Religion in contemporary Latin American social science.

No account of social science in Latin America over the past twenty, even thirty, years can fail to take notice of the extremely difficult institutional and financial conditions in which our colleagues work. The institutional conditions in many countries were dealt severe blows by military government: in Chile and Argentina hundreds, even thousands, of professionals were forced or pressured into leaving, often officially sent into exile, and government-funded research, and even teaching, of sociology and social anthropology were almost brought to a halt.[1] Once electoral rule was restored, things got even worse in Argentina because of the disastrous finances of universities and research institutions, while in Chile, although the financial position may have been less parlous, the market-obsessed political culture has simply ignored the uses of social science, save for basic statistical information. In Colombia social scientists have also been a preferred target for death squads. Neither social science nor the humanities are a promising profession anywhere much in Latin America: university salaries are low and in some cases simply do not provide a livelihood. In Brazil it is still possible to gain a tenured position in state and federal universities, but elsewhere the doors seem largely closed, and although in Mexico the universities employ large numbers, salaries and conditions are very poor and certainly not research-friendly. To survive, a professional social scientist who has neither private means nor a highly paid spouse, must engage in multiple employment, and the research which is undertaken is usually under contract to one or another branch of the international development community, whether multilateral, bilateral or non-governmental, leaving little space for professionals to pursue more analytically and independently defined research agendas.

This panorama itself is worthy of a detailed research project, to document what on the face of it is a record of neglect leading ultimately to a surreal situation in which, for example, some countries might simply not have any historians of repute. It reminds us that to be a social scientist in many Latin American countries today is itself a gesture of heroism, and to undertake research and publish even more so. The material incentives to publishing, which are quite standard in North America and the UK, do not operate very much in Latin American universities. The extremely restricted market for research publication means authors must rely on institutional and personal mechanisms of distribution – and none of my readers will be surprised if I say that most of the books and articles quoted in this overview have only come to my attention because the authors have given them to me. Latin American journals devoted to the social scientific study of religion, have limited distribution and are not easy to obtain by post. Too much research quoted in the books covered here (and doubtless funded

[1] The disintegration of sociology in Argentina in fact goes back to the 1967 coup when a brilliant generation of sociologists in the University of Buenos Aires Institute of Sociology, founded by Gino Germani, were disbanded. Many went to Europe and the US never to return, others found refuge in the di Tella Institute, in innumerable projects and later NGOs (CEDES etc.) and, in the case of the sociology of religion, in CEIL, a unit entitled 'Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Laborales' which persisted under Floreal Forni within the increasingly denuded CONICET – Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas., whose acronym has changed to CICyT.

by national and international research bodies) remains imprisoned in unpublished dissertations quoted only by their authors, their supervisors, and a few *cognoscenti*.

The embarrassing feature of the contrast between this situation and that of scholars from Europe and North America is that we benefit so much from it. Précis of these relatively obscure but often extremely valuable publications appear – quite legitimately and with ample acknowledgement - in our own publications, but our advantage is that we have the time and the incentives to package them in ways which will help us make our reputations. It is also unfortunate that Latin American scholars in the social sciences do not publish more in international, English-language journals: this is not the place to speculate about the reason for this state of affairs, but it has created a further tribalism: French and Anglo-Saxon scholars quote each other, follow their own theoretical gurus, and write for their own-language audiences, while the Latin Americans do much the same, except that they do make extensive use of Bourdieu and his terminology. As a result, major contributions fall through the cracks – such as those of Brandão (see below) or, in the opposite direction, the rational choice school (which is the subject, to my knowledge, of one thesis written in the North-east of Brazil by Lemuel Guerra (Guerra 2002)) One notable exception is the result of the efforts of André Corten who has edited volumes in French and English with prominent contributions from Brazilian and Argentinian scholars (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001) (Oro and Seman 2001) (Corten and Mary 2000) (with essays in English and French).

* * *

Despite this unpromising context, the social scientific study of religion in Latin America has experienced a flowering in recent years. There is an Association of Social Scientists specializing in the theme in the MERCOSUR, (Asociación de Cientistas Sociales de la Religión en el MERCOSUR, founded in the early 1990s) a Latin American Association on the same lines, and regular international gatherings. Latin Americans are well represented in the International Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SISR), based in Louvain, and which holds a meeting every two years, the latest, in 2001, in Mexico. There are also journals which I list here with the date of their, sometimes approximate, first year of publication: *Cristianismo y Sociedad* (Mexico, 1963); *Sociedad y Religión* (Argentina, mid-1980s), *Sociedade e religiao* (Rio de Janeiro, c.1979); the MERCOSUR Association publishes a Newsletter which is distributed by e-mail by Alejandro Frigerio,[2] and the journal *Sociedad y Religion* is now formally sponsored by the Association. Except for a few isolated numbers, none of these journals is held in any university library in the UK,. Outside Latin America the journal which carries most articles about the region is the *Archives des Sciences Sociales de la Religion*, reflecting the influence of the French sociology of religion on Latin American sociologists, and also perhaps the cosmopolitanism of its editors.

This brief paper is not a review article covering a fixed number of books, nor does it claim to cover or mention every trend or every significant piece of research in the field in recent years. The aim is rather to provide an analytical account of selected major trends, to show how these are part of a very rich tapestry, to alert or remind the

[2] alejandro.frigerio@il.com.ar. I have numbers 4,5, and 11 and can send them to any interested reader.

English-speaking public of the quantity and quality of Latin American work in this area, and thus to encourage them to engage with it more fully than at present.

