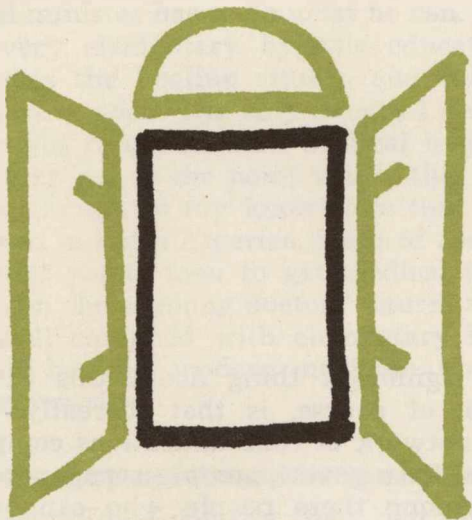


ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVES



CHRIST THE KING AND THE CHICAGO SEVEN

In response to several inquiries, the church council of Christ the King Lutheran Church in the Loop (Chicago) offers the following statement:

Many concerned Christians throughout the country have asked for clarification of our position and a description of our activities during and immediately following the trial of the so-called "Conspiracy" in the federal courthouse across the street from our new facility. The 150 and more days of activity have been at once a challenge and a test of all of us in the Christian church. From the outset, we were conscious of our position at the center of the action. None of us were certain what would happen. Many in our congregation were frankly fearful. Mob action, possible violence, and mass arrests within a stone's throw of our new altar was predicted. Revolution in the streets, so far from most of us, became disturbingly close.

During the first days of the trial, the council met and considered the encounters which had taken place. During the all-night vigil the day before the official proceeding began, volunteers had kept the doors open. A surprising assortment of persons came in. An assistant corporation counsel used a telephone to talk to his office about bail. Several of the patrolling police stopped to use our restrooms and drink coffee. The demonstrators across the street would now and then drop in to get warm. Most of them left quickly. A few of the younger, less action-motivated, sat and talked to the staff, volunteers, and assisting seminarians. Later, a news reporter interviewed his subject in the center ring of our "three-ring circus" facility. His technician quickly dismantled our telephone receiver, inserted the proper wires, and the four a.m. news was on its way. All of these encounters and many more were considered.

The resolution which was adopted was simple. *"The council hereby records its judgement that a unique opportunity for community service presents itself with regard to the present tensions and activities taking place in and around the Federal building across the street. We purpose to serve people impartially whatever their involvement, witnessing to our faith as the encounter opportunities present themselves."*

I could cite various kinds of evidence for this, all of which you can find in a book I have just written on Pentecostalism.* First, there is the large number of articles on such dissidence in the Russian press, including many reports of court cases involving "fanatics" or "sectarians" who "make noise." Underground newspapers provide another source of information about this, as well as the official newspaper of the Baptist Church in Russia. And personal interviews are a fourth type of evidence.

Question: *Could you say something about the "cellular" organization of the Pentecostals in South America and its potential for revolutionary change?*

Most cultures have a hierarchical social pattern. Power flows from the top, down. But in these cultures power from the top does not necessarily get down to the people. The Pentecostals of Latin America have a "horizontal" type of community which, among other things, makes them remarkably resistant to government manipulation.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. When I was gathering information from the Pentecostals, news of my visit and its purpose would often spread as far as 100 kilometers, much faster than such news ever could have traveled by newspaper. Every person knows twenty to thirty others, and each of these in turn knows twenty to thirty more, and so on. These kinds of contacts are common in cultures where the rate of illiteracy precludes the highly organized administrative structures so familiar to us in Europe and America.

**Enthusiastisches Christentum*. Zürich, Zwingli Verlag, 1969. It is to be available in English in about two years.

The significant thing about this in Latin America, of course, is that it really constitutes a network of communications completely insulated from governmental propaganda. Ironically, among these people who cannot read you have censor-free "coverage" of the news!

