

CHURCHES, SECTS, AND AGENCIES:

ASPECTS OF POPULAR ECUMENISM

In the final pages of Chapter V of *Afro-Brazilian Religions* Roger Bastide sees, at a given moment in the socio-religious evolution of Brazil, a process of social disorganization which in its extent affects not only blacks but also poor white nationals and stranded immigrants.* As generator of a "social marginalization," this process could only be the passage through "a moment of transition" characterized by "the exaggerated speed of change in the country."¹ According to Bastide, an "organic period" follows: with the "proletarianization of the blacks, the assimilation of the immigrants, the general rise in the standard of living of the masses, other phenomena of cultural and social reintegration will appear."² On the religious level the "spiritism of *umbanda*" is the expression of this new phase.

Umbanda represents the passing of the moment of disinte-

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¹ Roger Bastide, *Les Religions Afro-Brésiliennes*, Paris, P.U.F., 1960, p. 421. Or in the Brazilian edition, *As Religiões Africanas no Brasil*, São Paulo, Livraria Pioneira Editore, 1971, p. 417.

² *Ibid.*

gration during which traditional rites had been simplified: the priest had yielded to the healer and the faithful to the client. The *orixás*,* abandoning the *terreiros*,* had opened the way for the *encantados*,* the *caboclos** and *africanos*;* certain entities, such as the *exus** and the *eguns** had become significantly predominant. Thus an evolution which had started from traditional sources, Yoruban and Dahomeyan, ended in the *macumba* of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In the beginning, the controlled trance; later, the trance as expression of the libido of the macumbeiro.

At first, religious practices, a means of social control and an instrument of solidarity and communion; finally, magic rather than religion. And with magic came the exploitation of the participants, relaxation of morals, and crime.³ In fact—if we discount Bastide's optimism, which is probably a reflection of an accumulation of events in the '50's—we see him led to a conception of the *umbanda* as the expression of the beginning of an "organic period" and at the same time the strongly negative character of his evaluation of the magical tendencies of the transition period, his analysis, suggests the need to substitute sociological approaches for ethnological approaches which in their ensemble would take into account the religions of what he calls a "multiracial people."

Far from witnessing the overcoming of moments of crisis and disintegration, we see the persistence of conditions of insecurity, penury and disorganization, and even see them worsen. Although they are not always confirmed with the same intensity and are not evenly distributed, they are endemic characteristics of the development of the Brazilian type of capitalism, a constant, in a way, in our urban and industrial way of life. At the same time, the preexisting modalities of Pentecostalism and devout Catholicism acquire new characteristics. It seems that the use of the services of *umbanda* has spread intensively, reaching vast sectors of the middle classes. Religious and magical practices of Japanese origin have appeared and have been rapidly propagated. Furthermore, it is not rare that the holders of magico-religious powers in groups with doctrines as far apart as Pentecostalists, umbandists and

* See Glossary at the end of this article.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 397-418 (French text) or pp. 395-418 (Brazilian text).

Catholics use similar techniques to comply with the demands of their followers.

All this makes us think of a growth in clientele that under certain aspects is indicative of a breaking-up of old religious systems, since it is rarely presented as exclusivist or sectarian; indeed, the clientele is offered goods and services adjusted to certain exigencies, tending to conform to types of action which are almost like those of business and presenting differences in labels and packaging rather than in product.

* * *

In this work we would like to present the results of our observations on what we believe these new tendencies to be, so as to suggest later some possible directions for sociological analysis.

THE PENTECOSTALISM OF DIVINE HEALING

In a certain sense, all Pentecostalism is of *divine healing*. Ever since the study made by Beatriz Muniz de Souza⁴ published in 1969 this characteristic of Pentecostalism has been recognized as an integral part of its practice and fundamental to its doctrine. In the same study the author also points out the importance given to healing in congregations which she considers as tending toward the *sect* type, in which for example we find signs on the door of the meeting place announcing "daily prayers for the sick,"⁵ contrary to those which tend toward the *church* type.⁶ In addition, the techniques of the large gatherings in public squares, movie theaters and stadiums—associated by the author with the sect type⁷—is closely associated with divine healing and becomes less important as the movement settles down and gains stability.⁸ Since the time of the enquiry from which we quote here, the use of the radio as a vehicle for their messages by almost all of the

⁴ Beatriz Muniz de Souza, *A Experiência da Salvação, Pentecostais em São Paulo*, São Paulo, Livraria Duas Cidades, 1969.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 100 and 108.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 111 and 118.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-120.

Pentecostal congregations studied has also been noted.⁹ The exceptions are the Christian Congregation of Brazil and some less important groups, these latter abstaining, we assume, not because of doctrine, as in the first case,¹⁰ but because they do not have sufficient means. Although the public existence of *healing by radio* is not expressly mentioned, there is a reference to "special prayers" which were solicited and broadcast in the programs of the church, "Brazil for Christ." The same idea was already present, at least according to the deposition of a female believer (connected with a church, not with a sect) that healing "is something like telepathy. It is the transmission of a power and faith which the individual receives, and he is healed."¹¹ The same is true of the idea of a "current" of prayer and faith as well as that of the practice of blessing clothing or objects, proper to sects and not to churches.¹² Finally, the author cites cases of small congregations which, even so, reach "an important segment of the population through the preaching of their leaders on the radio, in public squares or in movie theaters,"¹³ suggesting the existence of small active nuclei surrounded by a large and fluctuating following.

Now in our opinion, these tendencies are accentuated in the most recent Pentecostal groups. Starting from a hypertrophy of divine healing and dependent on this practice, gatherings have gained major importance and have adopted a style which has reinforced preexisting characteristics. The use of the radio as a vehicle of evangelistic messages of conversion gives way to its use as a means of healing. The belief in the efficacy of prayers and blessings broadcast over the radio is spread by the missionaries themselves, who admit the effects of a curative *vis* transmitted to persons and objects by its waves. Expressions such as "a powerful current of prayer" are used.

The power of the "two or three gathered together in My Name" (Matt. XVIII: 19) may be multiplied when crowds are united in listening to the radio or in stadiums. Finally, the confessional heterogeneity of the masses who assemble is expressly

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 50. Cf. also p. 140.

recognized by the leaders, who lessen their emphasis on conversion and minimize their polemic ardor against competitive beliefs.

TWO ASSEMBLIES OF DIVINE HEALING

Thousands of people gathered in the gymnasium of the municipal sports center of Curitiba in October, 1976, for a meeting announced over the radio several weeks before. They were not there to hear a great preacher but to benefit from the presence of L. C., a famous "man of God." Missionaries are often referred to this way because through their continual and persistent publicity and due to a no less important activity, they achieve a reputation for being of great power; they present themselves as those whom "God through his gifts has raised up so that they may pray according to the divine revelations of the Holy Spirit."