Genealogy

The genealogy of the scientific study of religion in Latin America is in notable respects different from the genealogy of the social sciences more generally. The study of religion was dormant for much of the period in which marxism was the dominant fashion, partly no doubt because, as is so frequently, but misleadingly, claimed, marxism does not have the conceptual apparatus required to deal with relgion, or else simply dismisses it as an ideological construct. The reason was also cultural and generational: the social science training received by that generation of social scientists confined religion to the debate about the rise of capitalism and none of the major theoretical approaches in vogue worldwide dealt with religion, least of all the modernization theorists. Indeed cultural manifestations as a whole were dealt with only superficially by sociology and then only with such sloganised concepts as 'achievement orientation'. Curiously, even Gilberto Freyre, who certainly dealt with culture, did not have much to say about Catholicism.

In Latin America there was a distinctive tradition of cultural commentary which did make statements about religion, but it was set apart from the sociological mainstream. This was embodied in the work of folklorists, and in that of such practititoners of *geistgeschicht* as Manuel Gamio, Vasconcelos in Mexico, Eyzagurre in Chile, Buarque de Holanda and Freyre in Brazil, and (rather earlier) Sarmiento in Argentina, to name a few. But these had little influence on social science in the 1960s and 1970s – even Freyre who at least was evidently a sociologist, was not taken seriously.

Social anthropology was, to some extent, another story: the lowland Amazonian specialists, who dealt extensively with ritual and symbolism, had little influence on the study of national social formations, but although in Mexico and Central America a new approach was being pioneered by Eric Wolf which did deal with those issues, it also imitated sociology in its steadfast avoidance of culture and religion.

The exception to this story was in the understanding of Afro-Brazilian religion, and also of Brazilian messianism. But even in this case, the great pioneers, Roger Bastide (Bastide 1981) and Maria Elena Pereira de Queiroz , tended towards reductionist interpretations: Bastide documented candomblé in loving though to me incomprehensible, detail, but his general interpretation emphasized its function as an expression of black consciousness. Likewise, Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz' account of messianism (Queiroz 1976) successfully banalized the movements by explaining how they could make sense in terms of local economic and political tensions. This was an important contribution when it was first published (Queiroz 1965) since it showed that, at least in this type of movement, detailed local ethnography was more illuminating than abstract characterization of class protest.

The change in outlook and fashion came largely from changes in the Catholic Church and among a Catholic intelligentsia which, having been formed in seminaries, later migrated to 'civilian' life in the wake of Vatican II. The Theology of Liberation at

first propounded a continuation of the prevailing sociological fashions, regarding popular religion as little more than an example of false consciousness and elite manipulation. But it was not long before the social scientists and theologians under its influence looked to the notion of popular religion or popular culture to explain what they observed as they engaged in activism-cum-fieldwork in urban barrios especially. In the process – which is well known and has been described elsewhere and by others – many ex-priests or others who had studied for a time in seminaries, took up social science, went to study for example with Fr. Houtart in Louvain[3], became Professors of Sociology, high officials of the Sandinista government and so on. Thus a network of graduates of Catholic institutions arose, devoted to the cause and the culture of the poor. In Chile, for example, Cristian Parker, author of an influential study of popular religion (of which more below) passed through the Jesuits' ILADES in Santiago, then on to Louvain for his doctorate; he was a Catholic student leader and also occupied positions of responsibility in the Chilean Bishops' Conference and the Archbishopric of Santiago during the Pinochet years. Floreal Forni, who laid the foundations of religious sociology in Argentina, had been an activist closely linked to the Third World Priests, to Fr. Mujica and to grass roots Peronism in the 1960s and 1970s. In Mexico, according to Patricia Fortuny (Fortuny Loret de Mola 1999) recounts that on arriving in Guadalajara, presumably in the early 1990s after a time as a doctoral student in London, she found that the study of religion was almost entirely undertaken by former priests or nuns or else lay people who had been trained in ecclesiastical institutions. In Brazil, figures such as Pierre Sanchis and José Comblin show a similar trajectory.

A second, related, stream emerges from the French school of religious sociology led by Emile Poulat and later Danièle Hervieu-Léger, who can be said to have inherited his position as the leading exponent of a sociology of religion allied to a liberal Catholic sensibility. Again, many people either read or quote her work, or else have done doctorates in France – notably Fortunato Mallimacci, a disciple first of Forni, who did his doctoral research on the Argentine Church in the 1930s under Poulat's direction. This French stream was for long, like its English sister body the 'Sociology of Religion Study Group of the British Sociological Association', marked by a concern for the situation of the French church – loss of followers, of vocations etc. Poulat's outlook was broad-minded, liberal and deeply historical. and recently Danièle Hervieu-Léger has further broadened perspectives, by showing how certain tendencies towards the fragmentation and de-institutionalization of the religious – summarized in phrases such as 'religion en miettes - religion in crumbs' – or 'à la carte religion' – are present across the divisions between major religious traditions (Hervieu-Léger 2001).

The influence of the UK and US styles of religious sociology is less (in contrast to the strong US influence on Latin American political science and of course economics). David Martin's book (Martin 1990) (see a recent update in (Martin 2001)) on Pentecostalism was a pioneering and inspiring work and is ubiquitously and reverentially quoted, but his general theory of secularization, his approach to the subject, is less influential than French and Latin American approaches which place emphasis on the concepts of identity and popular culture.

[3] Houtart was the moving spirit behind a Centre for Socio-Religious Studies at the Catholic University of Louvain, through which innumerable Christian Democrats and, later, *basista* Catholic intellectuals, have passed.