What about television and radio in this connection? Can't they reach the illiterate? True. But the Pentecostals also use these media avidly. For example, Manoel De Melo is on the air every day from five to six o'clock in the afternoon! To be sure, these are "Gospel" broadcasts. But, as I explained before, in these countries such preaching does have an influence on politics and economics, though it be an indirect one.

This is as it should be, I think. In your question you wanted to know about the revolutionary possibilities in such a system of social organization and communications. I should hope that this cellular organization will not be exploited for overt political revolutionary activity. While this has been done successfully in Italy, it has not worked so far in Latin America. Instead, I should like to see *the biblical Message* made as "revolutionary" as possible and then, leaving it alone, allow it "by itself" to force changes in the political and educational institutions. I will admit, however, that my mind is not completely made up on this point.

In the second place, faith-healing is important because they simply don't have enough doctors. Most of these Pentecostals are not wealthy enough to go to doctors, so the Pentecostal minister has to do what he can. Usually some very elementary hygienic education accompanies the healing rituals, and this is, of course, very good. The only danger I see is that they might refuse modern medical help if and when they get to the point where they can afford it, though to my knowledge this has not happened in Latin America. Some of them have even sent young men to get medical training, and when these young doctors return, they are very well equipped with elementary hygiene, spiritual healing, modern medicine, and medical dispensaries.

Question: *Would you say, then, that the Pentecostals are to some extent reviving the role of the "medicine man"?*

They would not admit this, but I think you are correct. To me this seems to be a good thing, because it does not separate the doctor-as-technician from the doctor-as-healer-of-the-spirit, something we are all now coming to understand and value more highly.

Question: *What about speaking in tongues?*

Speaking in tongues is, of course, very important in this culture. It is completely spontaneous and natural, though the degree of emotion connected with it tends to vary with the individual. The attempt is made to communicate without using ordinary grammatical sentences, and they apparently actually succeed in doing this—not with the head, to be sure, but with the heart. For them it truly does seem to "edify the body of Christ," as Paul says. Per-

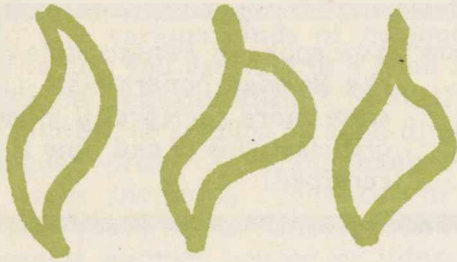
sonal prayer is aided by means of this gift too: it allows the person to have an experience of "communication with God" without having to put it into conceptual language. I think this is important for all intellectual Christians to notice—especially those who are exhausted from their own thinking. It may be a more "communicative" type of prayer than one cast in ordinary language! This is, of course, a psychological interpretation, which is not unimportant, but which should be accompanied by a theological interpretation (which we do not have time to get into now).

Question: *You spoke of Pentecostals criticizing the Russian government. Could you state more specifically what kind of criticism this is and how it has been received?*

In my opinion an "eschatological" perspective informs their criticism of the Soviet government. By this I mean that the Pentecostals believe the world is to be evangelized with the message of Jesus Christ and that it is the vocation of the Russian people to do it. It seems to me that they have taken up the "Third Rome" concept from the Orthodox Church of prerevolution times and are applying it now to the new situation in their own way.

Their reasoning is interesting in this connection. Passages supporting what they want to do are found in the original documents of communism, such as the writings of Lenin and Marx. To Brezhnev, for example, they cite texts which decry the Tzar's persecution of religious minorities and promise that when the communist state comes, every citizen will enjoy complete freedom, not only to believe what he wants, but also to *propagate* his faith. "Where, then, is religious freedom in our communist state?" they ask.

