

"The Holy Rollers are Invading Our Territory": Southern Baptist Missionaries and the Early Years of Pentecostalism in Brazil

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The Holy Rollers are invading our territory recently – Billy said the other day that he had about come to the conclusion that it was not Catholicism we had to win folks from down here but from the Pentecostals, Spiritualists, Seventh Day Adventists, and such ilk. Their preferred method of approach in Ricardo is to affirm that the Baptists are fine folks but lack just one thing, they need to be sealed by the Holy Spirit so they can cure and be cured, speak in tongues, etc. An ignorant believer can easily be led astray.

--Edith Allen, Baptist Missionary, Rio de Janeiro, 1932¹

One hot day in November of 1910, two men dressed in heavy wool suits stepped off a freighter in Belém, Pará, chief port of the lower Amazon River and rubber capital of Brazil to fulfill a divine prophecy. The equatorial weather was hot and humid, hovering somewhere around 80 degrees, not altogether unlike the Chicago summers the men had become accustomed to, though quite unlike the chilly weather of their native Sweden. Perhaps the two men took off their jackets, loosened their ties, and rolled up their shirtsleeves as they made their way through the bustling city. Or, perhaps, for propriety's sake, they kept jackets on, ties tight, and sleeves down they walked slowly through the steamy streets, stopping to rest in the shade of the mango trees which lined their way. There is a good chance they were rained on, and there is a good chance that this rain did nothing to cool them off. It is likely that rivulets of sweat dribbled down their backs as they made their way to the city's single Baptist church, somehow finding directions despite their nearly non-existent Portuguese.²

¹ Edith Allen to T. B. Ray, 27 May 1932, Southern Baptist Convention Archives, International Mission Board Missionary Correspondence (IMBMC): Allen.

² Climatic information from *Atlas do Brasil* (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, *Devisão de Geografia do Conselho Nacional de Geografia*, 1959), 10. Please note that in this paper, the terms "Southern Baptist" and "Baptist" will be used interchangeably.

One of these men was Gunnar Vingren and the other was Daniel Berg. Both were Swedish Baptists in their mid-twenties who had emigrated to the United States as teenagers. Vingren was thin and fair with a dark moustache which curled up dramatically into sharp points at each end. A Baptist pastor, he had quit school at age eleven to work as a gardener in Sweden and then as a laborer in the United States before enrolling at the Swedish Baptist seminary in Chicago. Berg, by contrast, was dark-haired and strong, with a broad physique well-suited to his work as an iron-worker. Not only were both men Baptists, they were also part of the Pentecostal movement which was sweeping eastward across the United States at the time, an as-yet uninstitutionalized movement which sought to integrate the practice of Spirit baptism into evangelical worship.³ Having begun with the founding of the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906 (with Charles Fox Parham's 1905 Bible school in Houston, Texas and 1901 Bible school in Topeka, Kansas as Azusa's direct antecedents),⁴ the movement quickly spread eastward, which is where Vingren learned of and first experienced Spirit baptism in 1910. Berg, for his part, had become Pentecostal during a visit to Sweden in 1908.⁵

³ It should be understood that, in the early 20th century, Pentecostalism was not seen as an *alternative* to traditional worship but rather an *addition* to it; it was only when mainline churches rejected the doctrine of Spirit baptism that Pentecostalism began to evolve from a movement to a collection of institutions. Spirit baptism, the essential Pentecostal belief and practice, is believed to occur when God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, descends from heaven and is incorporated by men and women who manifest the Spirit's presence in their bodies with ecstatic expressions which include shaking, rolling, running, dancing, seizing, and, especially, speaking in tongues. It traces its origins all the way back to the day of Pentecost, the moment fifty days after Jesus' resurrection when, according to the Book of Acts, Jesus' spirit descended into the bodies of his apostles.

⁴ Parham's Topeka Bible school is generally accepted as the site of the first instance of glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, in the United States. Parham, who was white, taught his tongues doctrine in Houston, where William J. Seymour, founder of the Azusa Street Mission, who was black, listened to him outside the Bible school's open windows.

⁵ It was during a visit with his childhood friend, Lewi Pethrus, the eventual leader of the Swedish Pentecostal movement, that Berg was influenced to adopt Pentecostal beliefs. Paul Freston, "Protestantes e política no Brasil: da constituinte ao impeachment" (Ph.D. diss., Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 1993), 70. This location of Berg's conversion is important as scholars typically assume that Pentecostalism is a U.S. import. Even scholars who are aware that Vingren and Berg were Swedish immigrants tend to assume, as, for example, Cecília Loreto Mariz does in *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 25, that Vingren and Berg were "Baptists who discovered the Pentecostal renewal in the United

A few months before their arrival in Brazil, at a prayer meeting held in South Bend, Indiana, God had spoken through their friend Adolfo Uldin⁶ and told the two men to “depart to preach the Gospel and the blessings of the Pentecostal awakening” in Pará, supposedly a place no one present for the prophecy had ever heard of. In fact, according to the official story, determining the location of the mysterious Pará required a trip to see the atlas at the local public library.⁷ Several months of scrounging up enough money to book passage to Brazil followed.