Social surveys, a practice commonly associated with Anglo-Saxon sociology, have been used on occasion to useful rather than creative effect. Surveys of religious affiliation and attitudes, such as those carried out by ISER in Rio and CIESAS in Guadalajara (Fernandes, Carneiro et al. 1998; de la Torre 1999), those carried out by and by CEBRAP in São Paulo (Pierucci and Prandi 1996) and the valiant survey carried out in the 1980s in El Salvador by the Universidad Centroamericana (Coleman, Aguilar et al. 1993)[4] have been designed more to document basic patterns rather than test theories or hypotheses, and their authors (such as Mariz in Brazil, de la Torre in Mexico and Parker in Chile) seem to have reserved their more creative energies for other approaches and publications. These surveys have confirmed what most people with a minimum of field experience would expect, but nevertheless they are extremely valuable as confirmations that these expectations are not mistaken. The one possibly counter-intuitive finding has been that Pentecostal voting exhibits, at least in Chile, the same pattern as the voting in the population as a whole ((Parker 1996)p. 146 quoting(Tennekes 1985)).

Sociology and Social Anthropology

One curious feature of the study of religion by social scientists in both the English and the French-speaking worlds has been the abyss separating sociologists and social anthropologists. After Durkheim the two hardly communicate, they do not quote each other, they publish in different journals, and they seal their tribal differences in the most definitive way by attending different conferences. Sociologist tended to focus on the esoteric and the introspective – as in the fashion for 'new religious movements' – and one has difficulty finding references in their work to ritual, symbolism, myth or magic – the daily bread of the anthropological study of religion. This has been a shame, especially for sociology, while anthropologists for their part took a long time to bring their sights to bear on urban religiosity, and on the phenomenon of Protestantism. In Latin America the pattern has begun to change in highly creative ways, especially in Brazil where already early in the 20th century proto-anthropologists were drawn to the urban practice of umbanda and candomblé, and later to carnaval. These practices seem to have been 'pagan' enough to seduce the anthropologists but 'modern' enough to be part of mainstream sociology. When the Pentecostal phenomenon acquired high visibility in the 1980s and 1990s the two disciplines had no trouble finding bases for collaboration and even synthesis (Mariz 1993; Birman 1996; Mariz 1999). The result has been highly creative because, in Brazil especially, studies of Pentecostalism and its hybrid offspring neo-Pentecostalism have been able to deal in an unabashed manner with the exhibition of money, healing and possession, which seem to provoke a certain embarrassment among Anglo-Saxon sociologists who tend to overlook them. Lalive d'Epinay, the Swiss sociologist whose work in Chile is still rightly regarded as pioneering, if only because he saw the Pentecostal phenomenon so early (Lalive d'Epinay 1969) was unable to 'take seriously' the symbolic and thaumaturgic dimensions of his subjects' religious life, or indeed to take them seriously as agents of their own destiny, producing an account couched almost exclusively in terms of their status as victims. Once an anthropological perspective is incorporated, this sort of impoverishment of

[4] Although the authors of this paper were based in the US, the work presented is that of an institution led by the martyred Fr. Ignacio Martin-Baró, who was killed together with the Rector of the UCA and others on 16 November 1989.

the subject matter is less likely, because it incorporates universal elements which characterize religious behaviour in general, and thus also enable us to overcome or sidestep doubts as to whether one can compare apparently disparate phenomena.

The confluence of anthropology and sociology is also present in Mexico: the CIESAS (Centro de Investigaciones ETC. ETC.) group in Guadalajara, led by Guillermo de la Peña, combines the two almost seamlessly: the work of de la Torre, Fortuny and de la Peña himself uses qualitative and quantitative methods and always includes a strong element of insight into the world views of its subjects, as for example in De la Torre's account of the Iglesia La Luz del Mundo (de la Torre 1993).

In search of an appropriate vocabulary

We are sometimes trapped in an ideological, or a least culture-bound, concept of what religion is – is it belief or a way of life or an ethnic belonging? To avoid the resultant philosophical doubts we can disentangle various elements of religious behaviour and extract categories which transcend their identification with particular traditions or doctrines: in the place of faith, or belief, or institutional design, we therefore have symbolism, ritual, myth, misfortune, and ethnicity. The benefit of incorporating an anthropological perspective has been to focus analytically on these themes, and thus to break down barriers between religious categories (especially between possession cults and forms of Christianity) which are often the projections of a particular cultural formation (in both senses of the word). To illustrate the argument, I would add that my own experience that understanding Judaism in Israel is helped by a degree of ignorance of the intricacies of the Rabbinical tradition and a degree of awareness of religion in the favelas of Brazil.

We see this operating also in the work of one of the most creative – but least recognized internationally – of thinkers of Latin American religion, namely Carlos Rodriguez Brandão. Brandão is of particular interest because he represents the most subtle of the children of Liberation theology, who has developed a concept of popular religion which conveys its poetry without falling into kitsch or sentimentality. Re-reading Brandão for perhaps the third time, having found inspiration in his main book, *Os Deuses do povo*, in my own work, persuades me more than ever than his is one of the great contributions to the study of popular religion anywhere, and that this is a book to which one can always return with profit and enjoyment. Its restricted reception reflects the tribalism and fragmentation of the international social science community and perhaps also, just a little, the author's own reluctance to pursue international fame. This, or other works of his, are often cited in the Brazilian and Spanish language literature on Latin America, though as a source of useful quotations rather than as a catalyst for a detailed discussion, but in the English-language literature it has been almost entirely ignored. If García Canclini deserves to be translated, then Brandão certainly does. Brandão manages to include a strong 'flavour' of the content and language of popular religion in the analysis itself, by using a rich and varied vocabulary which demonstrates in language the contrast between the erudite and the popular. Where the more flat-footed sociologist or anthropologist would illustrate this by referring to levels of income or education, by allusions to a language of resentment or class struggle, or by explaining the social effects or functions of the phenomenon in question, Brandão uses the vocabulary of

the everyday and frequent allusions to location and aesthetic settings. He has a captivating way of marshalling strings of synonyms to illustrate his points:

> Sacerdotes, feiticeiros, profetas e seguidores de "botina reúna" com sola de pneu, sandalia japonesa, congas azul-marinho furada ou pé-no-chão….roceiros dançadores fervoirosos, … filhos e netos de velhos que caminhavam com os pes descalços sobre o caminho de brasas vivas das noites de sitio de São João…negros das congadas, rezadores de terço e ladainha, curandeiros e benzedores das ruas de cima dos bairros "de baixo"…do candomblé da Tenda de Iansã "da Guiomar" e dos terreiros dos cultos ocultos do saravá …dos macumbeiros, demandeiros, feiticeiros, "gente de esquerda", pretos, estranhos e temidos. (p.122)

The passage uses words from the lives of the popular sectors which probably never are used in middle class society: the 'benzedores' – who offer blessings and healing to whoever comes and asks; the 'rezadores de terço' who say the rosary; the 'demandeiros' (who convey requests to one or another spiritual or supernatural entity) and 'gente de esquerda' (who practice black magic 'of the left') – all agents and intermediaries catering to the daily needs of a people who have no shortage of misfortunes in need of treatment or consolation. There are similarities with Cristián Parker's account, in which the 'vitalism' of popular religion, its emotive character, are highlighted among other features, as is its role in social integration. But there lies the difference: for Brandão popular religion exists in constant, structural tension with the erudite and official (or 'cold' as Parker sometimes calls them) institutions of official, erudite, Catholicism, or of historic Protestantism, or with the 'mediating cults' of established and respectable Pentecostalism, itself standing 'above' the little sects and churches and prayer groups or simply the culture of spiritual sensitivity which prevails among the subaltern classes. This tension is shot through with relations of power – a word around which Parker treads very cautiously, if at all.

For Brandão the erudite is moved by a will to monopoly and power: official institutions of all religious persuasions are driven to control or exclude the popular, or to impose themselves upon popular forms of belief and practise, not because of a particular doctrine or social context, but rather because in a class society religion is – by assumption - a dimension of power. Indeed, I think Brandão goes so far as to claim that the establishment of monopoly is built into the very existence of the religions he considers. How then can he conceptualise popular religion without laying himself open to the ultimate anathema of 'exoticisim', 'essentialism' or – heaven forbid! – romanticization. Doubtless Brandão benefited from the fact that his book pre-dates the global influence of the bible of the anti-authenticity school – namely Said's *Orientalism* (published in 1978). For, re-reading him now, its ability - in style as well as content – to convey the distinctive character of popular religion remains truly refreshing. This is achieved by passages and usages such as those quoted above and also by an analysis which does not close down alternatives and portrays in extensive, dense detail the permanently shifting relationship between the erudite and the popular. In particular, one should note that despite its insistence on the role of social classes and on the opposed categories of popular and erudite religion, Brandão's is not a bipolar conception: the little sects and prayer groups which form among the poor and under constant pressure, from their leaders and from other

sources, to institutionalize, to officialize, while at the same time spontaneous leaders pop up endlessly to try their hands, with uneven success, at religious leadership. It is the open-endedness of the relationship which dominates. In the world of popular culture non-belief is inconceivable: people tend to be *firm in their belief* rather than *faithful* to one or another *church* or religious tradition.

Brandão also manages to skirt around the thorny problem of terminology which haunts religious sociology. The vocabulary we use even as social scientists carries a bias in favour of the dominant western religions: we talk of churches and priests, of liturgies and gods and devils, and although we may not fall into some of the more egregious mistranslations of Victorian missionaries (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Meyer 1999; Lehmann 2001) or of the Franciscan iconoclasts in colonial Spanish America, our usage is still littered with misleading analogies. One example is the transposition of political and economic categories (such as 'progressive' or 'poor') into religious contexts, such as the Catholic Church, giving rise to well-known formulae which prejudge what should be the result of external analysis – or, stated in a different way, take at face value the claims of the participants about the moral force of their activity. By avoiding the standard vocabulary he opens up the analysis and opens up an analytical space which does not commit either the author and takes moral pressure off the reader. This strategy is not spelt out, and may be quite sub-conscious, but its effect is that Brandão employs a host of terms which become almost a proprietary vocabulary: *agente confessional, agente de baixo, agente de cura, practicantes, gerente de salvação*. He uses the word *trocas* (exchanges) almost compulsively, perhaps inspired by Bourdieu, but also as a device to construct a 'level playing field' in which religious and non-religious relationships are not placed on separate planes or in separate analytical spheres, for the thrust of his account is to allow for the pervasiveness of religion in daily life *and vice versa*, denying the privileged or at least radically distinct space reserved for religious relationships in our own daily speech and in the speech of the 'scientific study of religion', to use the consecrated phrase. Other words which crop up over and over again are '*baixo/cima'* (below/above) and *pequeno*. The incessant use of *pequeno* by Brandão denotes something between endearment on the observer's part and a degree of intimacy among the social actor: it is a type of essentialism, and highly subjective, but so disarmingly shameless that the reader can learn from its use while discounting any offence to over-refined academic sensibilities.