So far this demand for reform has not accomplished very much, despite the courage of those Pentecostals who have spoken out. The only response of the government has been persecution (an experience Pentecostals have been having all over the world!), as when recently two hundred of them were sent to prison. The reaction of the Pentecostals to this has been to send even more critics to fill the breach: at the universities and colleges, and even out in the countryside, where protests continue to be made.



Her answer was very clear. "First," she said, "you have to do something with the middle class of your society, not with those at the bottom, and not with the university-culture." (Some Protestant theologians told them they needed a university-theology. But that would be the worst thing! These same people also concern themselves with a university-level economy, when it is an economy that can enlarge the middle class that is required.) "Secondly," she continued, "you will have to do something about land reform in your country. And thirdly, you will have to organize yourselves and develop a political program—which is something you will have to do not alone, but together with the Roman Catholics. If you ally yourselves with the progressive forces in the Roman Church, you will have sufficient strength to really accomplish something in your country." The reply was: "The Roman Catholic church is one of the chief offenders resisting land reform. How can we join forces with them?" To which Miss Ward replied, "This is all the more reason for you to help the Roman Catholics, isn't it?"

They got the point. They even asked her to come to Latin America and work more with them on this. I don't know whether or not she did, but this is the kind of help American and European missionaries could give these people. One can talk with them! They are teachable! But it is important to do it in the right way.

Question: *To what extent is the Latin American Pentecostal movement the result of mission efforts of American Pentecostal churches?*

Some Pentecostal churches of the Third World have arisen spontaneously in these countries, for example, in Chile where Pentecostalism grew out of the Methodist missionary movement. The Assembly of God in Brazil, which is the largest Pentecostal church in the world, came from the efforts of a Swedish-American layman from Chicago, a laborer who felt called to do evangelization in Brazil. It varies from one country to another, but in general one can say that the more foreign missionaries there are, the less effective the churches, and this includes foreign missionaries of the Pentecostal type. Incidentally, credit must be given to the Pentecostals in North America because they have recognized this and have followed the policy of sending as few missionaries as possible; as soon as possible they turn over the work of missionizing to the national church. At least this has been their policy in the past. Lately some of them seem to have been having second thoughts about these churches developing their own "theology" and their own cultural and economic views. But I don't think they can turn back the clock.

Question: *What is the importance and effectiveness of "faith-healing" in Third-World Pentecostalism?*

First, faith-healing is important because it brings in the "bodily" aspect of the Gospel. This is very important. It teaches people that the Gospel has something to do with their physical existence, which then very easily translates into a concern for their economic well-being and for political reform. A person who has experienced "healing" will never say that the Gospel is simply "spiritual."

He had heard that some people had accused him of wanting to join the WCC only to get money. This he flatly rejected. "We have no need of money," he said; "we have built our schools and churches alone; we have built up our church organization completely by ourselves, and we do not need any foreign help." Then he explained what it was that they really wanted. "We realize that an African church is not really a 'church.' There is only a *universal* church. And because we want to belong more to *all* the churches, both historically and horizontally in time, you might even say belong to the 'catholicity' of the church, we want to join the World Council of Churches. If you exclude us because we might spoil the 'doctrinal purity' of your organization, then we regret that very much, but we would still remain your friends."

Could such a leader be the leader of an "oc-cult" religion? Hardly. There is present in this letter a great deal of Christian maturity!

CONCLUSIONS

A comment or two in conclusion.

There is an American church historian and statistician, David Barrett, who has just published a book in which he predicts that in the year 2000 A.D. there will be more Christians in Africa and Latin America than in the rest of the world combined. And the majority of these Christians will be of the "Pentecostal" type (understanding by the the latter not the historical denomination called by that term, but "pentecostal" in a phenomenological sense). It will be a *verbal* type of Christianity with a "theology" resembling that of the Old Testament prophets and the early Christian community before anything was written down: one that is passed on by hymns, logia, proverbs, jokes, parables, and miracle stories. At the same time we shall also have in America and Europe a new "post-literary" type of Christianity which will be quite distinguishable from the "literary" type of Christianity composed of Roman Catholicism and all the traditional Protestant churches.