For more than an hour on the established day, before the arrival of the missionary himself, his assistants entertained the crowd with hymns,¹⁴ prayers and brief exhortations. The general atmosphere was not at all that of contrition. While the people freely moved about, chose their seats, bought "evangelical articles" (records, Bibles, various printed matter) in the booths provided for the purpose, the employees of the organization prepared the gymnasium. They installed sound equipment, wired off an area in the center of the gymnasium and set up the platform from which the missionary would speak. Around one o'clock L. C. entered the gymnasium where he was greeted by loud applause. He was accompanied by his wife and an elderly woman. Three soldiers of the state militia served him as guard.

The first hour of the meeting was entirely devoted to the collection of money for financing the radio broadcasts presented by the church. There are twenty-five in all, spread throughout several states (São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Paraná) and one minute of broadcasting costs ten cruzeiros, according to information supplied by L. C. After an introduction in which he appealed to the generosity of the public, the missionary, assuming an attitude and adopting a tone of voice appropriate to public evangelical prayers, "addressed himself to God." The main theme

¹⁴ Frequent during the meeting. At the entrance the public could buy mimeographed copies of the words.

of his prayer was the invoking of divine protection for the radio programs, which he referred to as "vehicles of blessing." Turning again to the audience L. C. asked, "Who has already received a blessing by radio?" Many raised their hands. And then, "Who is disposed to make a great offering of 100 cruzeiros? This is the price of ten minutes of broadcasting..." Ten offerings were announced here and there in the crowd and collected by the assistants scattered throughout the gymnasium and recognizable by their uniforms. Then the sums asked for in each new appeal were continuously lowered while the number of solicited donors increased, so that the *quantum* which was to be collected was kept constant. The demand could have been for as little as five cruzeiros. Afterward came the free offering, collected by the assistants who passed among the people so as to obtain the contribution of those who had not yet given anything. This first part of the meeting ended when three men carried the money out in a big sack similar to those banks use.

From the beginning of the assembly, or more precisely, from the arrival of the missionary, crises of possession had begun to appear. In the middle of the audience or near the wired-off enclosure, here and there in the stands, people fell, struggling convulsively. At first defended by those who were with them or by other persons nearby, they were quickly seized by the assistants of the missionary's organization, and put into the enclosure where they remained under surveillance. Some fought, others screamed. Possessed women, noticeably more numerous, were controlled by uniformed deaconesses who acted with assurance and revealed physical strength and know-how. Deacons took care of the men. In both cases deacons energetically conjured against the evil spirits, as well as using force. Women were immediately wrapped in a sort of heavy, thick cloth apron having two long bands which served to shackle the most agitated limbs. It should be noted that this material was already stacked near the platform before the meeting began.

Although the crises of possession were the crucial point of the gathering, its dramatic high point, in a way, the strong impact on the crowd made by the first cases did not last long. The agitation and noise of the possessed became a normal part of the meeting, and the interest aroused by the spectacle diminished.

While several of the possessed screamed and others rolled on the ground and, managing to escape from their fetters ran around the enclosure, L. C. continued to speak, the choir sang, the collection continued. At a certain point the missionary, in a superior and self-assured tone, remarked to the new and intimidated spectators, "Do not be afraid. This is only the beginning." According to him, more violent manifestations would follow, when the demons would have to face the power of God.

Before going on to the part of the meeting devoted to healing, the missionary read from his Bible the Gospel account of the healing of the blind man of Jericho, and asked all those who had brought "the sword of the believer" to read with him. The very simple style of the sermon included the use of certain rhetorical questions, such as, "Does Jesus have the power to heal?" Hearing the positive response of the crowd, the missionary proclaimed, "Thanks be to God! Hallelujah Jesus!" Then he made a brief commentary in which he emphasized that if Jesus could heal then, he could still heal now, today.

In addition to the special prayer relative to the collection of money, there were three others intended respectively for the possessed, people afflicted with bodily ailments, and those who were holding clothing, objects, photographs, and so on, belonging to themselves or to absent persons.

There was no clear distinction in the prayers between the appeals in favor of the "victims of witchcraft" and those concerning the "possessed." The question, "Who among you is victim of macumba?" was asked rhetorically, and it was often followed by an aggressive reference to the *umbanda*. "It is there that people can learn witchcraft." On the contrary, the attitude toward Catholics ("our Catholic brothers") was one of complacent superiority. In general, however, the missionary's speech was not polemic.

To return to the possessed: although some thwarted and rapidly subdued seizures could be detected, even outside the wired-off enclosure, those who were led to the place of healing were not numerous with respect to the large number of people present. In spite of a certain fluctuation (some of those who were conducted into the enclosure left it, calmed, even before the

special prayer, while others entered), at a given moment no more than twenty women and four men could be counted.

Inserted between the different parts of the meeting there was a pre-election interlude. A candidate for the municipal elections and his father mounted the platform, political men belonging to the Arena (Alliance for National Renewal) and known in Curitiba. At the entrance to the gymnasium electoral agents of the MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement) distributed propaganda about their candidates. The two men presented themselves as *believers* and praised L. C. The latter, while speaking, did not directly ask for votes. He contented himself with announcing that the candidate was a defender of the cause of the church and a person having influence with the authorities. It was he, the candidate, and his father who had gotten permission for the use of the gymnasium, as well as the sound equipment which was being used for the meeting. Then, after having exchanged several words with the politicians, the missionary announced over the microphone that he had been informed of the probable presence in the audience of a DOPS (Department of Political and Social Order, political police) delegate and invited him to come forward. But he either was not there or did not want to accept the invitation. Apropos of this interval of electoral propaganda we noted the muttered protest of a member of the audience: "That shameless N. [here he gave the name of the candidate] comes here to campaign for votes!"

The last forty minutes of the meeting were devoted to the traditional appeals for a new life through the Gospel, and those who "had chosen Jesus," responding to the invitation of the missionary threw away their cigarettes and approached the platform. L. C. again took up the theme of the blind man of Jericho and insisted on the association between *healing* and *salvation*. He hoped to be able to say, like Jesus, to those who had been cured, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

At the end of the meeting, after the departure of the missionary and as the gymnasium emptied, numerous sick people, whose physical defects were often quite visible, were carried or pushed in wheelchairs. They were the negative counterpart of those who had left their crutches with the missionary, after being judged to be in a condition to do without them. One

last case of possession, completely outside the hour for exorcism, could still be observed as a woman in prey of a violent seizure began to run, bringing on the intervention of the assistants who had just begun to relax.