Upon their arrival in Pará, Vingren and Berg befriended Nelson, who generously let them stay in the dark basement of the Belém Baptist Church. Vingren dedicated himself to learning Portuguese while Berg supported them both with wages from his job at a local foundry. About six months after their arrival, with Nelson conveniently several hundred miles away,⁸ Vingren began leading prayer and healing services at the Baptist church where he preached the doctrine of baptism by the Holy Spirit. Some of the Brazilian Baptists embraced his Pentecostal message.

States.”

⁶ Adolfo Uldin is the name given by Wilson Harle Endruweit in his dissertation, “Pentecostalism in Brazil: A Historical and Theological Study of its Characteristics” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1975), 11, citing Ivar Vingren, *Gunnar Vingren, O Diário do Pioneiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Casa Publicadora das Assembléias do Deus, 1960), 20-1. However H. Joseph Carr Jr. gives the name “Olaf Uldin” in his thesis, “A Missiological Comparison of the Pentecostals, Baptists, and Churches of Christ in Brazil” (M.A. thesis, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1979), 10.

⁷ Emilio Conde, *História das Assembléias de Deus no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Casa Publicadora das Assembleias de Deus (CPAD), 1960), 14. Conde’s history, published by the publishing house of the Assemblies of God (Brazil), serves as the official history of the church. While Conde does not discuss his sources anywhere in the book, it is safe to assume that he relied very heavily on the journals of Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg: Daniel Berg, *Enviado por Deus, Memórias de Daniel Berg* (Sao Paulo: Grafica Sao Jose, 1959) and Ivar Vingren, *Gunnar Vingren, o Diário do Pioneiro* (Rio de Janeiro: CPAD, 1973). Based on my research, I believe it was more likely that Uldin had heard about Pará from the Baptist missionary Erik A. Nelson, a native Swede who had been the Southern Baptist missionary to the Amazon Valley territory (which included the state of Pará) since 1893. Freston also came to a similar conclusion.

⁸ According to SBC records, Nelson had only recently returned to Brazil for an extended furlough in the United States and, after a brief stay in Pará, left to see to his other territories. R. J. Willingham, “Sixty-Sixth Annual Report of the Foreign Mission Board Southern Baptist Convention,” Minutes from IMB Meeting, 17 May 1911, IMB Archives and Records Services, Accession No. 2686. (Hereafter cited as IMB Archives, 2686, etc.) Also Nelson to R.J. Willingham, 20 January 1911, 5 July 1912, 15 July 1912, 21 August 1912, and 27 May 1913, IMBMC: Nelson.)

Others adamantly rejected it.⁹ Forced out by a minority of the church's members, the two men and their seventeen followers founded the Apostolic Faith Mission. Seven years later, in 1918, the Mission changed its name and became the first church of the *Assembléias de Deus no Brasil* (AD), which is now, despite the splits and schisms it has endured over the years, the largest Pentecostal organization¹⁰ in the most populous Pentecostal nation in the world.¹¹

This account of events has rarely been questioned. Two Swedish men arrive in Pará by way of the United States and, as if by magic, found the fastest-growing religious movement in Brazil.¹² For the most part, it is all we know of early Pentecostal history. Scholars generally rely heavily and uncritically on the church's own accounts of their beginnings, if they pay any attention to them at all. Most focus on the 1960s and beyond, far more concerned with explaining Pentecostalism's appeal and implications than with investigating its history. This is because the salient concern of the sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists who comprise most of

⁹ According to Freston, this had happened at Vingren's Chicago church as well, and was the event that led him to leave Chicago for South Bend. Freston, "Protestantes e política," 70.

¹⁰ As André Corten states his book on Pentecostalism in Brazil, "The *Assembléia de Deus* of Brazil is the most important Pentecostal Church in the world in terms of its number of faithful, with at least 5 million members." (Corten, *Pentecostalism in Brazil: Emotion of the Poor and Theological Romanticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999), 46.)

¹¹ According to the 2000 Brazilian Census, 10.4% of Brazilians identify as Pentecostal. 10.4% of 169 million, which was Brazil's approximate 2000 population according to the U.S. Library of Congress website (<http://countrystudies.us/brazil/26.htm>), is 17.6 million. A more generous calculation results in far greater number: if Charismatics, a group which includes both Protestants and Catholics who share Pentecostal practices, are included, the resulting group, Renewalists, accounts for 49% of the (urban) Brazilian population, according to the Pew Forum's 2006 survey (<http://pewforum.org/world-affairs/countries/?CountryID=29>). That would be more than 83 million people.