But this is what is important—the *relation between the literary and the post-literary types of Christianity will be the chief ecumenical problem of the future, and if we do not solve this problem, we may split the Christian community in a very dangerous way.* This would be a dangerous split because the literate Christians would be the rich, and the post-literate Christians would be the poor. We need to devote a great deal of hard thought to this problem. It may be (and this is just an afterthought) that your experience in America in trying to relate these two types of Christianity may provide us with the model we need for working out the problem all over the world.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

Question: *What kind of economic changes can we anticipate from the impact of this movement?*

In the Pentecostal churches of Chile one is also required to become a member of the Socialist or Communist party. It is not possible to be a Pentecostal and a member of the Liberal Party. This indicates the support of specific economic theories in this church. But this is an exception. Until recently, the Pentecostal churches in other countries have not understood the relationship between their individual misery and the economic and political structure of the country and of the world.

I might mention here something interesting that happened in Uppsala between Barbara Ward, the British economist, and these Pentecostals. One thing that impressed them was the fact that Miss Ward spoke without notes. "It was the best speech we ever heard," they said.

So I asked them if they would like to talk with her personally, and they said they would.

Barbara Ward had to ask a priest first whether she was allowed to talk with them. And he gave her permission. The first question from the Pentecostals was: "You have now told the rich nations what they should do—international taxes and so forth. But what about us? What can we do?"

What is more, this movement has leaders who recognize the dangers threatening its religious community and who are surprisingly sensitive to the social and political needs of their people. Their language, of course, is sometimes misleading. They use traditional biblical language in places where others would not. Yet if one reads between the lines, one sees a profound grasp, not only of what it means to suffer as a Christian, but of the radical thrust of the Gospel against all those who make the poor suffer.

I think here of two men, one being Manoel De Melo, the leader of a large Pentecostal church in Brazil of more than a million members. He took his church into the World Council of Churches last summer, and when asked why he did this, he gave two reasons. First, he said, he feels that the World Council needs the Pentecostals. "I attended the Fourth Assembly of the World Council in Uppsala," said De Melo, "and I observed the way they conducted their committee meetings and their services. To me it was very boring." (I think he was right!) He then continued, "I think *they* are 'underdeveloped.' I felt as though I were standing in 'the valley of dry bones' and that what was needed was some 'wind' to blow over them to revive them again. That's the reason we are joining the World Council of Churches: they need some 'pentecostal fire.'" Pentecostals have no "inferiority complex!" That's what is so wonderful: they know that they have something to give.

The second reason for joining the World Council, given by De Melo, is their need to join forces with others for political and social reasons. "What good does it do to convert a million people if at the same time the Devil unconverts ten million through hunger, disease, and military dictatorship? These sorts of things one can't overcome by holding wonderful religious services, but by organizing one's forces and joining with others who have similar interests. We must join now with other Protestants and even with Roman Catholics to help each other." The model for De Melo is Helder Camara the evangelist, who has shown us the proper way to evangelize today.

It should be evident from this that Pentecostalism is not simply an "opiate" in the Third World. It speaks in the concepts and communication patterns of these newly emerging nations. Here is one of the few examples we have of poor people themselves beginning to contribute to the solution of their problems. One reason for their vitality is surely their independence from both American and European mission efforts. They are all independent and, in fact, do not want any help from these other churches. Mission administrators in this country and in Europe have sometimes asked why these Pentecostal churches are growing so rapidly in the Third World. I usually answer them quite bluntly: *Because they don't have any "missionaries!"* It can be turned around the other way, too. Why aren't the Protestants growing in these areas? And the answer is: *Because they have too many missionaries.*

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not saying that the time for American and European missionaries is finished. But it is over for the traditional kind. Instead we need the kind who will come to help Manoel De Melo *at the point where he asks for help.* Can we ever compete in evangelization with a man like De Melo, who has converted probably a million people? I doubt it. But when he comes asking for help in organization, we should give it. De Melo needs, of course, not simply a technician, but a man who can translate our sociological and secular language back into the biblical language which is the *lingua franca* of Pentecostals the world over.