Brandão can also be criticized for using the word 'class' in a rather primitive manner. However, the word is not used in a historicist or macro-structural sense, and, in a work based on detailed fieldwork in a small town in the interior of São Paulo, a setting in which social barriers are very clear cut, the notion that classes 'truly exist' is not far-fetched. Also, its use helps to reinforce the strong emphasis in the book on the politics – i.e. the power factor – which is pervasive in religious exchanges.

The 'politics of religion' can of course mean many things. There is a sense in which it is pervasive throughout the literature under discussion, whether people are negotiating with their attendant spirits through a medium, joining a church and changing their lives, looking to legitimise some new umbandist establishment, or drawing boundaries to keep the priest out of their neighbourhood dealings. All these dealings (Brandão's *trocas*) involve power relations. But Latin American scholars seem to have lost interest in the study of religion in its relation with institutional politics, even though at

one stage it was very prominent albeit in a somewhat *militante* frame. North American colleagues have been more prominent in this area, with the exception of Paul Freston, who has lived and work in Brazil, and published in Portuguese, for perhaps 20 years, establishing himself as the pre-eminent authority on Pentecostals and politics in Brazil and in Latin America generally (Freston 2001).[5] In Mexico, de la Torre portrays the intimate relationship between the Iglesia La Luz del Mundo – which has neo-Pentecostal features but dates back to the 1920s and is in many ways quite a unique case – and the PRI (when the PRI was in power) (de la Torre 1993).

Ethnicity

One theme which will almost certainly be unfamiliar to Anglo-Saxon readers is that of the penetration of what, for the sake of neutrality, I shall call Brazilian possession cults, in Uruguay and Argentina, raising interesting and unfamiliar questions relating to ethnicity and to the law.

The literature consists of several articles and books by Alejandro Frigerio (originally in his UCLA Ph.D. thesis, which, as so often, has remained unpublished and untranslated) and Ari Pedro Oro, both moving spirits behind the MERCOSUR association mentioned above. It describes how the Argentine and Uruguayan practitioners of varieties of possession cult (*umbanda, batuque* – the version prevalent in Rio Grande do Sul – and *candomblé*) have variously laid claim to their Brazilian authenticity, their African, Yoruba, authenticity, or even their Argentinian purity (alluding to the exterminated African populations of the River Plate) ((Oro 1999)chapter 3). In the process the protagonists of this 'religious MERCOSUR' have undertaken a strategy which has been adopted before in Brazil, looking to codification and a certain stringency, so as to gain respectability as a *religion* (Dantas 1988). This is important to them since, like Afro-Brazilian religion in urban areas over many decades, they suffered a degree of contempt in the local culture and some unwelcome attentions from the police until a new Argentine 'Ley de Cultos' was passed in the late 1990s.[6] There is a more profound relationship between frontier-crossing and stringency: the pattern described by Oro and Frigerio is reminiscent of that observed among ultra-orthodox Jewish communities which, cut off from their original 'homes' by the disasters of the twentieth century, and dispersed to America, Western Europe and, of course, Israel embarked on a path of increasing stringency which seems to have no limits. Thus the acquisition of respectability implies codification, while the three-way play of African, Brazilian and Argentine origins legitimates lifestyle and ritual rule-making which draws boundaries around the community, thus creating quasi-ethnicities.

[5] Pierucci and Prandi (1996) reprint analyses of Pentecostal electoral behaviour originaslly published in 1989, 1992 and 1995, but curiously they do not update them and do not take Freston's contributions into account (nor does Freston acknowledge theirs!)

[6] (Frigerio ((Frigerio 1997) alludes to its impending passage in the Congress). In Brazil the repression of cults, most egregious in the inter-war period, can never have been said to be very enthusiastic, while the attempt to institutionalize and establish approved practices and instances to approve them, have, unsurprisingly, failed. Uruguay has a stronger tradition of non-interference by the state in religious affairs and so the Uruguayan 'branch' has not had these difficulties.

There have also been studies of Jewish communities in Latin America which raise similar themes: they are experiencing a significant growth of ultra-orthodoxy, with the accompanying increase in stringency and the tightening of ethnic ties and boundaries – and on the other hand a growth of influences from the surrounding culture – so that we find leading Rabbis adopting prominent political postures in the field of human rights, and converts – especially women marrying Jewish men – using a language of lost ethnicity or quasi-mystical revelation to describe their experience (Sorj 1997). These common patterns in turn reflect worldwide trends in religion generally, so that these innovations in Afro-Brazilian practice and dissemination are not peculiar to Brazil or the Southern Cone.

If contemporary religious change has created controversy where once 'everyone' knew a religion when they saw one, it will also now create similar difficulties for the already thorny concept of ethnicity. For while the possession cults make headway among the urban middle and lower-middle classes – often of German, Italian and doubtless Jewish ancestry - of the River Plate, in Brazil itself links between possession cults and African identity or origins are diversely constructed and interpretd – and even denied. *Basista* Catholic priests adopt what they see as African rituals to get closer to popular culture, reinforcing the identification of the African with the cults. Neo-Pentecostal churches, however, who manage both to anathametize the cults and to adopt much of their symbolic language seem utterly oblivious to the African dimension. Although the continuities and discontinuities between Pentecostalism and indigenous religion have been much discussed, there has not been much consideration of the implications of the Pentecostal upsurge for the content of race relations in Brazil, or indeed in countries with significant Indian populations such as Mexico, Guatemala and the Andes.