Finally we report an episode which appeared especially significant to us, even though it was only a limited incident and had slight repercussion. Having entered the enclosure reserved for the possessed and other people in search of healing, a woman violently insulted and shoved aside a deaconess who was attempting to treat her as possessed by putting a strait jacket on her. Unsuccessful, the employee called a deacon who had no better luck . . . Containing his exasperation and after having energetically exhorted the demon who, according to him, was acting through the woman, hearing himself answered in foul language, he commented in the hearing of the nearest audience members, "The Devil tries to deceive us by going so far as to deny that he is the Devil!" The incident concluded when the police, called by the missionary's assistants, arrested the possessed (or pseudo-possessed) woman and took her off to a DOPS car which was at the entrance of the Gymnasium. A certain malaise could be seen among the directors of the meeting. In fact, the missionary's wife, leaving the platform, approached the area where this tumult was occurring and, visibly annoyed, tried to find out what was happening.

The second meeting of divine healing which we are going to describe took place at Osasco in August, 1976 and was conducted by a different missionary, the head of a rival church. It was in a slightly different style from the one described above.

For several days the following message had been broadcast, inserted into a series of religious programs which fill the morning hours of a radio station in São Paulo:

"Miracles, healing and salvation through the power of God. The chosen town: Osasco. The day: August 7, at 6 p.m. Place: Independence Gymnasium (President Altino). And who is going to pray for revelation? The missionary V.R. And this festival of hymns of praise will be brightened by the presence of the singers Josué Barbosa Lira, Osvaldo Nascimento, the Oliveira sisters and also the duo, "The Messengers of Christ." The past, present and future through the prophecies of the prophet Geraldo. And at the end of the evening God

our Father will give His blessing. And the Divine Holy Spirit will spread its fire. And Jesus Christ will bring you salvation.”

In fact, on the day and at the appointed hour a crowd as large as that of Curitiba assembled in the stadium. As had been announced, it was a festival in which, to the joyful part of hymns and music, was added the dramatic part of exorcism and the serious part of prophecy.

The meeting began around six o'clock with the presentation, in the style appropriate to “shows,” of the first Gospel singers, accompanied by a small orchestra using electric guitars. It should be noted that this initial show, which lasted until about 7:30, was directly associated with the promotion of certain singers, some of whom were already known to at least a part of the audience and whose records were sold up and down the ramps of the stadium. During this presentation, only singers, musicians, announcers and those in charge of the sound system were on the raised platform—actually more a stage than a platform.

Once this part of the program had ended, the central figure of the festival entered: the missionary V. R. Greatly at ease in the handling of large crowds, V. R. appeared in a silver lamé jacket and rapidly took over the meeting. Contrary to the first meeting we described, it is not so easy to describe V. R.'s behavior. Using, *mutatis mutandis*, techniques proper to a master of ceremonies he presented a succession of short speeches accompanied by exuberant bodily movement, treating—in a rather obvious manner—the usual themes of divine healing. As it was not possible for us to record his words we give here some passages from another speech broadcast by the same missionary:

“The sovereign name of the Lord be glorified and exalted. Listener, you who have heard the Gospel, the “Zeal of the Gospel” [allusion to a record heard some moments earlier] with José and Damião. In a moment I will be praying for you. I will be asking the blessing of the Lord, I will be asking the salvation of the Lord for you, I will be asking, I will be praying that God will bless you, that God will give you the grace to receive His blessing. Open your Bible!”

After reading three verses referring to the resurrection of Lazarus, the missionary went on:

This same Jesus, He has not changed. He is the same today. He is the same tomorrow. He will be the same eternally. He is going to bless you now. It is enough to believe, it is enough to have confidence...

In the stadium speeches similar to these were interspersed with appeals, sympathetic allusions to the great crowd gathered there,¹⁵ singing by the choir accompanied by rhythmic hand-clapping. These—and here let us remark in passing—keeping a “square” rhythm, with no syncopation, no swing. The numerous young people present never let themselves use body movements except those of the arms and hands. Perhaps in Brazil some other rhythm, that of certain Gospel songs of Mahalia Jackson, for example, might have presented the risk of slipping into a profane demonstration, to be especially feared for what it might mean in loss of identity.

A greater seriousness appeared when it came to the collection of money necessary to cover the expense incurred for the meeting—around 25,000 cruzeiros. At that moment the passage from openly familiar language to that of prayer was rapid. The discourse went spontaneously and fluently from one level to another. And the collection was made by the assistants, who with heavy cloth sacks went up and down the ramps of the stadium.

It was possible to grasp a clear meaning for two long prayers. At a given moment, adopting an impressive attitude, V. R. prayed, asking the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Elias, to show his power over the *pombagiras* * and *exus*. May those evil spirits appear *now* and may they, vanquished, free the victims of witchcraft and macumba. This signal unleashed a series of trances in the audience. The loud cries of the possessed were added to the Hallelujahs, Glorias and Glossalalia of the audience¹⁶ as well as to the final sentences of the thundering oration. As at the meeting at Curitiba the assistants located at strategic points in the stands ran quickly in the direction of the agitation in order to capture the possessed and lead them to the

¹⁵ It should be noted that V. R. addressed himself to his “Catholic brothers, spiritist brothers, Evangelical brothers.” We believe the reference to spiritists was a euphemism for umbandists.

¹⁶ Also noted in part of the public present at Curitiba.

area at the foot of the stage. In a short time men and women were thus prostrate on the floor of the gymnasium, some very agitated, others inert and seemingly unconscious.

For several minutes, acting like someone who feels himself possessed by the Spirit, V. R. announced his "divine revelations," that is, the perception given him of conditions of pain and extreme anguish in the audience. This was done with precision, as he indicated the place where the afflicted person was and his particular ailment.¹⁷ He even declared that he saw a light glimmering up and down the ramps. It was then that the designated people, as well as all those who were "infirm, paralytic, deaf, bewitched, troubled with problems, drugged, cancerous, tuberculous, those who suffer from nerves, those who have heart trouble"¹⁸ and those who were disposed to do so descended to the center of the stadium.

The second long prayer concerned this mass of suffering beings gathered at his feet. But if there were stubborn cases he came down from the stage and by the laying on of hands accompanied by an energetic reprimand he made a final effort to overcome the Evil One.

As at Curitiba, a political intermission also occurred in Osasco. Feigning surprise, the missionary announced the presence in the audience of the mayor of the town and invited him to come to the stage. Accepting the invitation, the mayor addressed the audience, calling them his brothers and declaring that he would lend them the stadium whenever they needed it. The public also learned that he was not only in politics but was the composer of gospel songs.

So ended, around nine o'clock, the part of the meeting in which the missionary was the central figure. The announcer took over the microphone, the singers returned, the choir sang, V. R., having taken off his silver lamé jacket, discreetly went backstage. In a few minutes one of the attractions announced for the evening slowly made his appearance. He came from a sort of small loge located in a more elevated position with regard to the stage. It was the "prophet Geraldo from Itaquaquecetuba." He solemnly descended the stairs, assisted by two young girls carrying trays of lighted

¹⁷ Cf. Beatriz Muniz de Souza, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

¹⁸ Text of a publicity poster put out by V. R.

candles. He was dressed more as a priest than a prophet, wearing a handsome white caftan under which appeared matching trousers and shoes. That was how he arrived on the stage. To play his part—announced ahead of time on the radio—he was assisted by several pastors and by V. R. himself, who humbly joined the semicircle around Geraldo. All the participants placed their hands on the prophet, and one of them prayed in a loud voice that God manifest himself. Geraldo slowly kneeled and with his hands uplifted began to speak. Because of the tumult in the audience it was very difficult to understand what he said. It was clear however that he spoke “in tongues” but he also expressed himself in current Portuguese. From the little that we could gather his speech was edifying rather than protesting. In spite of the difficulty a few sentences could be understood, for example certain allusions to the approaching End. While he was speaking the general atmosphere of the immense assembly again became solemn.

When we visited the “miracle room” of the missionary in the center of São Paulo a few days later, we inquired about the prophet Geraldo. We learned that he was not a permanent member of V. R. ’s team. It seems that his presence in Osasco that evening was the result of an uncertain and circumstantial association.

After this part of the meeting, the level of intensity dropped considerably. The announcer took up his appeals and his hymns, but the public had begun to leave the stadium. The meeting was over.

THE NEW USES OF THE RADIO

Actually it is a matter of a broader use of a means formerly limited to certain religious groups rather than an innovation. Basically it is founded on the belief that a benevolent force, directly or indirectly divine, may be transmitted to objects or persons that it protects or from which it keeps away evil by contact with substances which receive and conserve it. The *água fluída* of the spirits is an example of the second case. This kind of belief is known to be widely spread and long recognized in the history of magic. What seems new to us is the *generalization* of the conviction that these benevolent forces can be transmitted by radio.

Regarding this subject, we will describe the religious programs on a radio station in São Paulo in the early hours of the morning, as well as two other, later broadcasts over a different station. More than a documentation, we hope to offer material for reflection.

About 1:30 a.m. a *sacred announcer* opens the program with a “spot” which we mentioned on page 56 of this study. Then the lay announcer comes on to announce the broadcast of “The Miraculous Hour,” presented by the Apostolic Church, an organization about whose doctrine and practice we know nothing except what we could deduce from the broadcast messages. We learned that it is a religious branch derived from a Pentecostal tent meeting directed by a missionary from the United States in the 1950’s. Since then it seems to have undergone profound changes. The prominent features of its message are as follows: a marked and rigorous puritanism (totally absent from the radio speeches of divine healing); the invocation of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, who is placed at the side of God and Jesus, and finally a curious expression of religious creativity, the invocation of a *Holy Grandmother Rosa*, a figure directly associated with the Comforter, with the Holy Spirit. The only information I have for the moment is that this personage lived a pious earthly life in the religious group and was raised after her death to a position which permits her to act as an advocate. We note that in the broadcasts heard so far no such explanation has been given.

The language of the leader (who refers to himself as the *bishop*) and his assistant is grammatically correct. The religious music is more or less traditional¹⁹ and makes one think of a mixture of ancient Catholic popular melodies and Protestant hymns. The Holy Grandmother Rosa is a central figure, addressed with familiarity as Granny. It is through her intercession that miracles occur for those who believe.

The broadcast is divided into two very distinct parts. First come the reports of those who have witnessed healings (these are letters, not recordings) obtained directly by invoking the Comforter (the expression is ours) as well as indirectly by listening to “The

¹⁹ In strong contrast to the *divine healing* programs described above, in which secular rhythms are frequently used alongside *sertaneja* melodies.

Miraculous Hour” or by drinking water which is consecrated by radio waves. Then come announcements about the activity of the church, and it is through these that we learn of the existence of numerous nuclei which, curiously, are much more dense in the state of São Paulo and in the small towns of the Center-South than in the state capitals. We do not note the mention of a single nucleus in São Paulo with the exception of the headquarters of the church itself. If we ignore the allusions to the Comforter and to the Most Holy Virgin Mary we could take the address for a normal, pious Protestant sermon. The most important moment, however, is that of the prayer and blessing by the bishop. Addressing himself primarily to the Comforter, he concentrates his petitions, in an emphatic tone, on the appeal that those who believe be delivered from their physical and mental suffering. In virtue of the powers She holds, he *reprimands* the suffering and *releases* the bodies of the listeners from whatever binds them. He does this energetically and peremptorily. He again asks the Holy Grandmother for the consecration of water and clothing (placed on the radio set) “by the virtue” of her spirit.

At two o'clock is again heard the recording which announces the meeting at Osasco, described above, and a secular announcer introduces the “next attraction”: the program “Proverbs of Solomon.” Here we must digress for an explanation. At this time a series of broadcast begins which lasts until five o'clock. This time has been leased by a small advertising firm whose proprietor also owns a recording company which puts out gospel recordings, and a bazaar which sells religious articles. It is he who, acting with an acute sense of business and publicity, and in spite of limited resources, somehow coordinates what is called in his spot announcement “the longest evangelical program on Brazilian radio in the early morning hours.” Whenever he can, he sub-leases the time at his disposal. When he does not succeed in doing so, he fills the vacant time with pious programs which he produces himself, interspersed with announcements and playings of his sacred LPs; interviews with gospel singers he is launching; and advertising for his bazaar. “Proverbs of Solomon” is a program of this type.

At 2:35 begins “The Hour of Miracles,” with the missionary V. R., the same who held the meeting at Osasco. His initial

speech is an introduction in which he describes the work he does in the center of São Paulo, where “God is performing marvels.” He then talks about his listeners spread all over in the towns of various states, including, he says, many in Aparecida, “that well-beloved town”. There are listeners as far away as Uruguay, Argentina and Bolivia. His voice is echoing, and he uses oratory effects which are not foreign to those who are familiar with popular evangelical eloquence. The initial address ends with something which might be a preparation for a blessing. In an almost playful manner, he speaks in a friendly tone to those who cannot sleep and to those who suffer, announcing that he is going to pray for them: “I am going to pray for you and the Lord is going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit.²⁰ You are going to feel the warmth of the Holy Spirit. And when I have finished praying, go to bed. You will fall asleep very soon. Because the angel of the Lord will come into your home.”

Then comes the reading of a very short passage on the resurrection of Lazarus, which is the basis for the following discussions: a) what brought about the miracle was a “word of authority,” “a word of power,” “a word of grace;”²¹ b) the miracle occurred, Jesus said, “not that My name be glorified but that ye may believe...”; c) Jesus and His power endure and are still valid today. Afterward, he recommends that his listeners place a glass of water or a piece of clothing on the radio . . . Then come the witnesses who had been recorded beforehand in the miracle room. We transcribe one of them here, in its entirety: it is particularly interesting because it illustrates an encounter between healing and *umbanda*.