Another example also comes to mind which shows that Pentecostalism in the Third World is not simply "occultism." The "spiritual chief" of the Kimbanguist church of the prophet Simone Kimbangu in the Congo is Diengiende, a Congolese. For about three years he negotiated with the World Council of Churches about membership. Some felt uneasy about it because his church had no written confession of faith. We could not decide whether, lacking such a document, they could be a true church. So at the end of the negotiations Diengiende wrote a letter in which he said some very interesting things.

Finally a word about Africa. Many are aware that there is a large growth of "independent" Christian churches in Africa at the present time. Some doubt that these are true "Christian" churches, however, because they have appropriated too much from their pre-Christian culture. I have no doubt that some of them are truly "Christian"—Christians of the Pentecostal type. They have a Pentecostal-like "liturgy" and a Pentecostal-like spirituality and piety. I don't like to say "Pentecostal-like theology" because I am not sure there is such a thing. They do have books, but generally these are rather dull fundamentalistic descriptions of traditional Christian doctrines laced, of course, with some of their special doctrinal additions. *Actually, what they do is much more "modern," in my opinion, certainly more exciting than what they say theologically.* I prefer to describe theirs as a theology based on "living texts" rather than on "written texts."

THE THIRD WORLD

Now for the Third World.

I shall begin with the example of Santiago, where there are hundreds of Pentecostal churches. These thrive in poor sections in which life exists on a bare subsistence level, and where sickness and crime run rampant, much as they do in the slums of American cities. In these areas where no one else dares venture, the Pentecostals go. With their guitars they sing and "testify to what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for them." Most are simple laymen not very different from those in the slums, so the listeners quickly recognize that those who sing and testify are like themselves. Out of curiosity, perhaps, they will come and listen. This appears to be one of the reasons so many of them—literally hundreds every week—are "converted."

The convert usually is not sorry he listened to the Pentecostals. He soon finds a "family" waiting for him, people who stand willing to help solve his temporal as well as spiritual problems. He can expect food and clothing as well as entré into an educational process whose initial concern is to help him learn to read well enough to comprehend the Bible. This commitment to Bible-reading makes large demands on him and they facilitate the task by reading the Scriptures with him in unison. Some pick up enough reading skill through this method to eventually read the newspaper. Moreover, new jobs are found for the new convert. It is significant that the Pentecostals are considered honest men and their recommendations for workers are highly respected.

Let me describe a Pentecostal service. I have attended many of them and have also preached at them. Usually the preacher is put in front of the people, sometimes as many as two thousand of them, an ocean of faces. One looks into these faces and sees there the traces of centuries of slavery, faces leathery brown and expressionless, behind which the real person lies completely hidden. They are very poorly clothed, with pieces of tires for shoes, and one feels sorry for them.

But then the trumpet plays its first melody and suddenly all these faces are changed. They light up and become real human beings as they begin to speak and sing. Sometimes they get up and begin to dance. These dances are "inspired by the Spirit," but they are also suspiciously like those dances native to the Indians which the Spanish colonialists long ago suppressed. Apparently they never completely died out. It is very interesting that these cultural elements from pre-Christian times now re-emerge in the Pentecostal services. Have they here rediscovered something genuinely their own, something which helps them establish their own identity?

Some say that this Pentecostalism is an "occultic" religion. I would to some extent agree: there are traits of such religion here. But as long as the rest of us provide no remedy for the "headaches" of our world, how can we deny "aspirin" to those who suffer with these headaches? It is very cruel to say to these people that their religion is "only an aspirin."