¹² It should be noted that Vingren and Berg were not the first two Pentecostals to arrive in Brazil. They had been preceded by Luigi Francescon, an Italian who had also come to Brazil by way of the United States. However, because Francescon focused his efforts on the Italian emigrant community rather than on Brazilians, because the church he founded in a Presbyterian community in São Paulo—the *Congregação Cristã* (CC)—is smaller and less influential than the AD, and because the CC has even fewer published sources than the AD, Vingren and Berg presented better subjects than Francescon for this study. For a brief account of Francescon's work in Brazil, see Paul Freston, "Pentecostalism in Brazil: A Brief History," *Religion* 25 (1995): 124-5. Also see Francescon's memoir, *Histórico de Obra de Deus, Revelada pelo Espírito Santo, no Século Atual, Fourth Edition* (São Paulo: Congregação Cristã no Brasil, 1977).

the scholars who have studied Brazilian (and Latin American) Pentecostalism in any depth is identifying and explaining the present-day situation, not determining its historical development. The forty-odd years between establishment of Pentecostal churches in the 1910s and their emergence as powerful political entities in the 1950s and 60s are elided, in most studies, to focus on the second half of the twentieth century. With the exception of Paul Freston, most historians have done no better, simply relaying the version of the church's beginning published by the AD's own publishing house¹³ and focusing their scholarly efforts on later years.¹⁴

We cannot continue to overlook the history of the early years of Pentecostalism in Brazil. Consider these widely-accepted numbers: In 1900 there were no Pentecostals in Brazil, in 1930 there were 44,311, and by 1970 there were 1,418,933. To put this into perspective, consider that in 1900 there were 4,582 Baptists, 19,108 Presbyterians, and 5,596 Methodists; in 1930 there were 41,090 Baptists, 46,032 Presbyterians, and 15,480 Methodists, and by 1970 there were 295,295 Baptists, 244,030 Presbyterians, and 58,591 Methodists.¹⁵ Why did the number of Pentecostals grow so quickly? How did the Vingren and Berg—few in number, poorly funded,

¹³ These AD sources consist mainly of a handful of missionary memoirs and church-sanctioned histories. They are notoriously difficult to work with due both to their triumphalist bias and to their scarcity. As Paul Freston, an expert on Brazilian Pentecostal history and politics, has explained, Pentecostalism has little use for history, which it regards as largely irrelevant. "Taking its name from the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost," Freston writes, "it sees itself as a return to origins" and thus "there is little idea of development, since all is contained in the original event." Because Pentecostalism is understood by Pentecostals as having been created by the Holy Spirit, they see only two important historical moments—the *original Pentecost* (as related in the New Testament) and *its recovery* by those who founded the Pentecostal movement a century ago. (Paul Freston, "Contours of Latin American Pentecostalism," in *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Donald M. Lewis (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 223-4. Originally stated in his dissertation, Freston, "Protestantes e política," 64.)

¹⁴ See Appendix in Premack, "'The Holy Rollers are Invading our Territory': Southern Baptist Missionaries and the Early Years of Pentecostalism, 1910-1935" (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007).

¹⁵ Francisco Cartaxo Rolim, *Pentecostais no Brasil: Uma Interpretação Sócio-Religiosa* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1985), 104. Rolim based his figures on three sources: Erasmo Braga and K. Grubb, *The Republic of Brazil* (London: W.D.P., 1932); W. Read, *New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil* (Michigan: E.P.C. Press, 1955); "Estatística do Culto Protestante do Brasil" (no publication information given).

without institutional support—manage to gain so many converts so quickly when it had taken Baptists and other Protestant groups so much money and so many years to gain comparably so few? Why were they more successful in converting Brazilians than the Baptists and other evangelical groups who had not only more resources but also far more experience with mission work? Were they more appealing? More strategic? Just luckier?

Finding answers to these questions requires first that consider yet another question which is seldom asked: What were the origins of Brazilian Pentecostalism? Two overlooked facts need to be drawn out. First, as Freston has described, it was during a visit with his childhood friend, Lewi Pethrus, the eventual leader of the Swedish Pentecostal movement, that Berg was influenced to adopt Pentecostal beliefs.¹⁶ This location of Berg's conversion is important because scholars typically assume that Pentecostalism is a U.S. import. Even scholars who are aware that Vingren and Berg were Swedish immigrants tend to assume that Vingren and Berg were "Baptists who discovered the Pentecostal renewal in the United States."¹⁷ Second, despite sharing similar names, the AD and the U.S.-based Assembly of God have been completely separate institutions since the beginning. The churches are now affiliated, but they remain independent.¹⁸ These two pieces of information demonstrate the fallacy of assuming that Pentecostalism was a North American import. It is not that simple.

¹⁶ Paul Freston, "Protestantes e política," 70.

¹⁷ Cecília Loreto Mariz, *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 25.

¹⁸ The homonymous churches became affiliated in 1934. According to a 1982 Assemblies of God document, "Field Focus Brazil," "The work of Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg became the Brazilian Assemblies of God. Shortly after their arrival, these two young Scandinavians sent to Norway and Sweden, asking for help. The missionaries who responded were mostly Swedes. In 1934 Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stalter became the first American missionaries to join the mission. The Stalters were working in Brazil with another mission when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. After withdrawing from this mission the Stalters were appointed to Brazil by the American Assemblies of God. Shortly afterward the Orla Boyers and the Virgil Smiths also left the mission with which they were working in Brazil to join the missionary force of the American Assemblies." (Personal correspondence with Gloria Robinett, World Missions Archives, Assemblies of God, 24 Mar 2008.) Thus it is quite clear that US missionaries did not found the AD, and that they did not become involved in the organization until its third decade of existence.

Next, it is necessary to look outside of the meager Pentecostal sources for answers to questions about causes of early Pentecostal growth. One underutilized methodological approach is to make use of the extensive records of the Protestant churches that were involved in mission work in Brazil in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—a group which includes Southern Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans. All kept extensive records which include the personal and professional correspondence of missionaries and mission board members, minutes of various committees and conventions, newsletters and short magazines published for various audiences, photographs, missionary health records, and other materials. By using these sources to place the Pentecostal movement in the context of the development of other Protestant groups, we can understand how Pentecostalism gained enough traction in Brazil to be poised to take off when it did, and why Pentecostalism—and not other forms of Protestantism—exploded in the 1950s and 60s.

Of these sources, Southern Baptist records provide the most useful material for clarifying the success of Pentecostalism. Because Baptist theology, with its emphasis on direct experience, is most similar to Pentecostal theology, and because most of the early Brazilian Pentecostal churches were formed by *crentes* (Protestant believers) who left their Baptist congregations, the Baptist missionaries were most threatened by the Pentecostal presence in Brazil and therefore made note of Pentecostal activities in their journals, reports, and correspondence.¹⁹ Using Baptist sources to investigate Pentecostal history is not easy, however. Along with the fact that such sources contain their own biases, there is the challenge of staying on track. Heading north to go south, so to speak, it can be difficult to keep the ultimate destination in mind. But it is worth

¹⁹ As David Martin has argued, “Baptists had a more demotic and participatory style and they were ready and/or able to reach some of the poor and the coloured. The growing success of Baptists relative to Presbyterians presaged the future success of Pentecostals. The Pentecostals were in most respects like the Baptists, only more so.” (Martin, *Tongues of Fire*, 63.)

going out of our way in order to contrast the experiences and methods of Vingren and Berg with those of the Baptist missionaries who were so much more established in Brazil and yet found so much less success there.

In order to achieve a complete understanding of Pentecostal success, it is necessary to consider the strategies, activities, and attitudes that they did not embrace and which would have limited their success if they had done so. While still a young movement, by 1935 Pentecostalism already had twenty-five year's history in Brazil and that history explains much about its growth. Taking a comparative approach which relies on primary sources found in the missionary archives of the Southern Baptist Convention, this paper carefully examines what Vingren, Berg, and their followers did to create their extraordinary success. Unlike Catholic priests and mainline Protestant missionaries, Vingren and Berg shared their power easily and eagerly; they *needed* Brazilians to take the Pentecostal message and to spread it themselves: preaching, converting, founding churches, leading. I argue that Vingren and Berg succeeded in establishing a dynamic Pentecostal movement in Brazil because they gave Brazilians an agency which other forms of Christianity denied them.

My research tells the story of how Baptist missionaries sought to spread their faith while also maintaining their control over it, something which Vingren and Berg—operating independently, without institutional support—were neither inclined nor able to do. While the Baptist missionaries—because of their class and race biases, their educational requirements for pastors, their dependence on the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board, the political circumstances of their arrival, and the fact that many of them were women—became heavily invested, in terms of both finances and energy, in educating the Brazilian upper class, the early Pentecostals were free to focus on doing just one thing and doing it well: convincing people

to accept the Pentecostal doctrine of baptism by the Holy Spirit.

It is essential to understand that, in these early years of Protestantism in Brazil, conversion was essentially a numbers game. The more churches you could found, the more people you could convert; the more converts you had, the stronger your movement became. The efforts that mainline Protestant missionary organizations made to grow were stymied by the critical role the missionaries themselves played in the process. The main difference between the Pentecostals and the Baptists was that, once Vingren and Berg managed to convert the first 17 believers in Pará, Pentecostals no longer needed missionaries in order to establish and grow new congregations of believers.

As the church which Vingren and Berg had founded in Pará continued to spread throughout Brazil, Pentecostals continued to employ the same *modus operandi* that the Swedes had in Pará, an undertaking easily accomplished with the Baptists stretched so thin and so many of their churches lacking permanent pastors: they brought the doctrine of Spirit baptism into existing churches. For example, M. G. White reported from Bahia in 1917 of the trouble caused by “various sects at work in the field. ‘Holy Rollers’, ‘Darbyists’, ‘Independent Baptists’, and so on; *all working among the believers, instead of seeking the unsaved.*”²⁰ Similarly, a report from Mexico in 1919 described how “several good but simple-minded Baptists were carried off their feet by these pretenders,” so-called Holy Rollers who were finding so much success that special services were held to counteract their influence, as it sighed that “it seems that error flies like the wind, while truth crawls toward the goal.”²¹ If it weren’t for the strategic need to send positive,

²⁰ W. C. Taylor, “Annual Report” of the North Brazil Mission, presented at FMB meeting 16 May 1917, IMB Archives, 2693 (italics mine).

²¹ J. S. Cheavens, “Report of the North Mexico Mission,” presented at FMB meeting on 14 May 1919, IMB Archives, 2700.

self-congratulatory reports to the Board so that much-needed funds would be provided to them rather than sent to one of the other mission fields, candid reports such as this one would probably have occurred with far greater frequency.

The Pentecostals were the wolves who pounced when the shepherds were not looking, and the Baptists simply did not have enough shepherds to protect their flock. Pentecostals poached the Baptists' flock throughout their first decades in Brazil. Some lambs were forced out when they accepted the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism; some opted to leave because they were offered more autonomy by the Pentecostal shepherds; some might have joined up with the Baptists had they been given an opportunity but simply met the Pentecostals first. In 1918, Z. C. Taylor reported from Recife that the single Baptist church there "is the only church in a vast region where the people are clamoring for the gospel, and where the Spiritualists and Holy Rollers are invading the country and offering the people stones for bread." He went on, "It makes one heart-sick to see the opportunity we are losing for want of workers in that great field."²² But with only one missionary for every one million Brazilians,²³ there simply were not enough Baptist shepherds.

Why were the sheep so eager to be stolen? A main reason for Brazilians' enthusiastic response to Pentecostalism was that it empowered them. Power in the Catholic Church was held by (mostly foreign) priests; power in the mainline Protestant churches was held by foreign missionaries and Brazilian elites; power in the Pentecostal churches, however, could be held by

²² W.C. Taylor, "Report of the North Mexico Mission," presented at FMB meeting on 15 May 1918, IMB Archives, 2694.

²³ See Ginsburg's memoir, *A Missionary Adventure: An Autobiography of Solomon L. Ginsburg* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1921), 207.

anyone—and after 1930, *had* to be held by Brazilians.²⁴ This was in part a matter and theology and in a part a matter of necessity. In the case of the AD, Vingren and Berg knew they would not be able to advance their cause without Brazilian leadership and support. With limited funds and reinforcements available from abroad, they needed the Brazilians and could achieve very little without them. So while the Baptist missionaries doubted Brazilian leadership ability and continued to do so well into the 1940s, if not longer, typically doing a remarkably poor job of hiding their doubts, the Pentecostals could little afford to do so. The Brazilians were thus their equal partners from the very beginning.²⁵

As happened in Pará, *crentes* who accepted Pentecostal doctrine were expelled from their churches and founded their own. Brazilians were thus in charge of things at once, the foreigners too few in number and too dependent on Brazilian partnership for the kind of foreign/native tensions which became so problematic among the Baptists to ever be a significant concern for the Pentecostals. Unlike the Baptist missionaries, who depended on the Board to pay their salaries, assign their territories, and approve and fund their projects, the Pentecostal missionaries had no choice but to work independently because they were spreading a new religious message which was still becoming institutionalized. This enabled them—and also *compelled* them—to be far more effective than their mainline Protestant predecessors and contemporaries.

In order to fully understand the reasons for Pentecostal growth in Brazil, we need to look not only at what the first Pentecostals did but also at what they did *not* do. My comparison

²⁴ In response to escalating tensions between missionaries and Brazilians, a general meeting was held in 1930 where the decision was made that all churches would be taken over by Brazilian pastors. The decision was made on scriptural grounds; as Vingren put it himself, ‘We all believe that each congregation should be free and independent as were all the congregations mentioned in the Scriptures, and we therefore reject all kinds of organization and establishment of denominations except the foundation of local churches.’ Vingren, p. 157-8 as quoted in Endrueit, ‘Pentecostalism in Brazil,’ 34.

²⁵ See Conde, *História das AD*, 29-59, for descriptions of Brazilian pastors.

demonstrates that one of the things which most facilitated Pentecostal efforts was that, unlike the Baptists, they did not have substantial requirements for Brazilians who wished to become pastors of their own churches. The Baptists, despite founding missionary Solomon Ginsburg's 1900 warning to the Board: "Brethren, if Brazil is ever to be converted, it will only be through Brazilians [so] let us therefore prepare our men, so that in the near future they may be able to take our places," made sure that such a future was a long time coming, largely because of the way the Baptists went about preparing *their men*.²⁶ Biblical literacy was considered essential for Baptist pastors (as it was and is for other mainline Protestant pastors), and when the Baptists first arrived in Brazil in the 1880s biblical literacy for anyone other than priests was unheard of (and even for priests was unreliable).²⁷ Therefore, any Brazilian who wanted to become a leader in a mainline Protestant church—either as a pastor (an option available only to men) or as a missionary (a possibility for both women and men)—had much to learn.²⁸ The Baptists thus decided early on that they ought to follow the Presbyterians' example and focus on opening schools for the upper classes.

Founding schools in Brazil became, as missionary Z. C. Taylor put it in a 1900 letter, "the necessary outcome of missions."²⁹ Before a Brazilian could lead a Baptist church, he needed formal study of the Bible. The Baptists looked to the Presbyterians, who had been in Brazil since

²⁶ Ginsburg, "Annual Report of the Pernambuco Baptist Mission for 1900."

²⁷ In Catholic Brazil there were no versions of the Bible in the vernacular and the Latin versions were available only to priests.

²⁸ Baptist training requirements were less than those of other churches, but were still significant for people starting from nothing. Pentecostals, however, required far less: Pentecostals believed that because power and knowledge come directly from God via baptism by the Holy Spirit, they did not invest in theological training because beyond basic biblical literacy. The ability to read and interpret the Bible, while useful, was not absolutely necessary.

²⁹ Z.C. Taylor to unknown correspondent (first four pages of letter are missing from archive) circa Summer 1900, IMBMC: Taylor.

1861, for models. According to Ginsburg, who toured their school(s) in Pernambuco, the Presbyterians had found great success by investing in theological training:

They have a good church in this city, and several others in different parts of this State. I attribute their excellent success to the wisdom of their first missionaries, who, as soon as they had the opportunity, prepared some young men for the ministry, and these are spreading their cause with a zeal worthy of esteem and appreciation.³⁰

A focus on education continued to be the primary Baptist strategy over the years, mandated by the Board and supported (if not always enthusiastically embraced) by missionaries in the field.

Over thirty years after Taylor and Ginsburg first urged them to do so, the Board continued to believe, as Executive Secretary Charles E. Maddry wrote to missionary Edith Allen in 1934, “that the hope for our work in all lands is through the young people . . . [and] we ought to concentrate on institutions, agencies and individuals that train our young people for future leadership.”³¹ Allen, for her part, despite feeling confined by her teaching duties in Rio and wishing she could “go to some town where there is no work and build up a work from the ground” and experience that “soul satisfaction [found] in the constant fresh contacts in talking to others about the gospel who have not heard it that nothing in a school routine can substitute,” also believed in the importance of the Mission’s educational efforts. “I feel more and more and the years pass,” she wrote to Maddry, “that some of us have got to give our time and strength to these institutions that must prepare the leaders for the work out on the fields, and in that conviction am glad I can serve here in Rio college.”³² A month later she repeated those sentiments (perhaps trying to convince herself she believed them), writing that experience

³⁰ Ginsburg, “Annual Report of the Pernambuco Baptist Mission for 1900.”

³¹ O. E. Maddry to Edith Allen, 14 December 1934, IMBMC: Allen.

³² Edith Allen to O. E. Maddry, 23 September 1934, IMBMC: Allen.

“convinces me more and more that the most lasting results come from training the children into young people capable of serving the church, and preparing a few of the choice ones for leadership” and “right there comes in the vital need of our college and its contribution to the denominational development.”³³

Forty years later, the general consensus among the Baptist missionaries, according to Allen, was that Brazilians were still not yet ready to take over, for “moral character and stability aren’t developed in one generation.”³⁴ Others of her letters offer evidence which bolsters her assertion that this opinion was widely held. Describing Daniel de Sarmo, who was made secretary of the Brazilian Baptist Convention in 1931, Allen wrote that “his principal peril will be in speaking too frankly to the Brasilians about their faults. *He sees them as we do*, and has been exceedingly plainspoken, which isn’t always the best thing.”³⁵ And, a few years later, when some of her comments on Brazilian (in)competence were excerpted from a letter she had written to Maddry—for example, “that there is considerable character building to be done yet, before we will have a Brazilian constituency in condition to take over full responsibility of the work”—and published in the *Baptist Courier* without her permission, she chided her correspondent that “the Brazilians know that *most of us feel that way*, and it does not help any to see it in cold black and white.”³⁶

It certainly did not help to see it spelled out so clearly, as it only served to fuel the resentment the Brazilians already harbored toward the foreigners. After all, the Baptist

³³ Edith Allen to O.E. Maddry, 19 November 1934.

³⁴ Edith Allen to Ruth Ford, 20 February 1940, IMBMC: Allen.

