EVANGELICAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL[*]

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Summary

The proliferation of movements of religious renewal, especially in locations described as 'social capital deserts' where power is exercised on the basis of relations of personal dependency and the state has only a sketchy presence, gives reason to ask whether those movements might provide a basis for institution-building. Focusing on Christian evangelical churches and using the author's own research experience and a large number of secondary ethnographic sources, this paper explores this question using theoretical frameworks drawn from the work of Robert Putnam on social capital and from a modified version of the rational choice approach to religion. The paper concludes by noting that although some doubt surrounds the contribution made by these religious movements to the creation of social capital, through trust and participation, they nevertheless do create some of these for their own followers, especially women.

Keywords:

This paper addresses an apparent puzzle: how is it that so often it seems that the only institutions being built in the highly unfavourable circumstances of impoverished and excluded populations are religious institutions? I will respond to the question by relating it to the contribution of religious movements to the creation of social capital. This question is not about their possible contribution to entrepreneurship or the accumulation of capital, but rather about the separate, though ultimately no doubt related, question of institution-building. It thus connects up with the longstanding concern in Development Studies for institutions as a framework for economic activity and also with democratic participation (Bates 1988; North 1990; O'Donnell 1996)

The image of the permanence and stability of religious institutions in the midst of chaos is an arresting one, described in numerous ethnographies as well as journalism and documentaries, for example about *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro where gangsters inspire fear and the only respected figures are the pastors, sometimes themselves former dealers: even the gunmen respect them.[1] Apparently it is precisely in these unfavourable circumstances that evangelical

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[1] Joao Salles' documentary *Historia de uma guerra particular*, a realistic complement to the film, and book, *Cidade de Deus*. The evidence that evangelical churches find their followings principally among the poorest

or Pentecostal churches (terms used here interchangeably, have apparently proliferated with the greatest rapidity? How far can this image of trust amid distrust really go? The 'unfavourable circumstances' refer, analytically speaking, to the lack of institutions, by which is meant a social environment in which formal organizations are governed by abiding rules subject to disinterested application and adjudication, with a frontier between the private and the public sphere. Also, in the unfavourable circumstances patron-client relations are the dominant form of power and authority, inhibiting universalistic rule-based behaviour and rewarding relations of personal dependence. In more practical terms, they evoke poverty and often violence which have persisted despite, or sometimes because of, massive social change in the immediate and global environment.

1. Institutions, social capital and civic associationism

The idea of social capital as originally formulated by Coleman was concerned principally with explaining educational achievement (*human* capital) in terms of the involvement of schoolchildren's parents and the density and stability of their social and familial networks (Coleman 1988). Putnam's development of the term extends it to a relationship between intense civic associationism (well beyond the family) and institutional transparency and trust in the wider society. This is presumed to strengthen democracy. It has been noted that strong and active civic or collective organization can be destructive of democracy or civic life (cf. pre-Nazi Germany) and trust (like gangs and drug-traffickers), but certainly in the latter case the absence of institutionalized trust (as distinct from personalized trust) disqualifies them, on my definition, from inclusion under the heading of social capital (Berman 1997; Portes 1998).

In his book on Italy (Putnam, Leonardi et al. 1993) associationism and trust were more in balance than in the later and more famous *Bowling Alone* (Putnam 2000) which tends to pay

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strata is abundant for Latin America, (Lehmann 1996 and see below note 10). In South Africa they tend to grow more among the social strata just above the poorest Garner, R. (2000). "Religion as a source of social change in the new South Africa." <u>Journal of Religion in Africa</u> **30**(3): 310-343.

Elsewhere in Africa they are present in all social strata, even among the very poorest Englund, H. (2007). "Pentecostalism beyond belief: trust and democracy in a Malawian township." <u>Africa: Journal of the International African Institute,</u> **77**(4): 477-499.

The differentiation types of Pentecostalism in relation to socio-economic classes is a subject ripe for research, although the qualitative literature gives strong indications. Pew surveys do not include such variables.

more attention to participation, though it does not ignore trust and transparency. Participation has many facets: one contrast is between what might be called the 'real' and the 'virtual': some people go to meetings, tend to sick friends or relatives, volunteer for the local Red Cross, attend church or mosque or synagogue, help to organize the school Summer Fair and so on. These forms of participation involve a commitment of time and also of one's personhood: a person appears in public as a participant. Such real participation can of course be further subdivided, in a manner which is not irrelevant for our subsequent discussion: some people volunteer but do not deliberate: they are happy to help out and no doubt to donate funds, but do not get involved with decision-making or management, that is with the 'politics' of their organization. Virtual participation is slightly different, though more prominent in wealthier than developing countries: it accounts for an ever-increasing share of association membership, and refers to the millions who contribute their membership dues but do not attend any meetings or participate publicly at all. They are contributing to organizations which are run by professionals, headquartered in capital cities, and devoted to lobbying. In *Bowling Alone*, which is all about the USA, Putnam expresses some doubts whether such participation contributes much to social capital and worries that it accentuates sharply conflictive or confrontational partisan politics: locally only the true believers participate (Putnam 2000), while nationally a 'gaggle of professionally dominated advocacy groups' (Theda Skocpol's words quoted on p. 344) garner large sums of money and tend to highlight single issues and sharpen their differences. Putnam provides ample evidence of declining active, 'real' participation in the last third of the twentieth century in the United States (p. 58ff.), and expresses corresponding concerns about the health of the country's democracy.