Surprisingly, though, they have had no quarrel with communism or with the essentials of the social-political system in Russia. Some of the Pentecostals, in fact, are government functionaries and even officers in the Red Army. Their charge has been that the Russian government has not really been "communist." They fight Brezhnev with quotations from Lenin and Marx. If one considers the passages they cite from the founders of Communism and the drive of their argument, it would seem that they have a real point. They insist that Russia is really not "constitutional" in the broader sense of that term because the basic legal and political structures of Russian society do not reflect the thinking of Lenin and Marx. This very interesting criticism of the Russian state by the Pentecostals should perhaps make us qualify any stereotype we may have of them as illiterate visionaries.

There is also a strong Pentecostal movement in Italy, where they outnumber all other Protestants put together. In France they are also strong, the only Christian church, incidentally, which has significant contact with the Gypsies. They alone have been able to appreciate the special "liturgy" of the Gypsies. Admittedly, using the term "liturgy" in connection with Gypsies sounds strange. But their songs do function this way for them. They have a very interesting way of signaling the different parts of the service through spontaneous-sounding songs. They have no books; most of them cannot read; yet a kind of liturgy is found among them—just as it is for most of the Brazilian and many of the Chilian Pentecostals.

Even in Scandinavia there is a significant Pentecostal movement. It is noteworthy that in Pentecostal Bible schools there it is compulsory to learn the history of the trade unions, which seems strange to American Pentecostals who are not as closely involved with the unions nor as concerned to influence them. Norwegian Pentecostals are also very strong protesters against the American involvement in Viet Nam and they support the diplomatic ties between their government and that of North Viet Nam. Again, when American Pentecostals hear this they find it very strange, identified as they are with theological and political conservatism. The rightist stance, then, is not characteristic of all Pentecostals throughout the world. In fact, the Pentecostal movement has suffered from being seen too much through American spectacles. Most of the books about them have been written by Americans, who interpret Pentecostalism in such places as Indonesia, Latin America, and even Europe only in the light of the Pentecostalism they know at home. Americans tend to overlook the unique features of the movement in these other countries to make it look theologically and politically conservative. But, as we have seen, this is a false picture.

In the United States there are black as well as white Pentecostals. We have seen that Pentecostalism originated in the American black community. Its unique "liturgical form" also originated there. The black culture has been an "oral" rather than a "written" culture. Instead of books they have used hymns, spirituals, "the blues," and a preaching that features parables, jokes, and ballads.

Precisely these elements now form the basis of the liturgical life of the Pentecostal churches of the Third World.

What, for instance, does the command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28) mean in a world threatened by overpopulation? What do the words of Jesus about the lilies of the field and the birds of the air and about taking no thought for tomorrow (Matt. 6:25ff.) mean to people in the midst of famine, or to a government laying out long-range economic plans? What is the content of premarital chastity when the birth-control pill has made sexual intercourse without fear of pregnancy a universal possibility? How shall we obey the commandment not to kill when a still-beating heart can be taken from a "medically dead" person and transplanted into the body of a dying man in order to give him new life? What attitude will the Church take to abortion when the "morning-after pill" is perfected and widely used? How shall Romans 13:1 ("Let every person be subject to the governing authorities") be understood in the light of current agitation for the rights of "selective conscientious objectors"? With what attitudes shall the Church read the "Great Commission" of Jesus (Matt. 28:18ff.) as it faces squarely the fact that the percentage of the world population which bears the name of Christ decreases every day, simply through the geographical distribution of birth rates? With what methods shall the Church seek to implement the implications of Gal. 3:28 ("There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free") in the global battle against racism?