³⁵ Edith Allen to T. B. Ray, 20 November 1931 (italics mine).

³⁶ Edith Allen, “Notes From Rio de Janeiro,” *The Baptist Courier*, 5 December 1935, and Edith Allen to O.E. Maddry, 31 December 1935, IMBMC: Allen (italics mine).

missionaries were certainly aware of the *crentes*' eagerness to spread the evangelical message. In his memoir, Ginsburg described the enthusiasm of the converted Brazilians. "If there is one characteristic that distinguishes the Brazilian convert more than any other it is his desire to tell the good news to others," wrote Ginsburg. "He just bubbles over with joy and he cannot keep quiet. He must go out and tell others."³⁷ Typically the Baptists were happy to see Brazilians bringing their friends, relatives, and neighbors to Protestantism, but most were reluctant to give the kind of real leadership roles which the Pentecostals so liberally offered.

It became such a problem for the Baptists that they even had a special term for Brazilians who wanted the missionaries to grant them more power: they were called "radicals" by the missionaries and the Board. It was a much-discussed problem which often came to a head at conventions. For example, Allen reported that her 1931 district convention sessions "were even more disquieting than those of last year" as "the radicals were plainly in the ascendancy, and the anti-missionary spirit was manifest more than once."³⁸ A few months later she reported that "some of the missionaries are worried at radical croppings out in different places."³⁹

The efforts that the missionaries and the Board made to address the problem did little to help. For example, in a 1931 letter T. B. Ray encouraged missionaries to give contributions toward Brazilian pastors' salaries to their churches rather than directly to the men themselves, for "if the Mission pays directly to a pastor any portion of his salary, that reduces by so much his responsibility to his church." Ray continued, "A pastor ought to be made to feel that first of all

³⁷ Ginsburg, *A Missionary Adventure*, 215.

³⁸ Edith Allen to T. B. Ray, 20 November 1931.

³⁹ Edith Allen to T. B. Ray, 24 February 1932, IMBMC: Allen.

that he is pastor of that church and not a servant of the Mission.”⁴⁰ But friction between missionaries and Brazilian leadership continued. For example, while the Allens were in the United States on furlough for fifteen months in 1936-37, a Brazilian family moved into the house they had intended to occupy upon their return, while others spread rumors that the Allens would not return at all—according to Mrs. Allen, the pastor who made “the biggest campaign against Mr. Allen” said “he wasn’t returning, and no good as a teacher”—and angled to take their jobs.⁴¹ “Not a speck of appreciation, but that is the order of the day down here now. . . by the bunch that is running things.”⁴²

The power struggle was ongoing, and often it was ugly. It undoubtedly was inefficient as well, slowing down the work and thereby creating opportunities for Pentecostals. The Baptist party line, as expressed by Ginsburg, was that evangelism and the “opening up” of new territories must be practiced by missionaries, not Brazilians. “Although in some places a competent native could do it, as a rule it has to be done by the missionary, who in a certain way can demand, if necessary, the protection of the authorities.”⁴³ While such protection might have been needed in the early days of Baptist missionary work, back when missionaries often had to rely on their political and social connections to secure permission to preach and occasionally get them out of jail, it was no longer was the case—at least not universally—by the time Vingren and Berg were beginning their work.

Foreign Mission Board Assistant to the Executive Secretary Ruth Lucille Ford, with whom Edith Allen kept up a regular correspondence, got it exactly right when she wrote in a 1940 letter

⁴⁰ T. B. Ray to William Allen, 31 October 1932, IMBMC: Allen.

⁴¹ Edith Allen to O. E. Maddry, 16 March 1938.

⁴² Edith Allen to Ruth Ford, 21 September 1936, IMBMC: Allen.

⁴³ Ginsburg, *A Missionary Adventure*, 217.

to Allen, “I am very much afraid . . . that these dissensions and divisions and lack of harmony do much to retard the work, and that is a thing to be deeply regretted.”⁴⁴ While the Pentecostals found fantastic success sending Brazilians out to evangelize, the Baptist effort stagnated, and what slowed the Baptists’ work speeded the Pentecostals’ as some disillusioned Brazilian Baptists, frustrated by the missionaries’ endless “character building,” tired of being treated like children, responded enthusiastically to Pentecostalism’s promise of greater power.

Furthermore, unlike the Baptist missionaries, Gunner Vingren and Daniel Berg were working class immigrants from Sweden who, despite their light skin, were accustomed to being considered “ethnic” rather than “white” (a term which when applied unmodified at the turn of the twentieth century in the United States—where both men had resided for several years—referred normally to white Anglo-Saxon Protestants). Furthermore, as Freston argues, they were men who, given the place of Baptists on the outskirts of Swedish society, were accustomed to marginalization. Anti-intellectuals who were uninterested in social climbing and unconcerned with institution-building, Vingren and Berg were comfortable building communities as socially excluded as they were accustomed to being as Baptists in Sweden, immigrants in the U.S, and Pentecostals in Baptist churches.⁴⁵ In many ways, they could not have been more different than the Southern Baptist missionaries, most of whom were educated white men and women who had grown up in the Reconstruction U.S. South, with all the race, class, and social baggage that entailed.