Missionary (M.): Very good. What is your name, madam?

Client (C.): Madame de O.

M. You are going to tell our listeners what you have received here in the miracle room. Speak, sister!

C. The miracle which I received, brother, is that I, before coming

²⁰ It should be noted that the belief in baptism by the Holy Spirit, central to Pentecostal doctrine, is transformed into a sort of influence without religious connotation.

²¹ In certain contexts, Portuguese versions of the Gospels are translated by *dinamis* (from the Greek word for power) and by *vertu* (from the Latin *virtus*). It is in this acceptance that the term entered into the missionary's vocabulary.

here, went to a center of *umbanda*, you know? I stayed there three years. I never...

M. Where was this center?

C. It is at Vila Moraes. Just today I brought... the day had come to bring his photo which I had bought down there as a souvenir, but today...

M. And what is the name of this center, sister?

C. It is... Now I don't remember very well... but the photo... I know that the father down there is Father Ismael...

M. But he is not your father, is he, Madame! (slight laughter)

C. No! Thanks be to God, no. My Father is in Heaven, thanks be to God. It has been many years...

M. Very good. And how long have you frequented this spiritist center, madam?

C. Three years. But never...

M. And when the father came down there... you did not receive anything...

C. I never received anything... never...

M. How long did you go there when you were ill?

C. I... I never... I went to ask to be healed... I had a nervous disturbance. I never did fall down. But I never got anything. You see?

M. You never received anything?

C. Afterwards I sometimes took the bus, when the meeting of *umbanda* was over, and I came to town. I arrived in town and I wanted to enter the Church of the Living God [a center of divine healing run by the missionary S.C., a competitor of V.R.]. Then one day I decided to speak to the Caboclo Boiadeiro, you know, I said that I wanted to join that church...

M. In the center?

C. In the center. Then the Caboclo Boiadeiro said to me: "My daughter, you may enter because it is good there, because they worship God there too." That's good.

M. That is certain. [in a murmur]

C. Then I decided, I began to come. And then I came to this church, but I still went sometimes over there [in the center]. Then that completely passed... [she had stopped going to the *umbanda* center].

M. And now you are not afraid of the Caboclo Boiadeiro?

C. Now I am not afraid. I have great faith in Jesus. At the Church of the Living God there was a woman who told me to go to the church of V.R., it was also very good. I agreed and that is how I wanted to know V.R. ... you... the missionary. Then I came one day, I asked... I arrived here, you see? And I began to come here more often. And I began to receive grace... I took many medicines from

the doctor—Dr. Hugo—It has been just a week since I consulted you, my brother. You recall that I told you that I fell, that I had begun to fall often... [referring to attacks she had had]
(V. R. interrupted his client.)

When the testimonials are over and after a short commercial on the subject of the next meeting, V. R. prays in the style we have described with regard to the meetings. He reprimands “all the work of the macumba, of sorcery,” and energetically commands, “Get thee away! Get thee away! In the name of the Father, the Son,” etc.

The morning devotionals continue with the secular announcer introducing the “next attraction” offered by the firm X. It is one of the broadcasts produced by the leaser of the entire time: “Encounter with Evangelistic Music.” Taking over the microphone and presenting himself as a *brother* of the listeners, the advertiser behaves like a sacred disk jockey. He has his records played and promotes his business. At a certain moment he announces the visit of a singer of his “stable” and starts to interview him in the well-known style of radio technique: relaxed, slightly joking, he tells the public about the successes of the singer, all this mixed with a terminology and formulas appropriate to evangelistic conversation. A festival of gospel singers is announced. There “Jesus will perform marvels,” says the singer. The superimposing of the publicity theme and the religious theme is complete: “What I would like is that our brothers listen carefully when they hear these hymns ‘The Bloody Hands of Jesus’ [title of an LP]. I would like them to meditate a little on the suffering of the Lord when he spilled his last drop of blood to save us . . . Also the hymn ‘To See Only Thee, Lord,’ which was played a lot in Rio. That’s what made me known in Rio de Janeiro, and here in São Paulo it will be heard even more, won’t it? And our *brothers* are now going to hear ‘To See Only Thee, Lord.’ I am sure our brothers are going to enjoy it and [emphatically] see only through Jesus!”

The interview is followed by hymns, “commercials,” announcements and by a new program—“Music and Faith”—which is redundant with regard to the preceding program.

B. N. and his companion, she also a missionary, sub-lease the

following time in the morning schedule. "The Hour of Blessings" is a broadcast of the "Crusade of Faith." B. N. speaks of the letters asking for prayers which he receives from the listeners and gives the number of a "permanent telephone" which is precisely that of the advertising agency which owns the radio time. "Call and I will pray for you every day." The woman missionary invites "the sisters of our church or of other churches, or our Catholic sisters . . ." to participate in the regular activities of her church. They can bring their problems. If it is a question of a "difficult case, I will submit it to the missionary, and he will pray, and Jesus will solve the problem." After recorded witnesses who confirm the efficacy of the blessings, the missionary states that they are going to form themselves into a "great current of blessing."²² Then comes the prayer for "the suffering, those who have troubles and problems . . ." and the petition for a special blessing for the great assembly which will take place in a movie theater.

"The Voice of Liberation" is the following program, led by L. C., the missionary of the Curitiba meeting. It is announced as "still another attraction" offered by the firm X, "the largest distributor of G.M. parts." L. C. is also the "greatest preacher of divine healing of our time," according to the *sacred announcer*.

After a greeting to the listeners which is at the same time a prayer, L. C. begins to present the witnesses. A woman tells about the healing of her son who had had a nervous disorder and had been relieved by the ingestion and application of water which had been placed on the radio set at the time of the broadcast.²³ The boy himself had said, "Mama, put some water on the prayer" . . . Another witness told how he had been cured of madness, "the work of the macumba."

A "commercial" for divine healing was broadcast by L. C.: "Do not suffer any longer! Your turn has come to receive the blessing . . ." After having given the address of the local place

²² In a deposition made to a different missionary appears the expression "*firmar o pensamento*," associated with the concentration required during the time of blessing.

²³ This water was designated as "prayed water" in the testimonial of one client. Another missionary who speaks over a different station recommended on one occasion the use of oil consecrated by radio to fry steaks, which when eaten by the husband of the listener would cure him of drunkenness.

of healing, the commercial ended: "Free entrance. Do not miss this opportunity!"

There are particularly significant aspects of the testimonials, among which we mention the following. First, there are cases for which the blessing room functions as a sort of dispensary²⁴ where one can go and where one can return if the problem recurs. Second, the making and recording of depositions may mean the fulfilling of a vow (this is expressly mentioned in some cases). Finally, there is a belief in the physical formation of eliminated evils; excretions and mysterious objects²⁵ are frequently expelled from the mouth at the time of healing.

As far as the allusions to the frequentation of the *umbanda cult* places are concerned, L. C. is rather discreet. However, macumba and sorcery, in the sense that they are aggressive magic, are the subjects of regular attacks.

After the last testimony, important because it mentions the curative power of a short record—a recording of the "powerful prayer" of L. C.—the latter announces the regular sessions at his blessing room, as well as a baptism to be held at the Guarapiranga dam. Seventy-four buses have been hired just for São Paulo, without counting those of other towns; 1500 neophytes and around 25,000 people: such are the predictions of L. C. for this religious festival. Then he begins to pray. In his words, it is the "most powerful hour of prayer." It is five o' clock in the morning. The "longest evangelical program on Brazilian radio in the early morning hours" has come to an end.

On the surface, the religious broadcasts we are now going to consider are different from the ones described above. The first is expressly linked to *umbanda*. Its initial tone suggests Kardecism** *à la table blanche*: the studied sweetness of the sacred announcer, the musical background—a soft, characterless music—the theme of charity . . . The greatest of all cult places is going to be

** A term deriving from the name of Allan Kardec, the pseudonym of Hyppolyte Léon Denizard-Rivail (1804-1869), founder of spiritism, whose first work, *Le livre des esprits*, published in Paris in 1857 and introduced in Brazil the following year, caused a considerable stir. *Umbanda* derives from Kardecism, but it adopted numerous rites from other religions already existing in Brazil.

²⁴ The "blessing rooms" are commonly referred to as "Jesus' emergency rooms."

²⁵ Along with a large number of crutches, certain blessing rooms have showcases containing this type of object.

formed through the intermediary of the radio, says the announcer. At the same time he recommends that his listeners cover a table with a white cloth and put on it a lighted candle and a bottle of clear water. Attracted by these signs the good guides will descend and flood the listeners' homes with peace. Soft music in the background, soft music continuing. Then come several "commercials" which inform the listener that the program is supported by a federation of *umbanda* centers, of which the president is the announcer himself. He is also the owner of a shop specializing in religious articles. He names the products and offers his services. At this moment the vague music is replaced by the familiar rhythms of the *pontos cantados*.* The services offered are various: regularization of papers for the new cult places; orientation for beginners in the field; preparatory courses for candidates for the directorships of cult places. And for a different kind of clientele, the facility not only for acquiring necessary elements for *work* but also the possibility of having it done by specialists. It suffices to go to the shop, and there the interested party—who may not be disposed to face the difficulties of carrying out *obligations* at unusual hours and in deserted places—will find someone who will do it for him.

The program "Proclamation of Faith" comes shortly afterward on the same station. It thus profits from the expressly mentioned and appreciated collaboration of the same sound engineer. The program is for the benefit of the Apostolic Catholic Church of Brazil or, more specifically, the Sanctuaries of St. Anthony of Catageró and the Infant of Prague. The nature of the address of the bishop, assisted by the responses of the announcer himself, is completely different from all the preceding. The themes are those of a traditional popular Catholicism. There is insistence on devotion to the saints, on their power of intercession, particularly that of the patron saints of the sanctuaries. Announcement is made of the religious services available at the Grotto of St. Anthony of Catageró and of religious festivals. There is a prayer by the bishop, apart from the blessing itself. He addresses the saint and asks him to drive away "all suffering, persecution, evil spirits, unemployment, temptations, vices and sins."

The blessing is intended for the listener's home. The bishop blesses it so that unemployment, drunkenness and vagrancy may

be kept away from it, so that the “love of God, love of parents for their children, love for each other, and love of the children for their parents, will reign there.” The blessing comes from the “altar of St. Anthony of Catageró” and is addressed to “all . . . those who are spiritually united to me by the intermediary of your radio.” This is how the bishop ends, and he informs his listeners that he is sprinkling holy water.

THE FAITHFUL LISTENERS ALSO WRITE

Here we will give a brief synthesis of the special study which was the basis for an article soon to be published.²⁶ In this study we attempted to analyze 535 letters addressed by the devout in 1972-73 to the sanctuary of St. Anthony of Catageró, the same religious center which broadcast the program described above. These letters are part of what may be called a devotional schema which includes a broadcast in addition to the one from the sanctuary itself, and which we designate as “the world of saints.” The letters are mostly of gratitude and petitions and are accompanied by gifts or promises of gifts. Part of this correspondence arrived by mail and part was left directly “at the feet of the saint.” 77.1 percent of the writers were women. Indirect information permits us to know that in almost half the cases mothers of families, or more precisely, women of middle age having children were concerned. The family sphere and its problems were the dominant elements in the petitions and expressions of gratitude. Except for rare exceptions, the authors of the letters—according to deductions made from the nature of the problems presented—are among the very poor. Being women, to this poverty was added the fact of their limited experience outside the home. The only source remaining to them was power maintained and agreements renewed with the “world of the saints.” Men would look for ordinary solutions; women, sacred solutions.

Almost two-thirds of the letters came from São Paulo and its environs. The influence of the sanctuary, good radio reception,

²⁶ Duglas Teixeira Monteiro, “Cura por correspondência,” in *Religião e Sociedade*, ano I, 1977.

limitations imposed by the competition of other, similar sanctuaries, perhaps explain this concentration in the metropolitan area.

Underneath a seeming incoherence the text of the letters, carefully analyzed, revealed certain constants, among which we point out here only the permanent presence of a request for specific or general blessings and the entreaty that the letter be read over the radio.

As for content, the leading problems were health, work, business, housing and domestic quarrels.

In 57.5 percent of the cases references were found to radio broadcasts. Since the image of the head of the sanctuary is closely associated with his position as *sacred spokesman* and if we consider that 76 percent of the correspondence examined was addressed to him, we may infer that a reference to the broadcasts was implicit in many letters. Furthermore, according to the writer of one letter, the head of the sanctuary is the one who reads "our blessings" (a curious formula in which the reading of the letter is associated with the broadcast of a blessing). Along with the sound engineer and the professional announcer, the sanctuary director forms a "team" (this expression, used in this sense, occurred in three letters). The professional announcer, who also serves as an assistant, himself has admirers: "May God enlighten him," says one letter. Many of the writers sign themselves "faithful listeners" and adopt current formulas used by the public with respect to "radio people." For example, the broadcast may be qualified as "great and fabulous."

The letters indicated that the interest in the broadcast resides as much in the possibility of hearing the letters read as in the diffusion of the blessing. At times the devout person would say he was disposed to "pay [for] his words." Some wrote that they pray and cry while following the broadcast. We might point out here that in the expression of a devout person referring to the priest, "He reads our blessings"; the term *our* could suggest a sort of community of listeners.

However, only a few of the letters are read, as though they were representative of the others. But all are collected by the sanctuary and by the program, and all are blessed. At least we assume so.

Certain ones, referring to the broadcast, call it "the hour of

blessing,” adopting a term common to the programs described above. The sanctuary itself, says one letter, is the “church of blessing.”

Blessings by radio act in a direct way. Names, addresses, precise indications are mentioned in the letters to guarantee that they are correctly received. Children’s school satchels, remedies, clothing, bread and water, the ailing parts of the body are placed in contact with the radio set, and it is not rare to find references to healing obtained in this way. To listen to the broadcast, to be a faithful listener, deserves to be rewarded: “I ask your blessing . . . *because I listen* to your broadcast.”; “I listen to the broadcast every day . . . *That is why* I ask . . .” are frequent formulas.

A final word on the “world of the saints.” It reunites entities which go from the “holy and blessed souls of May 13”—that is, the “old ones” of umbanda—to God, passing on the way a large number of popular invocations among which stand out the five sanctuary saints whose powers are insistently proclaimed in the broadcasts.

FINAL REMARKS

The religious behavior of the low-income strata of the population of greater São Paulo which we have just described may be considered as an undoubtedly important but limited part of a vaster and more complex whole. In fact, alongside these manifestations we have traditional Pentecostalism which persists and attracts adherents; courses in Christianity; movements of charismatic renewal; and the wide diffusion of base communities in Catholic circles; *umbanda*, which has not been reduced to only anonymous masses of occasional users but is certainly spreading, and even enriched by taking up or integrating beliefs and practices of *candomblé** tradition.

It would be simplistic to imagine that the emergence of a request which we have qualified as non-exclusivist or non-sectarian could not co-exist with the persistence and even reinforcement of religious community modalities. In the case of Pentecostalism, for example, without wishing to discuss the different interpretations given to explain its expansion, we can

say that the social conditions which were present at its appearance are still in existence. In a changing society and especially under the social conditions in urban and rural areas where traditional ways of life are no longer able to survive, communities of *believers* may bring satisfactory answers. And that is how we understand Pentecostalism, as a break with a society in transition and the reconstitution on other bases of a continuity with the past;²⁷ as a religious modality of adjustment to an urban way of life;²⁸ as a solution which alienates the levels of society with relation to a “possibility of hope for historico-social changes,” presenting itself as a world which welcomes and protects but also “legitimizes a social context which creates conditions of uncertainty.”²⁹

The material we present shows the appearance of other tendencies in the religious domain which we are considering. What explanatory model could give an account of this coexistence of such divergent religious behaviors and according to what we may suppose, not only represented by distinct movements but possibly present in the very interior of these movements and consequently in the subjectivity itself of their agents?

To try to establish this schema it is indispensable for us to analyze, for example, the position of Peter Berger on the problems of secularization and plausibility.³⁰ We do not pretend to do so here, because for the moment our intention is only to indicate some lines for reflection. However, we will point out that the considerations we are going to make have the works of this author as a starting point.

The problem we presented above is posed by the recognition of the compartmented coexistence of world views which are divergent or even opposed, a situation particular to religious pluralism and to the breaking-up of monopolies held by orthodoxy. More seriously, it is equally posed by evidence according to which, in

²⁷ Cf. Christian Lalive D'Épinay, *O Refúgio das Massas, Estudo Sociológico Sobre o Protestantismo Chileno*, Rio de Janeiro, Pas e Terra, 1970.

²⁸ Cf. Beatriz Muniz da Souza, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Francisco Cartaxo Rolim, *Pentecostalismo: Gênese, Estrutura e Função*, Departamento de Ciências Sociais, FELCHUSP, 1976 (Ms.)

³⁰ Peter Berger, *Para una Teoría Sociológica de la Religión*, Barcelona, Ed. Kairós, 1971.

competitive situations, the maintenance of the plausibility of *weltanschauung* is uncertain.³¹

But let us look more closely at what the principal characteristics of these innovating tendencies are in the religious panorama of metropolitan São Paulo, putting a major emphasis on the Pentecostalism of divine healing to which the material we have presented mostly refers.

a) In the first place, the establishing of a market which contains the seeds of all the inherent problems peculiar to “marketing,” such as answering the various needs of the consumer, guaranteeing at the same time that marginal difference which distinguishes the product but does not prejudice the *uniformity* imposed by rational action. This phenomenon, emphasized by Berger, is directly related to the character assumed by those religious movements managed by veritable agencies obliged to confront the practical problems of working with large crowds and substantial financial resources. For that reason, these movements tend to organize themselves as enterprises which produce and distribute religious goods and services.

There are those who are dismayed or revolted before what they consider a shameless exploitation of the masses, thinking that from the “merchants in the temple” we have passed to the “temple of the merchants.” We would like to remind them that in the action of these religious agencies, because of their business-like methods, because of the indispensable separation of specialists and laymen, may be crudely revealed the grain of “truth” hidden in the sophisticated ideological formulas which are the basis for action of religious groups associated with the middle and upper classes. Would not this be the result of a burden peculiar to the present stage of development in capitalist industrial societies? A tendency affecting in some way all religious groups by endlessly feeding their inner tensions, by making the expressions of community and brotherhood mysterious and directing them toward the hypertrophy of an economic aspect?

b) Secondly, the lessening in importance of faithful and secure clients to the profit of an expansion toward fluctuating and transitory clientele made up of consumers who seek efficacy in

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 238-240.

the gestures, words and objects with power offered by a certain agency, but who also have no doubt as to the equal efficacy of other agencies. If the community, the *koinonia*, was from a sociological point of view one of the pillars of the structure of plausibility in the Christian churches, the active and permanent nucleus of its undertakings—it is bureaucratic and administrative support which guarantees its efficiency.

c) The significant complementarity and even the objective convergence between religious practices coming from different, indeed, antagonistic traditions would characterize something which might be seen as one of the “economic harmonies” possible in this market. This is what is suggested by the encounter between *umbanda* and the powers invoked by divine healing.

From one point of view, in its movements the classical function of religions, linked to the construction of worlds having a meaning, has been supplanted by the function of control of uncertainties. Such are the demons against which the fight rages. In traditional Pentecostalism demons are *kept at a distance* rather than confronted. They are of the “world”—the “abode of the Evil One”—and the community of the elect secures itself against their dangerous incursions, driving them away from the believers. In *umbanda exus* and *pombagiras* are *kept under control* and tamed. In divine healing they are met in struggles which are not only not feared but are on the contrary, sought. Exactly the same *exus* and *pombagiras* are, in a way, invoked or, better, summoned to appear in the arena in order to be *mastered and abolished*.

There are, however, intractable demons which will not be exorcized. They pose a problem for divine healing whose solution is difficult and may be impossible. It is then we see an unbelievable spectacle in which an entity, perhaps not sacred but nevertheless belonging to the domain of the supernatural³² is given over to the secular arm. Intractable demons are a matter for the police. We suspect that this predicament denounces the existence of a general legitimate order associated with global structures of plausibility, both secular and of the same nature as that which sustains and guarantees, for example, the economy of the market.

³² The expression is used in its meaning employed by J. Caseneuve, in *Sociologia del Rito*, Buenos Aires, Amorrortu Editores, 1972.

d) The lessening in importance of doctrinal differences and the irrelevant theological formation of the leaders (as already observed by Berger³³) is the fourth aspect to be considered. It appears that the polemics between Protestants and spiritists, Protestants and Catholics, really belong to the past. As far as the directing groups are concerned, there is a sort of tacit recognition of the inconveniences that would arise from introducing elements of division between factions whose responsibility for maintaining the status quo is held to be great. There are also—and this is an aspect which should be taken seriously—ecumenical overtures inspired by the more intellectual leaders, as well as the great ecumenism of the people, for which a dispute on the subject of the virginity of Mary would have no importance today.

Superimposed on today's theological formation is a training (acquired "on the spot" in most cases) in administration, direction, management, the conducting of large meetings, an acquisition of sensitivity toward capturing the variations in preferences of the consumers, an easiness of manner which permits the grasping of the complexity of the machinery of modern industrial society. This training is indispensable for the missionaries who are in charge of divine healing movements.

e) The Bible, which is the place par excellence for the message of conversion and salvation³⁴ and, secondly, for ethical guidance, has become an instrument of the legitimization of power—specifically, of the power of "performing miracles." That is, for the leaders. For the people, it is as opaque and rigid as Roland's sword. Carried, exhibited, brandished, it is "the sword of the believer," symbol of combat much more than a book open to understanding. It is perhaps the last stage of a kind of fundamentalist idolatry.

f) Lastly, the hypertrophy of two of the four connotations of sin in evangelical tradition.³⁵ In this tradition sin is refusal of the law, transgression in the juridico-penal sense; filth, mud, vileness, impurity; illness, leprosy, poison—the sinner is mortally ill; finally, sin is subjection and slavery. Now, in the Pente-

³³ Peter Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

³⁴ Rubem F. Alves, "Verdade e Dogmatismo", Ms. 1975, apropos of salvation and the idea of original sin in Protestant tradition, pp. 67-69.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

costalism of divine healing emphasis falls on the last two definitions, which are united. However, the Pentecostal concept of illness has not undergone profound change. In divine healing, the emphasis has simply been put on the combination illness-sin, already present in the faithful whose behavior was studied by Beatriz Muniz de Souza,³⁶ especially among those whom she placed at the extremity "sect" of her classification. The ideas of a connection between illness/demonic action/sin ended by dominating the idea of illness as "a test of faith" (in which the faithful is much less sceptical with regard to official medicine).

There is still another aspect, however. To be cured is to be liberated, and vice versa. With a different shade of meaning, however, which makes of the sinner less the agent of his own fall (slavery-illness) than a *victim of demons*, this latter word being used here in the metaphoric sense used above. To redeem a sinner is to snatch him from the power of those forces which constitute, more than anything else, an external menace. Whence a marked decrease in the efforts toward conversion centered on the idea of *being reborn* and consequently the expectation of a progressive sanctification. The discourse of divine healing makes practically no appeal or admonition relative to moral conduct. With the exception of references to outward appearance and adornment, along the line of traditional evangelical severity, the emphasis on the less exterior aspects of conduct is not strong. The fact that missionaries have to deal with crowds may not be foreign to this attitude. Since they dispose of mass control, any kind of follow-up of the results of their action would be impossible, or at least difficult for them. On the other hand they distribute the power they are convinced they possess without any discrimination. Spiritists (a euphemism for followers of *umbanda*), Catholics, Protestants of all denominations, all are *brothers* and, even more, need liberation and healing.

As we come to the end of this study we wish to emphasize again some important points. In general, the panorama offered by the empirical material contained in this work, without excluding references to *umbanda* and the devout Catholicism of certain sanctuaries, permits us to say that the fundamental article

³⁶ Beatriz Muniz de Souza, *op. cit.*, p. 166 et seq.

of faith underlying the behavior of the clientele is the belief that "God undeniably exists and manifests His power in multiple forms and through multiple intermediaries." This Divinity, who is not at all inactive, inasmuch as it is the source of all mediations and mediators, is found at the apex of a pantheon which is at times syncretic and manifestly inarticulate but perhaps has a secret latent structural articulation. It follows as a corollary that the behavior of the clientele has nothing to do with religious indifference but must be considered as manifestation of *religious indifferention*. In this indifferention there are no dramas of conscience, but there is an anxiety and there are lacks, not as far as concerns the meaning of things: the search for a possible compatibility between biography and history, for example. There are no problems of theodicy nor of anthropodicy. There is a search for solutions to concrete problems, explanations and partial answers to partial questions. Brief, possibly contradictory, these answers concern the daily life of micro-structures, domestic nuclei and workers' groups. They are at the same time anchored in uncertainty and a permanent source of insecurity. In the life of the family the close association with vital cycles would in principle allow the belief in a relative stability. It would be redundant to accentuate that the living conditions, the lack of support for legitimate religious values, the weakening of traditional ties, have ended by placing the family's security in an uncertain dependency on material attachments and interests. On the other hand, we may say that solid routines principally expressed in large enterprises and in complex organizations in general constitute a guarantee of security in a society marked, economically, by an emphasis on rationality and predictability. However, we may also say that the fortresses of bureaucratic rationality are a part of an intrinsically irrational system and are thus extremely vulnerable. In both cases, we see fundamental spheres constantly menaced by forces which elude control and whose origins are unknown.

GLOSSARY

africanos—encantados	spirits of sects of northern and northeastern Brazil
cabocles	names given to the indigenous divinities worshipped in the candomblés of cabocles (civilized Indians or mixtures of Indian and white)
egun	souls of the dead which are evoked in <i>umbanda</i>
exus—pombagiras	respectively, male and female divine messengers and protector spirits
orixás	a generic name for the Yoruba divinities, intermediaries between the supreme god and man
pontos cantados	very rhythmical hymns of macumba, candomblé and umbanda used to call down the spirits
sertao terreiro	the thinly-populated interior of Brazil in the candomblés it is at the same time a cult place and the assembly of the faithful who celebrate African cults.