In this context, the contribution of religious participation (taken, perhaps controversially, to be a form of civic associationism) to the creation or maintenance of social capital is of obvious interest. In the US, because that country is well known for the high levels of professed religious attendance among its population, especially when contrasted with Western Europe, and in poor and middle income countries where we observe high levels of religious attendance or belief – two words which do not necessarily mean the same thing (Inglehart and Norris 2004). Countries characterized by extreme poverty often exhibit a high level of religious participation, or perhaps better, religious involvement, side by side with what might be called the lowest common denominator of civic institutional life. This caricatured correlation, of course, raises innumerable questions about what type of involvement and what type of belief (ranging from possession cults to high Catholicism in the style of Opus Dei),

and so it is necessary to focus the discussion on cases which can shed light on the issue by isolating key variables; but even if we restrict ourselves to institutionalized religion, the upsurge of evangelical Christianity in Africa and Latin America has to merit consideration as *taly* evidence of religion's contribution to social capital. Putnam's chapter on religious participation in *Bowling Alone*, however, raises doubts: it shows sustained high levels of involvement in associative life on the part of people who profess a religion, but also shows that this involvement is concentrated among evangelicals, and evangelicals tend to be inward-looking, strengthening the ties binding them to one another but not those which link people from diversified communities or affiliations as a whole – though there are exceptions (p. 78). And later, buried in a footnote, there is the remark that 'churches organized congregationally, such as Protestant denominations, tend to provide more opportunities for parishioners to build civic skills than do hierarchically organized churches, including Catholic and evangelical denominations' (p. 494, based on (Verba, Schlozman et al. 1995). I do not think these ideas need to be restricted to the US, not least because global Pentecostalism and movements in the Jewish and Muslim traditions as well transplant methods of organization across the globe. It must however be added that in a widely publicized paper which reveals some results of a vast US survey combined with case studies, which he had long been hinting at but holding back, Putnam struggles to find even a hint of trust across ethnic boundaries – even to the extent of finding that trust within ethnic groups is lower when they are in the midst of a mixed environment (Putnam 2000).

To this I would add that variations in organization and leadership add further features to the contrast between what Putnam calls the hierarchical and the denominational. Evangelical churches are organized quite differently from other types of church, as Putnam notes, and also from the standard model of civic association, but they also vary enormously, as one would expect. We can describe several models within Pentecostalism. In one model of small congregations pastors centralize both religious and administrative leadership and the all-important financial authority, retaining control and often ownership of their premises, while donations are directly or indirectly personal to them – to pay their salaries. This is to some extent transposed to a completely different scale in organizations like the vast Brazilian-based Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, with its millions of followers worldwide and its highly centralized management. For example, it has for long been unclear whether the ownership of its television network, TV Record, rests with the church or with its leader, Edir Macedo (Birman and Lehmann 1999). Also, officials in this church are apparently rewarded

in proportion to their success in attracting tithe-payers and donations. It is interesting, though, that Gifford and Englund offer contrasting African examples, which may be related to the socio-economic level of the churches they describe. Gifford, in a forthcoming book on Christianity in Kenya, much of which is devoted to churches following the Prosperity Gospel, describes the middle class and professional status of the followers of certain very large churches whose message is 'broadly evangelical, urging a moral life, stressing personal commitment but with social responsibility' (chapter 5). They are 'involved in some sort of outreach to the poor', and are governed by 'properly constituted boards', and at the same time heavily focused on warding off or expelling evil spirits and on achieving a prosperous lifestyle. Other churches attending to lower-income sectors have a similar ideology but have a much more personalized leadership in the hands of individuals, male and female, who pursue combined religious, economic and political careers and advertise the medical and financial solutions provided for those who give up the way of sinfulness and depravity and join their churches. In contrast, for Englund, Pentecostal churches in extremely impoverished townships in Malawi – not even in the capital, but in the provinces – where people can barely afford a radio, illustrate 'the potential of religion to enhance and expand the scope of trust among impoverished Malawians' (Englund 2007: 482). He describes a situation in which 'Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals occupy one world, their shared existential predicament creating conditions for an expansion of trust' (ibid. 483) and live peaceably together in close proximity. This is a less fulminating variety of Pentecostalism in which, for example, the process of joining is stretched out over many stages and an extended period of time in contrast to the spectacular conversions recounted in churches in Brazil and among the followers of Kenyan churches described by Gifford. At the same time, in the Malawi township the Pentecostal culture does not focus on a rupture with indigenous witchcraft and possession. Some congregations have adopted elections for church offices, but the fear of dirty tricks (essentially witchcraft) leads some church followers to stay away on election day, leaving the pastor to appoint the officers. Possibly, there is an association between spectacular possessions and conversions, (relatively) middle class followings and church size which has yet to be explored. Much of the literature has tended to treat Pentecostalism as a fairly unified phenomenon, recognizing principally the difference between small-scale chapel-based churches and the mega-churches known as neo-Pentecostal. But as we unpack the phenomenon into component variables certain sorts of typologies come into question. Size is not necessarily directly related to the centralization of authority, socio-economic status is no necessarily related to the invocation of magic or exorcism. There does, however, seem to one

constant factor: the absence of visible institutionalized procedures for decision-making where growth is fastest and magic, witchcraft and prosperity are dominant themes – even if rituals themselves are institutionalized.

This concern links in with Putnam's Italy book, which was more directly concerned with trust and its importance for the development of modern institutions, leaving social capital to emerge at the end as an overarching explanatory variable. For the problem in Italy's regionalization – the prism through which Putnam examined Italian political culture - was that in the South, with its patronage-ridden politics and its pattern of social loyalties revolving around family and extended kin, regional government had difficulty in laying down a basis of legitimacy for modern state administration, while in the North, with a tradition of popular participation, these difficulties were far less pronounced. Of course, matters are more complicated[2], but that was the core concluding argument. Now evangelical churches we have cited share these 'Southern Italian' characteristics to some extent: authority may not be entirely family-based, but it is usually personalized in the figure of the pastor. In the Assemblies of God in Brazil, for example, the President of a state convention, which is the *de facto* locus of power (rather than the national organization which is a loose confederation), routinely holds office for decades and if he passes it on to his son nothing would be thought strange (Lehmann 1996). The Mexican-based *La Luz del Mundo* church, whose origins are not Pentecostal at all but whose modern structure and ethos is very close to neo-Pentecostal, practices a clear succession from father to son (de la Torre 1993). Contrast these with the Church of England or the Catholic Church whose procedures are more elaborate and presumably more transparent, though still the voice of the laity is secondary or, in Catholicism, unheard. In both of these parishioners and followers have a wide scope for running institutions with little or no hierarchical interference: charities, fiesta management, Christian Base Communities, Sunday School, etc. are operated with varying degrees of independence from hierarchical control. Crucially, great institutions have mechanisms for ensuring a degree of recourse against abuse of power. These may not always be used