And what will it mean to take with utmost seriousness participation in the mission of God in cultures which are penetrated by religions other than Christianity? Must not the Church be willing to take non-Christian festivals and transform them for use in its own worship life, as did the early Church? Is it not possible that Christians could, for instance, celebrate a non-Christian festival of lights, explaining to one another and to their children, as they set out the burning oil lamps, that Jesus is the light of the world? Is it only in the West that liturgical experimentation with jazz and folk-rock music can take place? Must Bach be imported into Africa? Is it not possible that African music should now be brought to Europe? Cannot God's praises be sounded as well on African drums as on European pipe organs? If Greek philosophers could be used by the Church Fathers for understanding and communicating the Christian faith, is it not just as possible that Hindu or Buddhist or Muslim philosophers can provide thought forms and procedures for the expression and proclamation of the Gospel?

Is the Church absolutely certain that polygamy may not, in some cultures, be as adequate a family structure as is the monogamy of other cultures? If the early Church could adopt infant baptism on Biblical and theological grounds, even though the evidence for this practice in the New Testament is slight, is it not possible that a given time and place may demand its rethinking? Can cultures which are highly secularized and industrialized learn something about the cross and the celebration of the Lord's Supper from cultures in which "blood" still carries mystical connotations of life?

Any congregation of Christians which faces its task seriously could quickly draw up a similar list of issues. It would be easier not to face this kind of question. But the Church which has been sent into the world has no alternative. Participation in the mission of God in these days requires it.

God is living. Christ is risen. The Holy Spirit is given. The Triune God is at work in His world, gathering and scattering His people, and judging and redeeming His world. Christians are those people who have been born anew to a living hope (I Pet. 1:3). Sent into the world, the Church lives toward that day when there will be a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1), and when every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10ff.).

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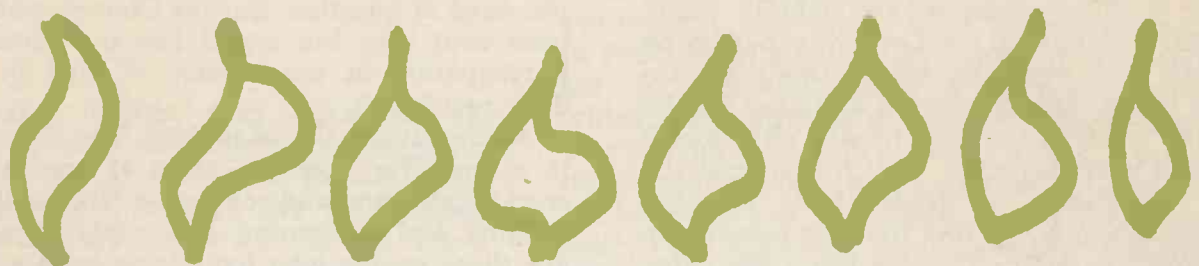
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by Walter J. Hollenweger*

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Pentecostalism and the third world



This article is taken from the tape of an informal convocation address delivered at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota, on March 11, 1970, transcribed and edited by "Dialog" with the authors' permission.

THE ORIGIN AND SCOPE OF THE MOVEMENT

Black churches have made two very important contributions to the Church-at-large: Jazz (which I consider a significant contribution) and Pentecostal "revivals." The latter originated about fifty to sixty years ago in a black Holiness Church in Los Angeles, and the first "Pentecostal" minister was a black man; this Negro preacher had only one eye; he was very poor and unschooled; but he instituted a "revival" which now embraces about thirty million believers.

The Pentecostals are probably strongest today in Brazil, where they number about six million. This constitutes about one fifth of the total voting population of Brazil—something the politicians have to take seriously! Before Congress was dissolved there were Pentecostal members in the Brazilian Parliament, and they were men who made remarkable contributions.

There are also large constituencies of Pentecostals in other Latin American countries. It is well known that in Chile there is a Pentecostal community of about one million, or fourteen percent of the total number of voters.

One thing that most people do not realize is that there is also a significant Pentecostal movement in Russia, one that is growing rapidly. Word has come of a controversy there involving the Baptist Pentecostals in which the Pentecostals have refused to accept a ban on Sunday school and open-air meetings instituted by their government and adhered to by their own Baptist leaders.

*Secretary for Evangelism of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland.