox theology, and their focus is on attacking Liberation Theology and the Theology of Integral Mission movements and their adherents, through an extensive use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs). Their program is allegedly based on Abraham Kuyper’s understanding of Calvinism and politics, and their understanding of Kuyper serves as the theoretical basis for their critique of everyone who does not accept their version of “the truth.” In practice, this declared commitment to “truth” is expressed by condemning the theological movements of (Latin American) Liberation Theology, Theology of Integral Mission and the more recent (in the Brazilian context) Public

20 At the beginning of the 1980s, the Brazilian office of World Vision published several of the Lausanne Documents in Portuguese, thus helping to popularize the Theology of Integral Mission in Brazil.

21 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000).

22 For examples of such attacks on the Theology of Integral Mission, and Latin American Theologies as a whole see, *inter alia*, Julio Severo, *Comentários, artigos e notícias do Brasil e do exterior*. <<http://juliosevero.blogspot.com.br/>> [accessed 14 July 2015]; *Discernimento Cristão*. <<https://discernimentocristao.wordpress.com/tag/movimento-evangelico-progressista/>> [accessed 14 July 2015].

Theology. This type of attitude—which does not acknowledge the “other,” and consists of endless talking but never really listening to what the other side has to say—is typical of a fundamentalist ethos of these Brazilian neo-Calvinists. Their main criticism is that Liberation Theology, the Theology of Integral Mission and Public Theology are “leftist theologies,” because (it is alleged) they all use Marxism to interpret reality. The irony is that they while they claim they are not supporters of right-wing politics, their position on such controversial matters such as abortion, LGBT rights, the death penalty, and Neoliberal Capitalism are all characteristic of a right wing political parties.²³

The Dark Side of the Participation of Evangelicals in the Brazilian Political Arena

As seen above, there are generally two main understandings among Evangelicals and Mainline Protestants in Brazil regarding participation in the public arena. The first group, most notably represented by the neo-Calvinists, seem convinced that they are the only correct, orthodox theologians in the world.²⁴ The second group has several branches, including the Theology of Integral Mission, Liberation Theology and Public Theology.²⁵ But there is also a third aspect. Many Evangelicals, especially among the Pentecostals, simply ignore these theological disputes, and enter the political arena by running for public office in elections at all levels (municipal, state and national). Since these individuals come from large Pentecostal churches, it is not difficult for them to win elections; indeed, many pastors instruct the members of their congregations on which candidates they should vote for. Many of these candidates use names such as “Pastor So and So.” The word “Pastor,” used as a title before a candidate’s name, has a very strong emotional appeal to many *crentes* (“believers”), of in many cases serves almost as a guarantee of victory in public elections.²⁶ The presupposition is that if a candidate is a Christian (which in this case means a member of a Pentecostal or Evangelical church), then [s]he will be good as a politician, because [s]he has internal guidance from the Holy Spirit, which the non-believers do not possess. Therefore, it is assumed, [s]he will be better as a politician than a non-believer.

23 Some blogs publishing the work of these so-called defenders of Christian orthodoxy and strong opponents of Theology of Integral Mission, Public Theology and Liberation Theology are: Guilherme de Carvalho, <<http://ultimato.com.br/sites/guilhermedecarvalho/>> [accessed 18 July 2015], Mídia Sem Máscara, <<http://www.midiasemmascara.org/artigos/religiao.html>> [accessed 18 July 2015].

24 This group will be discussed in the next part of this section.

25 By grouping these theologies together under one umbrella, I am not denying that there are differences between them.

26 To be fair, it is necessary to remember that not only Evangelicals do this: there are also some examples of Catholic candidates who do the same (“Vote for Father so and so...”).

As one might expect, the practical consequences of such practices are not always positive. There are many accounts of Evangelical politicians in Brazil being involved in major scandals, related, for example, to the inappropriate use of public money or the buying of votes.²⁷ In addition, politicians who won elections due to the votes of their fellow church members, who in turn voted under the orders of their pastors, all too often act in the interests of their congregations, rather than that of society as a whole. The result is a relationship based on patronage, and often it seems that the only goals these politicians seek to achieve are those which will benefit their churches and/or their personal ministries. It is regrettable that they use the labels of *Evangelical* or *Christians* merely for the good of their own church, and not for the good of the people, e.g. by introducing social reforms which would benefit those at the bottom of society. A major contributing factor to this situation is that these “Christian” politicians are unaware of the long history of Christian involvement in politics, which has been marked by a search for the *commonwealth*,²⁸ and lack a sound political education from a biblical, historical and theological perspective.²⁹

To sum up this section, during the last few decades we have seen Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Neopentecostal and/or Mainline Protestant church members running for public office as congressmen, senators, state governors and even President of the Republic. These are specific attempts, and they are acting almost as “lone rangers” in the political field. In doing so, some demand allegiance from their fellow church members, but others do not. We have also noted that members of Evangelical churches generally enter politics as representatives of their churches, not of the people or society.

The Brazilian Presidential Election of 2014

As an example of how this works out in practice, it is time to turn our attention to our case study, i.e. the Brazilian presidential election of 2014, with a special

27 Currently in Brazil, Petrobrás (the largest state enterprise in the country) has been the subject of many accusations of corruption, and more recent reports state that some very well-known Evangelical politicians have received bribes from businessmen of smaller enterprises which perform outsource work for Petrobrás: Gospel, *Parlamentares da bancada evangélica aparecem como recebedores de doações de empresas investigadas no escândalo da Petrobrás*. <<http://noticias.gospelmais.com.br/parlamentares-bancada-evangelica-escandalo-petrobras-67548.html>> [accessed 14 July 2015].

28 A few of the outstanding representatives of this tradition are: British abolitionist politician William Wilberforce (1759–1833), an Evangelical Anglican, who eventually succeeded in his political struggle in the British Parliament for the abolition of the slave trade; Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), the Dutch theologian who served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands; Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), the German Lutheran pastor and theologian, who while never a politician as such, took a courageous part in the political and social struggles of his day by defending the rights of minorities (in his context, the Jews), and who was eventually sentenced to death for his participation in the failed assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler; the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King (1929–1968), the great leader and champion of civil rights, who in his struggle against the violation of human and civil rights for black people in America, combined a powerful and deeply biblical Christian prophetic ministry with a policy of passive resistance.

29 See footnote 18 above.

emphasis on the part played by Evangelical politicians and the Evangelical leadership. Brazilian elections for major positions are held on a system of *turns*: a candidate needs more than 50 percent of the votes to win the election in the first round. There were three main candidates in the first round: Dilma Rousseff, of Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, Labor Party), who was the incumbent President running for reelection, Aécio Neves, of Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB, Brazilian Socialist Democratic Party, which happens to be “the mortal enemy” of PT) and Marina Silva, of Partido Socialista Brasileiro (PSB, Brazilian Socialist Party). Marina Silva deserves some attention: she had been a candidate for Partido Verde (PV, Green Party) four years earlier. Marina is a very interesting political character: she is a woman, she is black, and she comes from a very poor background. When she was younger she worked as a housemaid, she was illiterate until she was eighteen, and she was a very active member of the Ecclesial Basic Communities of Catholic Church, which was (is) a Liberation Theology oriented movement. However, she had a personal Evangelical experience of “conversion,” and so she became a member of the Assemblies of God Church. She became the natural successor and political heir of former President Lula.³⁰ In his first term, President Lula chose Marina as Minister of the Environment, owing to her involvement in ecological causes. But there was a conflict between the two women — Marina and Dilma — and President Lula took the side of Dilma, eventually nominating her as his candidate for the Presidency in the next election (2010). Marina, who twice tried to become President, and lost twice, never based her campaign on the fact that she was a member of the largest Evangelical Pentecostal church in the country, which has about 15 million members.

Another key character in the confusing arena of Evangelicals and politics in Brazil is the highly controversial Pastor Silas Malafaia.³¹ He is very well known nationwide, thanks to his constant presence on TV talk shows and his own TV program. He is an eloquent speaker, bold, even aggressive, and he is the self-nominated champion of the rights of the “Christian family.” He represents a sort of “Moral Majority” in Brazil. During the last presidential election, he was one of the bitterest enemies of the PT and President Dilma. But his attacks were not based on political or economic issues, but rather on questions related to the rights of homosexuals.³² Malafaia has now become a kind of pop star in Brazil, who is loved by millions

³⁰ Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, known as Lula, served as President of Brazil from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2010.

³¹ Silas Malafaia’s official website: <http://www.vitoriaemcristo.org/_gutenweb/_site/gw-pr-silas-detalle/?cod=406> [accessed 18 July 2015].

³² The question of the rights of homosexuals has been one of great tension as far as Evangelicals and politics in Brazil is concerned. Related to this see Christina Vital, and Paulo Victor Leite Lopes, *Religião e política. Uma análise da atuação de parlamentares evangélicos sobre direitos das mulheres e de LGBTs no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Heinrich Böll, Instituto de Estudos de Religião, 2012).

and hated by millions. What no one can deny is his political ability to influence so many people in Brazil, and to tell them to “vote for X” or “vote for Y.” This is a very delicate and dangerous situation, especially because Malafaia himself has no social project. This kind of messianic project based on a personality cult is always dangerous in the political field.

Conclusion

In these final remarks, I will present a blend of sociological and theological analyses of the complex picture of Evangelicals and politics in Brazil. My first observation is that the political influence of the Evangelicals, Mainline Protestants, Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals in Brazil has received the attention of many scholars during the last few years.³³ These religious groups have strengthened their importance in the public arena in the last few decades. The predominant tendency of Evangelicals is to adopt a right-wing political bias and, consequently, to support public policies which are traditionally defended by right wing parties. There is no agreement among them, no common agenda for the public good. In theory, there is a *promise* of the great benefits which Evangelicals could bring to the country, but what we see them pursuing today is almost always their own personal advantage, and not the good of society.

Due to influence of a sort of “Dominion Theology” of a Pentecostal style, i.e. the belief that Christians should govern a nation, and/or that every nation on Earth must be governed according to Christian law, many Evangelicals in Brazil feed the messianic dream that the “salvation” (in every possible meaning of the word) of the country lies in having Christian (i.e. “Evangelical”) leaders occupying key roles in the higher spheres of society.³⁴ According to these people, all the problems in Brazil will be solved when an Evangelical will be president. This is a dangerous, naive understanding of what being a Christian is all about, and of what should be the true role of Christians in society. Although this attempt to resurrect the medieval model of *Christendom* is a great temptation to Evangelicals in Brazil, they need to understand that Christian life is not one of power and influence, but one of service—especially, as has already been mentioned, service to the weakest and

33 *Inter alia*, Simone R. Bohn, “Evangélicos no Brasil. Perfil socioeconômico, afinidades ideológicas e determinantes do comportamento eleitoral,” *Opinião Pública* 10.2 (October 2004), <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0104-62762004000200006&script=sci_arttext> [accessed 19 July 2015]. Eduardo Lopes Cabral Maia, “Os evangélicos e a política,” *Em tese. Revista Eletrônica dos Pós-Graduandos em Sociologia Política da UFSC* 2.2 (August-December 2006), 91–112, <<https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/emtese/article/viewFile/13538/12403>> [accessed July 19 2015].

34 For the time being there are no academic studies about this Brazilian Evangelical theocratic dream, but it is quite clear that it is a Brazilian version of the American *Christian Reconstructionism* of the late Calvinist theologian Rousas John Rushdoony (1916–2001), but curiously enough, with a strong Pentecostal accent! For a critical appraisal of Dominion Theology in an American context see, *inter alia*, Bruce Barron, *Heaven on Earth? The Social and Political Agendas of Dominion Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

most vulnerable members of society. Brazilian Evangelicals have a great potential to do good for society, but they need to overcome the temptation of establish an Evangelical theocracy in the country. As Jesus Christ himself said, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45 ESV).

The Participation of Pan-Protestantism in the Public Arena in Brazil. Introductory Remarks

Abstract

Brazil, the world's fifth population and the sixth wealthiest nation (in 2014), is a society where religion still has a great influence. In recent decades, the growth of non-Catholic Christianity (Mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Charismatics, Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostal) has been observed by many students of the worldwide religious phenomenon, such as Philip Jenkins. With such an enormous growth in numbers, the participation of these groups in Brazil's public life is unavoidable. This paper attempts to outline an introduction to this broad topic to a wider external public, and will try to answer such questions as: what are the major concerns of the aforementioned religious groups, as far as social-political questions are concerned? How did their leaders operate during the period of the last Presidential polls? The main hypothesis is that the theological "credenda" of the group guides its social and political "agenda" in Brazilian society.