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[2] Notably because no sooner had the book been published than Italy's entire political system was engulfed by the fistful of corruption scandals known as the *mani pulite* inquiries. These led eventually to a complete implosion of the parties as they then were: the Christian Democrats and the Socialists were dissolved, as were the Communists. The scandals started not in the South but in the North, arising from deals involving the building of the Milan metro for example. It would nevertheless be wrong to draw conclusions from these scandals involving the elite about the tenor of social relationships in the streets and neighbourhoods of Northern Italy.

appropriately or when necessary as is illustrated by the sex scandals which have engulfed the US Church, the Irish church, other Catholic provinces, and the *Legionarios de Cristo* in recent years, and the brick wall encountered by African nuns who sought some redress against the sexual exploitation they had suffered from priests (Cornwell 2004) - but at least in theory they do exist: in Pentecostal and fundamentalist organizations, Christian or Jewish, avenues of recourse against abuse of power do not exist. They have powerful leaders and apparently followers trust these leaders; but that word 'trust' needs dissection: their trust is in individuals, not guaranteed or protected by an institutional apparatus governing the exercise of their authority as leaders.

These examples point to a structural tension, even a trade-off in the model of social capital, between trust and participation. The trustworthiness of institutions depends on a certain degree of impersonality or transparency, so as they also become more trustworthy they become less participatory and more bureaucratic – leading ultimately to precisely the virtual participation and personal disengagement which in Putnam's eyes do not feed or reflect social capital, and which is often thought to weaken the appeal of the more institutionalized churches. It is also true that for Putnam the 'hot' social capital which evangelicals promote is too partisan, too exclusionary of others: it does not feed the community at large. Rather – at least in his role as a promoter of social capital - Putnam approves of a colder version, in which people participate in several different fields and with several different networks and spread the practice of association and civilized debate. In this version, associations are more institutionalized: they have committees whose secretaries take minutes, they hold elections, they distribute managerial roles widely, but they are less aggressive campaigners, more open to debate. At the same time Putnam sees much benefit to the general good (though he does not use exactly that term) from personal participation. Face to face participation forces people to engage with one another, while participation through for example radio phone-ins and, one might add, mass meetings, does not provide a forum for 'real conversations' and 'democratic feedback' (p. 341): such virtual participation rather stimulates and rewards polarized and uncompromising stances, in addition to the polarizing effects of the professionalization of leadership in large-scale voluntary organizations, as mentioned above. To this I would add that there is much in civic association which requires us to stand up and appear in public, something for which face-to-face participation does not necessarily train us. Maybe some people just prefer to remain in the intimacy of their immediate circle, creating a quasi-psychological limit to the total quantity of public life a community or society can produce;

and maybe, also, there is to some extent, but only to some extent, a pay-off between hot and cold forms of social capital. Some cases may be a bit too hot for comfort, while others, which because of their institutionalization may potentially contribute more to the general good, may be too cold to fuel participation, and may have a bias against risk-taking and innovation.

Englund takes a few swipes at universalist 'neoliberal' concepts of citizenship, but there are elements of that in Pentecostalism. This is particularly noticeable if we consider the place of women in the churches. Pentecostal women are more or less systematically excluded from positions of leadership - save in several very large ones mentioned by Gifford which have been set up by a woman – although they are ubiquitous in subordinate roles and according to most observers, and to my own observations in Brazil, constitute the majority among worshippers, especially on weekdays. On the other hand my field research in Brazil in the 1990s yielded a discourse of citizenship among women: membership of the church was a liberation from untold sufferings at the hands of husbands and other men, and it mattered not if they were asked to sweep the church floor. The church offered them their only opportunity to be a type of citizen, that is to be treated on the same terms as everybody else, to be a member of an institution. No wonder they spoke enthusiastically about their weekly tithe: my interpretation is that they did not want to receive alms, they wanted to pay their membership like everybody else. To be sure they were not fully equal participants. But their membership should be compared with the absence of public membership in any other sphere of their lives.

More middle class people, for their part, as explained by Meyer and Laurent in separate studies in Ghana and Burkina Fasso (Meyer 1998; Laurent 2001), may not always be in search of citizenship in Pentecostalism. In these articles we see them finding in the church a refuge against the curses and spells of disappointed relatives who press successful kin to support their extended families by taking their children into their homes so they can attend urban schools, to help them out with living costs and so on. They are trying to construct the nuclear family idealized by neo-Pentecostalism and they do not want their road map (some might say their bourgeois idyll) to be shattered by a flood of embarrassing relatives 'up from the country'. Pastors provide exorcism which expels the devils sent by malevolent others to destroy people's lives, and the church community provides a social network in support. These are people who may be adopting a more modern lifestyle – smaller families, more individualistic – but they may also veer towards magical remedies to protect that lifestyle in which they may well have invested significant financial and psychological resources.

Pentecostal engagement with the spirits of possession is deeply ambiguous as many observers have pointed out (Lehmann 2001). Nothing could undermine trust and institutionalization more than dependence on the antics of a sorcerer. The Universal Church like all neo-Pentecostal organizations inveighs violently against the spirits – to the extent that in Brazil the Movimento Negro organizes protest marches in defence of religious freedom![3] Yet at the same time they play on the same ambiguities. When the Universal Church set up in Uruguay and Argentina it is said that first it had to explain to to its potential followers that they were possessed by demons whom they had never heard of – so as then to exorcize them...

Once again the diversity of Pentecostal experience precludes over-ambitious generalization about the relationship between magical powers, authority patterns and institutionalization. In Africa David Maxwell recounts how the movement adopted different strategies at different times in this respect: when the British were in command, denouncing witchcraft, they engaged with it, but later the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (AOGA) evolved. In an evocative passage Maxwell describes the evolution of a young man who once played the *Mbira* – a type of guitar – to pacify or expel demons – now just played it 'for God': it had lost its associations with the possession cults and could be embraced and used as an instrument of worship' (Maxwell 2006: 106). In another trajectory, the AOGA managed somehow to distance itself from the armed rebellions against the white regime – which it referred to as terrorists – while at the same time adopting a nationalist theology describing Jesus as a 'black man' and reclaiming the Bible for Africa. And finally Maxwell describes the way in which after Independence it entered into an alliance with the Mugabe regime and developed into a satrapy under the firm one-man rule of its leader, Ezekiel Guti.

A discussion of authority in Pentecosal churches cannot omit the question of their funding, especially in the light of the interest expressed in somehow mobilizing religion for development by multilateral and bilateral aid institutions. The standard model is that of

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[3] On 21 September 2008 a 'Caminhada em Defesa da Liberdade Religiosa' (March in Defence of Religious Freedom) took place in Rio de Janeiro. Supported by members of the State Assembly and the Secretaria for Racial Equality, the President of the Jewish Federation of Rio, the Catholic Church and various dignitaries. The march was also part of the electoral campaign against a Bishop of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God who was candidate for the Governorship of the state, and whose Church has been in the forefront of campaigns against Afro-Brazilian religion, regarded by the Universal Church as the work of diabolic forces.

membership entitlement based on monthly contributions of 10 per cent of income. There is flexibility, especially among the very poor, as Englund describes, and Garma Navarro refers to tithes given in crops and animals in rural areas of Mexico, and to exemptions for those who are not in work (Garma Navarro 2004: 158 ff.). But the 10 per cent rule is the norm and, compared with Catholic and Anglican churches, where offerings are discrete and mention of financial issues largely an embarrassment, Pentecostal pastors and preachers make frequent and sometimes insistent mention f the subject. Neo-Pentecostal churches are particularly well known also for appeals for additional voluntary donations over and above the obligator tithe. The management of these funds is usually not a matter for discussion with anthropologists, or with lay members – and in most cases pastors, especially in small churches, are risk-takers, even entrepreneurs, maintaining building and contents as their personal property.

Church funding – tithing – is a central element of the Pentecostal imaginary not only on account of its persistence as a theme in services, but also because in neo-Pentecostal rhetoric it is linked to the Prosperity Gospel. In the much-repeated motto of the Universal Church 'it is only by giving that you shall receive (a phrase originally coined by St. Francis in the 13th century); similar messages are repeated in Ghanaian churches observed by Gifford, linked to the threat of punishment for those who do not fulfil their obligation: those who fail to pay their tithes 'take Gods tithe' and bring themselves under a curse', whereas if you pay your tithe you will succeed, and it is through worldly success that 'God's blessing' is evidenced (Gifford 2004: 62). Neo- Pentecostalism, which features mostly large-scale centralized, and often globalized, churches, proclaims contribution as a way to achieve health, family peace and prosperity, as an exchange with the divine, but mediated by humans. Interestingly, in Garma Navarro's cases, which are small to medium-sized, as churches become more institutionalized, as they look more to educated pastors when making appointments, so the mediation shifts more into the hands of lay members, while officialdom distances itself from the Gifts of the Spirit (ibid.). But the trade mark of mega-churches and others which have 'bought in to' the Prosperity Gospel is the contrasting strategy of centralizing those gifts and retaining a distance vis-à-vis lay members – a relationship captured in the Brazilian phrase 'o *fast-food* da religião' (essentially the 'Macdonaldization' of religion) and Ilana van Wyck's 'church of strangers'. In Gifford's Kenyan and Ghanaian examples the message is uncomprisingly focused on financial wellbeing. Replicate much that one can hear for example in the Universal Church in many countries, preachers adopt a this-worldly version of the Old Testament prophetic vision. In the place of visions of a plain full of bones brought back to life

by prophecy (Ezekiel 37) as an analogy of the restoration of Israel to her rightful land, or Jerusalem brought back to wealth and righteousness (Isaiah 60, 61), they offer this-worldly visions of 'houses, cars, gold and silver' delivered immediately. National revival is a matter of economics: 'the Bible does not say that good governance exalts a nation, or that good policies exalt a nation. Any time God visits a nation the economy of that nation changes. Like the dry bones of Ezekiel, Ghana will rise again!' (Gifford 2004: 163-4). There is no reference to projects or to mutual aid among followers or to any collective communal ethos, but that is not necessarily surprising. Prophetic texts are captivating as myth and poesy, but their meaning is endlessly and inherently debatable, and subject to the assumptions and expectations of particular times and places. The humanistic, peace-loving Western liberal reading of that text of Isaiah is not the only one available, and one can quite easily imagine a more this-worldly interpretation by modern Latin American or African church-builders.

Maybe eventually these churches will institutionalize and thus become more attuned to the requirements of the project business – but in the meantime agencies might beware of the sorts of choices they might have to make if they became involved with them. While the rhetoric of poverty reduction might draw them to small local chaps, the need for a viable interlocutor will point to the more middle-class churches which might have at least the appearance of modern organization – yet these are also quite often the churches most drawn to the Prosperity Gospel, as illustrated by Gifford, and also Birgit Meyer (Meyer 1995; Meyer 1998).

Generalizing about Pentecostalism is becoming more and more treacherous: as ethnographies continue to pour out individuals' personal recollections of fieldwork becomes less and less reliable as guides to what happens elsewhere, yet the subject does not, to say the least, easily lend itself to the quantitative methodology which would allow us to use words like 'typical' or average'. For if Gifford, Maxwell, Meyer and Laurent seem typical for Africa and echo much from Latin America, we also find in Garma Navarro's study in one suburb of Mexico City's vast conurbation indications of the routinization of charisma, the rationalization of authority through education and qualification, the implementation of strategies to tame spontaneity by ritualizing the trance experience/performance (p.112) by restricting the authority to interpret prophecies uttered by lay members (p.117) by channeling glossolalia ('speaking in tongues') through music (p. 108) and by issuing guidelines mapping the path to gifts of the spirit (undermining their spontaneous character but strengthening pastoral control over them and their interpretation). But this is not a package of mutually correlated trends

towards participation and professionalism: the only church in Garma Navarro's sudy which opened its books to the membership was also the one where authority was most highly concentrated in one individual (p. 165-6).