Catholicism

The study of Latin American Catholicism by US and UK-based social scientists was for a time divided between a political or institutional approach, which has focused on base communities, and the traditional anthropology of popular religion. A whole generation emerged from the disappointments of the 1970s to look to Liberation Theology and Base Communities as an, admittedly partial, solution to the continent's woes. In Latin America itself, these issues panned out slightly differently: the graduates of seminaries and priestly vocations – mentioned above – sought a synthesis in a more theologically based notion of popular religion as an expression of what Parker called 'another logic' – a phrase which sounds less controversial in Spanish than in English. In a valiant attempt to reconcile the sociological and theological approaches – though he does not use the latter term – Parker ends up by adopting a position first formulated by Lanternari according to which 'all popular religion is generated within a dialectic with official religion and culture' (pp. 34-5)[7]. Parker's agenda – and by extension that of a whole generation of post-Conciliar Catholic intellectuals – can be summarized as follows: a faith in the people as innocent bearers of a divinely inspired religiosity (the vision of Liberation Theology crudely expressed) cannot be justified in terms of a 'cold Cartesian' epistemology, while stark

[7] A notion which I thought I developed in the mid-1990s, in ignorance of Lanternari's earlier contribution. It is a sad reflection on our tribalisms that I neglected at that time to take Lanternari's approach seriously, consigning him to the pigeonhole of naïve populism (Lehmann 1996).

correlations between class situation and religious practice – which might legitimise popular religious practice in a marxisant teleology – are unacceptable. The only way in which one can accommodate popular religion as an authentic expression of both popular consciousness and politico-cultural dissent is to recognize that it is a construction, but that cultural construction itself is a way of pursuing social change given that culture itself is a terrain of struggle for power. Parker goes further, though, ending his valiant chapter with an invocation of faith as an 'initial baptism' around which 'a whole network of symbolic systems in the Latin American cultures is being structured'. (pp. 39-40.) Responding perhaps too sympathetically to his primary audience of Catholic activists, he is caught in a trap which Brandão, who also has written quite frequently for an activist audience, has avoided, thanks to his deft use of language and his talent for bringing his fieldwork to life.

Mexico must stand at the opposite end to Brazil on thye spectrum of religious hegemony. Brazilian culture emerges from these studies just as Breandão said, full of faith but with little church loyalty and a popular culture bathed in undirected religious sensibility. Mexico by contrast, holds many examples of popular religion in ferocious support of its official counterpart. This was powerfully brought home already in the 1970s by Jean Meyer's milestone book on the Cristeros (Meyer 1973-74). By documenting in undisguisedly enthusiastic detail the agrarian roots of a profoundly religious movement in defense of the institutional church, and the ferocious persecution inflicted upon the Cristeros by the post-revolutionary state, Meyer took real political risks, especially as a foreigner. Nevertheless, something must have changed, for although at the time his book was received in almost total silence (despite going into three editions) thirty years later Meyer is a prominent and respected figure in Mexican academia. Although the leadership of the Mexican Church is still deeply conservative, recent work by Renée de la Torre shows how much has changed in Catholic culture even in Guadalajara, the largest diocese in Mexico, location of Latin America's biggest seminary and the 'second largest producer of priests in the world'. In de la Torre's depiction, the religious field in Guadalajara is a cultural space traversed by competing, conflicting but mostly co-existing modes of religious observance, in which although people do not hesitate to identify themselves as Catholics, they limit the Church's control over their way of experiencing religion, and construct an *à la carte* religiosity with a substantial dose of New Age and esoteric elements (de la Torre 2001).

Neo-pentecostalism

This of course is the hot story, especially as embodied in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God – a Church to which we should no longer unthinkingly attach the adjective 'Brazilian', in the light of its successful international growth. The study of Pentecostalism in general has an unusual feature for Latin American social science – namely that here we find ourselves witnessing and writing about a success story! It is also a rapidly changing, mercurial phenomenon, which has, appropriately, produced excitement and a mood of intellectual *disponibilité* in the social science community. Thus the whole concept of popular religion has had to undergo revision, as we have seen, as has the notion that modernity brings with it non-belief, or that it stands in contradiction with superstition, or that superstition is any different from religion. If the Pentecostal upsurge forced social scientists to revise hitherto uncritical or unthinking usages such as secularism, the neo-Pentecostal wave is forcing

sociologists to come to terms with what previously has been the domain of anthropology, and encouraging anthropologists also to bring their concepts of ecstatic religion, or of cults and of magic fully into the modern urban context. Brazilian social scientists, together with André Corten – perhaps significantly a francophone sociologist based in Canada - are in the forefront of this reappraisal. Cecilia Mariz, in an excellent review which ought to be translated (Mariz 1999) criticizes the assumption that there has been a return to magic, because 'there was never an abandonment of magic' by Pentecostals, or indeed in Brazil generally – or maybe anywhere. She also argues convincingly that the war against the devil conducted by contemporary Brazilian churches may be seen as a bearer of western-style modernity, because it is an instrument of moralization and because it is not structurally different from the demonization of evolutionary theory and sexual permissiveness by certain North American groups. Demonization is a way of disenchanting the world, and if Brazilian social scientists have been slow to understand this it is on account of their disinterest in comparative research, or simply in other countries (even in Latin America – Ari Pedro Oro and friends excepted). Stated more controversially perhaps, should we not 'loop the loop' and take a little more seriously what our subjects are saying?