We are told repeatedly - by David Martin (Martin 2001) and also by rational choice theorists (Stark and Finke 2000) - that the most institutionalized churches often rest upon scant real associative life. They are described as a moribund bureaucracy while in contrast the movements of renewal and return such as Pentecostals are an example of 'hot' religion, mobilizing the faithful in their hundreds and thousands. But the story can hardly end there. Even a moribund bureaucracy may be heir to a stock of social capital and this type of capital, unlike financial capital, though not very active, having been painfully built up, is not easily frittered away (Coleman 1988). We see this in the curious legitimacy of the Church of England which, despite declining attendance and financial contributions in many places, still remains a treasured piece of English culture, and indeed of English-speaking culture worldwide[4], so that the largely non-churchgoing public and the thoroughly irreverent media express vehement opinions on issues such as the sex life of priests and whether the heir or heiress to the throne should marry a divorcee. Church figures' pronouncements on the issues of the day are a routine matter of public debate (unlike the views of Pentecostal pastors). The Church and its buildings offer a place exempt from social strife in troubled times and places, just as clergy have played the role of peacemakers or brokers in civil conflicts in Ireland and in many other parts of the world. These stodgy churches are treated almost unthinkingly like a resource for society as a whole, and that illustrates their wealth of social capital.

A condition of the existence of social capital is its infectious, bonding potential: unlike financial capital it increases as it is spent, and we can see this when we notice how religious organizations give birth to *other* organizations which may create opportunities for civic participation even when the Church hierarchy itself is rather closed or inward-looking: Base Christian Communities, NGOs, schools, religious orders and medical institutions… The Church of England, one way or another invented much of the education system in Britain and in its African colonies, and the Catholic Church invented health care as well as education in many countries, just as Christianity invented secularism. Secularism itself – a set of

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[4] As witness the ferocious debates about same-sex marriages and homosexual priests in the worldwide Anglican communion and the controversies regularly stirred up by Archbishops of Canterbury and others. .

institutions for regulating the relationship between the religious and the everyday sphere of politics – was invented by the Christian Church. Charles Taylor has said that 'One of the motives for defining a space of the secular has always been theological in Christendom, and continues to be so today' (Taylor 1998), while David Martin develops the point that the aspiration of Christianity to 'cover the whole of life' generates a secular system of authority (Martin 2008)[5]. So now we must ask about the ways in which religious organizations and movements build institutions, and how they may contribute to the quantum of social capital in the societies around them.

2. Questions of authority

Yet despite the contrary examples we have found in Mexico, it is still the case that the most dynamic, fastest-growing religious movements today, in all countries, are of the 'hot' variety, strengthening internal ties and external frontiers, and showing little interest in creating institutions outside their own frontiers, and it is on these that the rest of our account will focus.

Building an institution means formulating and implementing a set of rules and rituals which set and protect boundaries, offer predictability and iteration (in rituals), and ensure trust. This may seem elementary, but in religion it touches on sensitive areas. Boundaries and rituals shape rites of passage, regulate the sex lives of followers, their marriage choices, their use of time and their family obligations. Unlike other institutions involved in such intimate matters religion straddles the public and private spheres in ways that make it impossible to be totally transparent and modern. For example, medicine and the law also straddle these spheres, but whereas doctors and lawyers are supposed to apply a specific type of knowledge only to specific areas of people's intimate lives under specified conditions and rules, in some movements, churches and sects, pastors, priests and Rabbis give instructions in unlimited

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[5] 'If Christianity covers the whole of life, comprehensively, rather than being just a ritual practice, the urge to social or imperial unity will create a universal institution, with a universal head, a *Pontifex Maximus*, sitting adjacent to the Emperor, … The result is that the space between Christianity and "the world" is converted into a space between church hierarchies and secular hierarchies, while another space emerges inside the Church between "secular" clergy and "religious" virtuosi who pursue Christian ideals in bounded communities, which are in their turn stabilised by a "rule" administered by authoritative "fathers-in-God"'.

spheres and are bound only by rules of their own making. Furthermore, when people consult pastors and Rabbis, or submit to their authority, they trust them not for their formal qualifications but for innate gifts which endow them with unconstrained authority – hence the word charisma which refers to qualities conferred by a magical procedure. So the trust placed in them can on occasion know few limits. The religious institutions generally regarded as most mainstream, hegemonic and respectable religious institutions place limits on charisma, yet even the most ponderous still retain a hint of this charismatic authority. This does not compare, however, with the most dynamic contemporary movements – evangelical Christians, Jewish *t'shuva* (return) movements, even West Bank settlers – which place far more authority in the hands of religious leaders, who themselves may have acquired their office through self-designation, and may exercise inordinate influence over the lives of their followers, diagnosing possession, conducting exorcisms, pronouncing on witchcraft accusations, dictating sexual mores and dress codes, pressuring people to donate.

This crossing of public-private boundaries goes together with a degree of closure and esotericism. In a trivial sense no institution is entirely open because all impose conditions of entry, membership or protection. But religion conditions entry in quite distinctive ways: Christian institutions, even those whose followers are mostly 'born into' their faith, require all individuals to pass certain ritual tests or to go through certain symbolic performances, to be members – baptism as a minimum, but more elaborate procedures for Pentecostals such as kneeling in public and 'accepting Jesus', and eventually baptism by total immersion. With more or less fervour and drama, all these rites of passage involve or invoke the supernatural. These considerations obviously mean that religion is not an open institution in a standard sense, and indeed the building and maintenance of frontiers is central to a religious institution or movement. The more dynamic the evangelical sects and movements, the more elaborate their rituals of joining, which is equivalent to establishing frontiers, even though they are not codified and are almost entirely unspoken. Secularized Jews and Muslims who adopt a wholly new way of life in returning to strict observance, change the way they dress, the way they talk, the way they walk, where they live, their jobs, and so on until they have burnt their bridges with their previous life. In both cases there are many stages as a person moves from being – in the evangelical case – a regular attendant, to 'accepting Jesus', to paying dues, to

receiving gifts of the Spirit (speaking in tongues, the gift of oratory and so on[6]), being entrusted with small jobs like sweeping the Church, and gradually ascending to teaching Sunday school, patrolling the aisles during services, and preaching.[7]

All these ritual practices draw and thicken frontiers and thus close the organizations off to outsiders. The campaigning ethos of evangelicals opens certain doors, but does not open the organization; rather the contrary: the most evangelical (the Jewish Lubavitch sect, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God) are the most secretive. Researchers are made acutely aware of this when they appreciate that certain subjects – notably money, internal politics and decision-making – are off-limits, and also when they realise how hard – indeed impossible - it is to feign membership: even where dress seems not to be a badge of belonging, an outsider stands out and is aware of standing out.

So, despite great commitment by followers, their ability to generate social capital is in doubt, and this for structural, not incidental, reasons arising from core features. Even when they have been secularized religious organizations are not like others: and conversion-led and fundamentalist movements are particularly distinct, because healing and exorcism come into play, because their followers have often (not always) burnt their bridges, because they place few institutional limits on leaders' authority.

3. Sacrifice

Together with thick frontiers goes an apparently above average willingness among followers to contribute financially, though the closed character of the organization means that reliable data are unobtainable on this point. And the willingness to give is particularly impressive in the light of the low income groups who are the prime constituency of Pentecostal churches.[8]

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[6] I Corinthians 12:8-10. Wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues

[7] A pattern observed during fieldwork in Brazil in the 1990s, especially in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.

[8] An extensive statistical analysis of religion in Brazil conducted by the 'Economía Social das Religiões' programme at the Fundação Getulio Vargas (2007) shows that family income among Pentecostals was one quarter less than among Catholics (but three quarters less than followers of Oriental religions!) and that average (individual) income was also one third less than that of the population as a whole. The results are available on

The demands imposed on followers by conversion-led movements range from those which try to involve them in the management and administration of the church, and which recognize gifts of the spirit among even the humblest, to those who treat their followers almost as customers at a supermarket. Therefore we can develop an analytical framework which would allow us to unpack church organization and religious participation and see what factors influence participation and contribution by followers to their organizations and ultimately to society generally.

In responding to the question why those religious organizations which impose the most stringent demands seem to attract and retain so many followers, it is claimed by rational choice (or supply-side) theorists of religion not only that they provide benefits to them in the form of charity, solidarity and shared facilities, but also, crucially, that the often demanding sacrifices they expect ensure that only true believers will join, while free riders will be discouraged (Iannacone 1997; Berman 2000). Paradoxically, the stringency of demands, at least up to a point, ensures individuals will contribute and also benefit. These explanations largely eschew ideological choices and focus on the everyday life of the people concerned – indeed this approach would be better called the 'everyday life approach', because it attaches much importance to the strategies individuals adopt in their daily lives and does not require always uncertain assumptions about the relationship between individuals' professed beliefs and their actions.

The rational choice approach is not very good at explaining the religious aspects of religious participation: it works best when benefits of membership in a 'club' (economists' technical term) are material and observable: for example in Israel, where direct and indirect government subsidies flow into the institutions of ultra-Orthodox Judaism, and where men who study Torah full time are exempt from military service, the incentive to free ride to avoid military service could be substantial, and so the leaders of the ultra-Orthodox institutions (yeshiva or study centre heads, and dynastic or quasi-dynastic Chassidic authorities) have over time taken measures to ensure that those who do benefit from these provisions are sincere in their

the internet at http://www4.fgv.br The data are derived from Census microdata and the Family Budget Surveys conducted by the Government Statistical Institute (IBGE) for 2003. The study also confirms that Pentecostals also give more generously to their churches: 2.34 per cent of their family income, compared with 0.71 per cent for Catholics: in absolute terms their donations are three times as great as those of the Catholics.

adherence, or at least behave as if they were (Berman 2000). Among Chassidic Jews there is quite often a division of labour between those who study or otherwise devote themselves to full-time religious activity and those who are involved in business. The latter make large donations to the religious institutions, so again, to keep the funds flowing, the leadership must make sure that these donations only support the true believers. Pentecostals in Latin America, and perhaps elsewhere, have a reputation as honest and hard-working employees, so they must guard against impostors. This self-protection is helped (though perhaps not exactly 'caused') by the imposition of very austere dress codes – as among Chassidim and other ultra-Orthodox Jews - of the sort which impostors would find irksome. The Brazilian *Deus é Amor* church (Lehmann 1996) offers an extreme example among Pentecostals of an austere dress code, but others, including those who proclaim the apparently hedonistic Prosperity Gospel, also have ways, perhaps less intrusive or draconian, of imposing conformity in dress and family life, and in forbidding tobacco and alcohol consumption (which are not forbidden by the ultra-Orthodox Jews). Individuals can for example be temporarily excluded from church or from certain rituals for misbehaviour relating to their sex lives, for consuming alcohol or tobacco, or for failing to pay their tithes. This of course is in addition to the demand for tithes, and sometimes donations beyond the tithe, in all Pentecostal churches, from the largest federations to the tiniest local chapel: again, some make the appeal during services and spectacular public gatherings, others more discretely. Berman and Iannacone expound a challenging thesis according to which the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Hezbollah and Hamas all accentuated the 'required levels of sacrifice' precisely when they received substantial external funding. This enabled Hezbollah and Hamas to branch into social assistance on a very large scale and thus, either because they would then become an attractive target for free riders, or perhaps because these resources gave them greatly increased power, they ratcheted up the impositions on their followers even to the point of using violence against them (Berman and Iannacone 2006).

But religion would not be religion if the benefits of affiliation were entirely material and observable. One fundamental way in which religion differs from other 'clubs' is in the uncertainty and intangibility of its benefits for individuals (*inter alia* salvation, divine healing, eternal life, peace of mind, overcoming infertility). Rational choice theorists, who are concerned with individuals, deal with this by conjuring 'compensators' out of an idiosyncratic psychology of their own. 'Most people desire immortality', their prime exponent, Rodney Stark, tells us, (Stark 1997) but do they? In Stark's understanding a compensator

compensates for the unachievable desires which humans are so to speak condemned to harbour: thus compensation for mortality can be obtained, for example, by following a religion's instructions about how to achieve salvation: more a consolation, surely, than a compensation.

I propose a different assumption: religious activists and officials try to place their followers and potential followers in a position where their choices are limited: at one extreme the limitations are light, at the other they are strict. Organizations achieve their ability to enforce these limitations – their power – by various means: controlling reproduction and influencing the upbringing and education of new generations; attracting streams of converts who become highly dependent on the organization; obtaining resources from the state and allocating them in part as incentives among followers and movement activities. Englund's account of the disputes arising from the availability of foreign donations among Malawi Pentecostal leaders are instructive in this regard (Englund 2007), and offer a less menacing instance than the Taliban. Maxwell's account of the very large Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa describes the mobilization of women as so successful that it brought in more funds than foreign donations (Maxwell 2006: 159), but the leadership continued to use scholarships and travel opportunities as rewards for their pastors.

Leaders, then, exercise power to limit the alternatives and open opportunities available to their followers, so as to encourage compliant behaviour, thus framing their choices. It is not all about patronage, by any means – for otherwise would not their followers just join the masses of political hangers-on? And millions of Pentecostals frequent tiny chapels whose pastors have precious few material resources. Crucially, their power hinges on the inherently intangible and uncertain character of religious rewards. By the time we know whether we have been saved, will it not, after all, be too late?

These manipulations of uncertainty confer added power on pastors: if a cure is successful the pastor's influence is enhanced, more people will come to him and his coffers will bulge. More usually the outcome is in doubt and the respective responsibilities of healer, exorcist and sufferer in even greater doubt. The pastor or church worker can capitalize on his or her monopoly of access to the supernatural by suggesting the cure was administered by an impostor or by someone similarly possessed, or that it is the sufferer him or herself who, by hiding something, is responsible, or maybe that the devils are just too powerful. The model so

far indicates that these charismatic and fundamentalist movements can build institutions and can generate trusting and transparent relationships through them. However, in their different ways they must also, if they are to preserve their frontiers and hold on to their followings, maintain a magical and mysterious dimension which is the preserve of personalistic, uncertain, highly manipulative and power-ridden relationships, in which trust is never free of fear.

But authority and power cannot rely entirely on manipulation and opacity. There are pressures for transparency too. Wealthy persons or institutions, like Malawi preachers' US-based sponsors, who entrust funds to a religious organization rather than spreading it among individuals (perhaps so as to be spared pressures from petitioners, scroungers and hangers-on) probably want, among other things, some degree of confidence that the funds will be properly spent. On the other side, those who have worked to benefit from their largesse want to be assured individually that they will benefit personally, and that others will not benefit unduly. So, in a perfect world, everyone has an interest in a rational, impersonal and highly institutionalized method of distributing the benefits.

Of course information is never perfect or equitably distributed, and so transparency is not always available, but in the religious field, because the 'headline' outcomes are not merely uncertain but unknowable, the problem is more delicate than in business, say, or even education. Although individuals know that they can deceive one another and are also aware in principle that if they persist in deceiving one another, the 'moral basis of community life' will founder (Atran 2003: 117), there is always a risk that people will try to 'get away with' something. That is why witches and mafia, who live by deception and by doing deals behind the backs of others, are held up as examples of what can go wrong, but that is also why they are feared (Lehmann 2001). It is also why special powers are attributed to charismatic individuals, who are not only prepared to risk sacrifice, but are said to possess charismatic gifts and special powers of insight.

So, somehow, the leader has to tread a delicate path between rational authority and supernatural empowerment. If the balance goes too far towards the former, then the institution loses its supernatural qualities and comes to resemble a company or a legal apparatus. If it goes too far the other way it can go to the extreme of self-destructive cults, though more likely it will just fail to develop and rise and fall with one single leader.

Putnam's chapter on religious participation in *Bowling Alone* shows sustained high levels of involvement in associative life on the part of people who profess a religion, but also shows that this involvement is concentrated among evangelicals, and evangelicals tend to be inward-looking, strengthening the ties binding their own communities but not those which bind the community as a whole – though there are exceptions (Putnam 2000: 78).[9] His underlying distinction is between ties which intensify relations within a certain social milieu and those which stretch beyond it (p.22). His point was that although evangelical religion encourages intense social interaction, it tends toward exclusiveness and is not of the kind which encourages civic life and democratic deliberation by bringing disparate people together in meaningful interaction.

Pentecostals for their part, in our experience and in the literature, clearly develop much bonding social capital, but they have not invested in the more trust-based transparent provision which is less reliant on personal relationships. The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, which was founded in Brazil in the late 1970s, and now is a worldwide organization, breaks with this introspectiveness but replaces it with an opaque centralized management and the 'supermarket' style of religiosity to which we have alluded: contrasted with the classic decentralized pattern of small tightly-knit chapels, it inspired the concept of neo-Pentecostalism. Mobilizing concepts of possession and 'liberation' (exorcism) with great brio, engaging with and also denouncing indigenous possession cults wherever it finds itself (Lehmann 2001), it converts classic themes of Pentecostalism into high drama (Campos 1997) Not for nothing are so many of its churches located in disused and reconstructed cinemas. It also departs from the classical model by rotating preachers between churches to prevent them from developing personal ties to church followers. Here the preachers and the church workers embody and manage the cures and exorcisms, while the managerial apparatus which deploys them takes care of finance. It is not precisely transparent – far from it – but it is a novel way,

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[9] Later, buried in a footnote, there is the remark that 'churches organized congregationally, such as Protestant denominations, tend to provide more opportunities for parishioners to build civic skills than do hierarchically organized churches, including Catholic and evangelical denominations' (p. 494, based on (Verba, Schlozman et al. 1995). Putnam's implicit classification of churches is a little misleading because he describes evangelical denominations (normally known as sects) as 'hierarchical' whereas this term is usually applied to the Catholic and Anglican churches with their hierarchy of bishops and archbishops – but he presumably means to say something like 'authoritarian', and to imply that Protestant denominations like Lutherans and Episcopalians and Methodists are less authoritarian than evangelicals, even though evangelicals would not recognize themselves in the word 'hierarchy'.

in Pentecostalism, of dividing the manipulation of magical uncertainty from the administration of the church's resources. As the 'supermarket' metaphor implies, this Church cannot be described as exclusive or inward-looking, but it encourages neither internal ties nor external ones, acting more like a 'personal service church' (Lehmann 1996: 191). However, it does get involved in politics, and in a way which is quite unusual for religious organizations – not as a lobby or pressure group, but as itself.