Patricia Birman is among the few who can place possession cults and Pentecostalism in a common framework of this sort. After many years of research in the world of umbanda she has undertaken analyses of the concept of possession among followers of the Universal Church, starting from the quite distinctive notion of a person which prevails in the world of the possession cults. Here one is not precisely the master of one's own fate: one is possessed. One has to pay one's dues and come to terms and cajole one's presiding spirits, as well as protecting one's nearest and dearest. Like Brandão, but in a very different way, Birman draws analytical strength from her writing talent. Where Brandão multiplies his synonyms she is precise; where he extends his rhetoric and reveals his loves and hates, she is discrete and poised. More interesting is the difference between their portrayals of a culture of which neither would claim to be part: Brandão does romanticize and make clear the distance separating both himself and the erudite sphere which he – and his readers – inhabit from the everyday concerns of popular religion. Birman takes almost exactly the opposite tack: she does not relativize or polarize, but, taking a small number of detailed individual cases, accompanies their thoughts and actions and describes their coherence. To a subject which is tempting sociologists to adopt too much rhetoric and prophecy, she brings a necessary dose of *banalização*: her ladies potter to and fro between different ritual codes; through years of involvement in the lives of their clients, they have come to acquire knowledge which the pastors of the Universal Church, prevented from putting down local roots by a jealous church bureaucracy, cannot assemble, yet can put to much use as an ingredient in their campaigns of moralization and communal exorcism (Birman 1996; Birman 1997; Birman 1998; Mariz 1999; Lehmann 2001).

For Brandão the difference between the modern religious world and the world of magic lies above all in the former's understanding of the religious field as a field of power. Birman avoids such issues, but I think both authors would deny that people at mass or in an ecstatic trance at a Pentecostal service are doing anything fundamentally different from people attending a ceremony in a *terreiro*, or awaiting the ministrations

of a medium, hoping to be healed of an illness or to recover the affections of an estranged girlfriend.

Coming from different tribes, Brandão and Birman do not seem to use each other's work: Birman from Rio anthropology, Brandão from Campinas and São Paulo and (for all his dismissiveness of the *comunidades de base*[8]) from Catholic *basismo*. To finish this overview, and still, I am afraid, remaining in Brazil, I want to draw attention to an outsider from yet another tribe, who has produced the most exhaustive – and exhausting – account of the Universal Church (*Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* – henceforth IURD) so far. This is Leonildo Silveira Campos whose *Teatro, Templo y Mercado: organização e marketing de um empreendimento neopentecostal* (Campos 1997) has passed almost unnoticed in the anthropological and sociological community, perhaps because he is from a Methodist university (UMESP – Universidade Metodista de São Paulo) and circulates in theological rather than social scientific circles.[9] The book is the result of painstaking research and disciplined, systematic data collection and analysis, combing through innumerable articles from the evangelical and secular press, and covering all the central themes of interest to the mainstream sociologist of organizations – politics, management, marketing (as the title suggests) – while at the same time confronting squarely the imaginary and bodily dimensions of this phenomenon. His most important analyses are those relating to the *mise en scène* of the IURD, to the care and sense of detail brought to the enactment of their liturgy, and to the theology of the IURD. He believes that the IURD is such a radically new and coherent phenomenon, that he has coined the neologism *iurdiano*, and after reading his book one might ask whether the IURD is not so much a new church as a new religion, if it is religion at all.

Campos' main concern is to show how, if this is religion, it is religion like none that has gone before, violating the criteria which our culture habitually attributes to the word, but achieving enormous success in the religious marketplace. He demonstrates that the leadership of the IURD has devoted unusually detailed attention to all the attributes of both a church and a business, and has designed or redesigned its liturgy, organization and culture in accordance with the needs and desires of its clientele. His main text is quite dispassionate, but the extremely informative footnotes, which he uses almost as a parallel text to convey field information, betray his cynical view of the methods and the objectives of the IURD and its leader Edir Macedo. The book suffers from the author's concern to laboriously introduce each theme and sub-theme with a disquisition on the history of ideas on the subject from Aristotle to Bourdieu, but it nevertheless achieves its aim. The informative and extremely insightful chapter on theology demonstrates the thoroughness of the IURD's revolution in what counts as religious practise. Here Campos begins unhesitatingly with the theme of the body: theology, according to the IURD, is both useless and diabolic, a sort of possession which confuses people and distracts from the true task of religion, namely to cure and deliver people from the devil, to put an end to their suffering. Jesus, its leader reminds us, did not waste time on theology – he devoted himself to healing the sick and casting out evil spirits. To this vocation the IURD adds much from New Age and

[8] On the same page quoted above he specifically and sarcastically says that in writing about the lowest rung of all ('o espaço mais subalterno') he excludes the CEBs 'mesmo quando , dentro de uma o duas, alguns camponeses ocupam, entre susto o improviso, um lugar no "círculo" democrático dos fieis reunidos' (p.122).

[9] It has been translated into Spanish and published in Ecuador by Abya-Yala, 2001.

esoteric practices, and uses a strong concept of guilt which could have been borrowed from psychoanalysis. For the pastors are told to tell their followers that if the cure does not work it is on account of *their* lack of faith, it is *their* fault. The explanation of how millions of people accept such a story is not easy, but the IURD will not have been the first religion to rely on guilt.

Maybe the IURD's success undermines the disapproval expressed by the secular intellectuals of what they see as its money-grubbing and its false promises of cures and new horizons. Or maybe the stand-off is more complicated, for is not Macedo taking at their word the anthropologists and sociologists who proceed on the assumption that religion is not about belief in the doctrinal sense? We observers, after all, conduct our analyses on the basis that religion is false belief, that it is rather a provider of ritual, of rites of passage and symbolic meaning, of solace, and tools to get through life's vale of tears. What right, then, do we have to complain if a prophet arises and builds a successful new religious movement which proclaims precisely that?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bastide, R. (1981). Religioes Africanas no Brasil (2 vols.). Sao Paulo, Pioneira.

Birman, P. (1996). "Cultos de possessão e pentecostalismo no Brasil; Passagens'." Religiao e Sociedade **17**(1-2): 90-108.

Birman, P. (1997). Males e maleficios no Discurso Neopentecostal. O Mal, a cultura e as religioes populares. P. Birman, R. Novaes and P. Crespo. Rio de Janeiro, EdUERJ.

Birman, P. (1998). "Feminine mediation and Pentecostal identities." Cambridge Anthropology **20**(3): 66-83.

Campos, L. S. (1997). Teatro, templo e mercado: organizaçao e marketing de um empreendimento neopentecostal. Petropolis, Sao Paulo, Sao Bernardo do Campo, UMESP, Vozes, Simposio.

Coleman, K., E. E. Aguilar, et al. (1993). Protestantism in El Salvador: conventional wisdom versus the survey evidence. Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America. V. Garrard-Burnett and D. Stoll. Philadelphia, Temple University Press.

Comaroff, J. and J. Comaroff (1991). Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume One: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa. Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Corten, A. and R. Marshall-Fratani, Eds. (2001). Between Babel and Pentecost: transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America. London, Hurst & Company.

Corten, A. and A. Mary, Eds. (2000). Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes: Afrique/Amérique Latine. Paris, Karthala.

Dantas, B. G. (1988). Vovó Nagô e Papai Branco. Rio de Janeiro, Graal.

de la Torre, R. (1993). Los Hijos de la Luz: discurso, identidad y poder en *La Luz del Mundo*. Guadalajara, CIEASAS-Occidente
Universidad de Guadalajara.

de la Torre, R. (1999). El catolicismo: un templo en que habitan muchos dioses? Creyentes y creencias en Guadalajara. P. Fortuny Loret de Mola. Guadalajara, CONACULTA-INAH
CIESAS.

de la Torre, R. (2001). "Religiosidades populres como anclajes locales de los imaginarios globales." Metapolítica **5**(January-March): 98-117.

Fernandes, R. C., L. P. Carneiro, et al. (1998). Novo Nascimento: os Evangélicos em casa, na Igreja e na Política. Rio de Janeiro, Mauad.

Fortuny Loret de Mola, P., Ed. (1999). Creyentes y creencias en Guadalajara. Guadalajara, CONACULTA-INAH
CIESAS.

Freston, P. (2001). Evangelicals and politics in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, Cambridge University Press.

Frigerio, A. (1997). Estabelecendo pontes: articulaçao de significados e e acomodaçao social em movimentos religiosos no Cone Syul. Globalizaçao e Religiao. A. P. Oro and A. Steil. Petropolis, Vozes.

Guerra, L. (2002). Mercado religoso no Brasil: competiçao, demanda e a dinamica da esfera da religiao. Petropolis, Vozes, CATAVENTO.

Hervieu-Léger, D. (2001). La Religion en Miettes ou :La Question des Sectes. Paris, Calmann-Lévy.

Lalive d'Epinay, C. (1969). Haven of the masses. London, Lutterworth (first published in Chile as El refugio de las masas, 1968.

Lehmann, D. (1996). Struggle for the spirit: religious transformation and popular culture in Brazil and Latin America, Oxford, Polity Press.

Lehmann, D. (2001). "Charisma and possession in Africa and Brazil." Theory, Culture and Society **18**(5): 45-74.

Mariz, C. L. (1993). Coping with poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil. Philadelphia, Temple University Press.

Mariz, C. L. (1999). "A Teologia da Batalha espiritual: uma revisao bibliografica." Revista BIB **47**(1 semestre): 33-48.

Martin, D. (1990). Tongues of Fire: the Pentecostal revolution in Latin America. Oxford, Blackwells.

Martin, D. (2001). Pentecostalism: the world their parish. Oxford, Blackwells.

Meyer, B. (1999). Translating the Devil: religion and modernity among the Ewe in Ghana.

Meyer, J. (1973-74). La Cristiada (3 vols.). Mexico D.F., Siglo XXI.

Oro, A. P. (1999). Axé MERCOSUL: as religioes afro-brasileiras nos países da Prata. Petropolis, Vozes.

Oro, A. P. and P. Seman (2001). Brazilian Pentecostalism crosses national borders. Between Babel and Pentecost: transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America. A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani. London, Hurst and Company.

Parker, C. (1996). Popular religion and modernization in Latin America: a different logic. Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books (first published by Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico and Chile, 1993).

Pierucci, F. and R. Prandi (1996). A realidade social das religoes no Brasil:religiao, sociedade e politíca. Sao Paulo, HUCITEC.

Queiroz, M. I. P. (1965). O Messianismo no Brasil e no Mundo. Sao Paulo, Dominus-EdUSP.

Queiroz, M. I. P. (1976). O Messianismo no Brasil e no Mundo. Sao Paulo, Alfa-Omega.

Sorj, B. (1997). Conversões e casamentos "mixtos": a produção de "Novos Judeus" no Brasil. Identidades Judaicas no Brasil Contemporâneo. B. Sorj. Imago.

Tennekes, H. (1985). El movimiento pentecostal en la sociedad chilena. Iquique, CIREN.