4. Political involvements

If the benefits promised by religion are unknowable, the pastors of the churches have shown not a little enthusiasm for political involvement, as the literature on Africa, especially the work of Paul Gifford, recounts, and as Paul Freston has done for the rest of the world (Freston 2001). Apart from intangible benefits, church membership helps people to find jobs, pastors try hard to get on good terms with politicians, irrespective of ideology, and their ability to deliver a small but solid bloc of votes makes politicians value their support (even where there are not free elections) – so they offer their supporters access to political patronage.

The involvement of evangelical pastors in politics is becoming increasingly visible. In Brazil the last Congress had an evangelical 'bancada' (caucus) of 80 members, though this was cut in half in the 2006 elections due, some say, to their involvement in corruption scandals. In systems of proportional representation religious leaders are valued for their ability to deliver secure, if not necessarily large, nuggets of votes, especially in some proportional systems, like the Brazilian, where people may have several votes to elect several Deputies for a particular constituency. In Brazil politicians, especially – but not exclusively those of the left - disdained the evangelical vote until the late 1990s, regarding them as irremediably opposed to anything remotely connected with the atheistic creed of marxism, or else simply failing to notice them. But since then that has changed, and the victorious candidate of the left in 1992 and 1996, Lula, made sure he had an evangelical running mate. But the evangelical candidates for their part attached themselves to various parties, exhibiting no ideological consistency at all. Indeed, experience in Brazil and other countries seems to show that the one consistent feature of evangelical politicians is that they have little ideological interest, save an opposition to same-sex marriage and the death penalty. They also make no noticeable intervention in debates on major issues like poverty, human rights, security, land reform and so on – in contrast to the Catholic Church. In Africa the story is similar: evangelical pastors are in

politics for the benefits they or their churches can obtain. This pattern of what in Brazil is known as 'physiological' politics tends to detract from the social capital potential of the religious movements, shifting attention to material benefits and patronage

Conclusion

This paper has distinguished between social capital and quantitative growth, between the internal cohesion of a religious organization and its contribution to the institutional apparatus of the society in which it exists. It has also distinguished between institutionalization in core religious institutions and in organizations which have grown out of them.

We have provisionally reached the conclusion that the religious organizations which grow in circumstances which might be described as a 'social capital desert' may not exactly be providing social capital to society, even if they are empowering their leaders and providing benefits for their followers, and attracting converts and returnees (or 'reverts') in very large numbers. This is because with occasional exceptions they do not build institutions which look out, but rather focus on servicing their members. This must however be qualified, for we have seen that Pentecostal movements exhibit a vast variation, and we have also seen claims that among the very poorest of the poor, at least in one case study, the Pentecostal churches do not draw thick frontiers and are claimed to engender trust across social and religious frontiers.

The phenomenon of conversion would have an important place in any fuller explanation of sustained participation and submission to stringent requirements in evangelical sects, for whom conversion and proselytism are a *raison d'être*. This phenomenon of churches whose membership is almost entirely accounted for by converts is relatively modern – i.e. twentieth century – and has also spread to certain Jewish sects and Islamist movements where people who are, strictly speaking, returning to their own heritage, can be counted, sociologically and psychologically, as converts. This helps to empower pastors and thus helps them to impose a tight framework on the choices made by followers, because, having 'burnt their bridges', converts are heavily dependent on their new community and eager to show readiness to help and contribute. Whatever the quantities involved, or indeed the shades of conversion, ranging from those who, though born into evangelical families, still have to be 'born again' to be fully accepted, to those who come from completely secular backgrounds, the point to bear in mind is that qualitatively, conversion is a driving force in all evangelizing sects and movements.

It is, however, necessary to conclude on a cautionary note, for it might be argued that, setting aside the churches which are providing a protective apparatus for the upwardly mobile middle classes, Pentecostals are filling a deep social capital void. The discussion in this paper has been premised on the implicit assumption that religious organizations, notably Pentecostal churches, bring some degree of cohesiveness to fractured social environments. The cohesiveness may be limited to their members, and if measured it may not turn out to be very substantial, but the assumption is that the texture of social relationships at least among their followers is more cooperative and exhibits shared goals than would otherwise be the case. We could, however, turn the assumptions round and ask whether an inclination to take a positive view of religious organizations is not conditioned by the difficult circumstances themselves: where there is hardly any autonomous grassroots organization the churches stand out, reflecting the lack of alternative sources of institutional life or citizenship rather than the merits of religion as compared with other forms of popular organization in the creation of trust and institutional life. Like the informal economy, these churches are operating in a sphere where entry is very easy, competition is fierce and regulation zero. The point is brought home forcefully by a reading of Omar McRoberts' study of religious districts in Boston (Massachusetts), in which 'the glut of vacant commercial spaces… provided ample space for religious institutions looking for cheap rents' (McRoberts 2005: 139). McRoberts insists on the very high proportion of worshippers from outside the neighbourhood, but if we look to the slums of Nairobi or the favelas of Rio, where church worshippers are clearly local inhabitants, the model of depressed areas with little competition for premises still fits well. Here religious markets are totally unregulated, like the informal economic activity which proliferates, and there are no inherited monopolies or hegemonies, so the task of aspiring pastors is to attract and retain followers using the mechanisms which have been described in this paper. Stated in other terms, the churches locate themselves in difficult circumstances because they have little extra to offer in places better endowed with social capital.

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