These differences in personal background mattered. Class and color affected whom missionaries felt most comfortable working with and how they viewed the Brazilians with whom

⁴⁴ Ruth Ford to Edith Allen, 9 March 1940. IMBMC: Allen.

⁴⁵ Freston, “Protestantes e política,” 69 and Freston, “Pentecostalism in Brazil,” 122.

they came into contact. And while the Baptists were not unwilling to baptize poor and black Brazilians, they saw them as “other” in a way that the Pentecostals did not. Consider the following which missionary Frances A. Bagby wrote in a letter upon returning from furlough to Brazil:

We reached our destination safely – and our whole trip was pleasant, with very calm weather, and some congenial passengers, although the majority were not the class of people we would choose for companions, unless for the purpose of helping them. We had professional boxers and professional dancers in our number. Mr. Bagby held the service on Sunday over in the first class social hall, and quite a goodly number of passengers from first and tourist class attended. We also had the opportunity of evangelizing a very cultured Portuguese gentleman, who has spent his life in Brazil. . . . He seemed to be such a sincere person, and a perfect gentleman of culture and learning, and persons of his type could be so useful in reaching others of the higher class.”⁴⁶

A distinction is made between those who are social equals—the passengers from first and tourist class—and those who are not—the professional dancers, boxers, and their ilk—with clear preference shown for the former. What would Bagby have thought of Berg had she met *him* aboard the ship, an iron-worker traveling third class?

This Baptist preference for evangelizing the upper classes was more than the personal inclination of missionaries like Frances Bagby. It was, in fact, official Baptist policy, at least in certain areas of Brazil. For example, when Edith and Billy Allen returned to Rio de Janeiro after their 1937 furlough, they found themselves installed in the fine home of the Almirante Henrique Guilhem Barreto—the Secretary of the Brazilian navy—a house chosen for its proximity to the Baptist college and the church which had recently been organized to serve the college community. Edith Allen wrote that “the nice house, we feel is part of the Lord’s plan for that particular contact we will make” during this new term which “is to be more largely with the

⁴⁶ Frances A. Bagby to Ruth Ford, 6 October 1937, IMBMC: Bagby.

educated, cultured class instead of with the poorer class as it was this last term.”⁴⁷ Despite her often-expressed personal preference for working with “the humble folk” and the difficulty with which she had to “reconcile [herself] to a future that is confined to just school contacts or those related to it religiously” and excludes “working in some section where the gospel is not known,” the Board’s priority was the upper class college community and hence that is where she and her husband were sent.⁴⁸

The Baptist fascination with the upper classes (and corresponding antipathy for the lower classes) was longstanding and was, I argue, one of the main reasons they became so deeply involved in education. Founding schools gave missionaries a way to influence, as they so often phrased it, “the best people” and “the better or ruling class.”⁴⁹ Pioneer missionary Z. C. Taylor, for example, visited the Presbyterian school in Sao Paulo, which had already been there thirty years and where they had educated, according to him, “the children of governors, the presidents of the Republic, city mayors, the law-making society and sentiment-making people of the state and country.” Taylor wanted the same for the Baptists, and there was no reason they could not achieve it, as the Presbyterian schools could not serve all the powerful families of the city. “As ex-governor told me,” wrote Taylor, “there were not reliable boarding schools in the city, and having tried to get his son into Presbyterian schools in vain, [he] sent him to Europe.”⁵⁰ Laura Barton Taylor described men from “the very best families of the city” of São Paulo who “come

⁴⁷ Edith Allen to Ruth Ford, 29 July 1935, IMBMC: Allen.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ These two phrases come up again and again in Baptist minutes and correspondence. One example is found in a letter written by Z. C. Taylor letter which states, “. . . our schools will attract the better or ruling class. . .” (Taylor to unknown correspondent, circa Summer 1900); another example is found in a Laura Barton Taylor letter which she refers to “the very best families of the city,” (Laura Taylor to R. J. Willingham, 26 June 1900, IMBMC: Taylor).

⁵⁰ Z. C. Taylor to unknown, circa Summer 1900.

and plead with me to take their children and train them up in the way that they should go,” while Ginsburg reported similar conditions in Pernambuco, where he was asked “by some of the influential citizens of this city, who are tired of the Jesuitical teaching, to open a place where they could put their children in our charge” and who “have even offered to help raise the means for starting a school if a good teacher is sent.”⁵¹ Meanwhile, in São Paulo, William Bagby reported in 1908 that the Girls’ School had “greatly prospered” and had received pupils “from many of the best Brazilian families in the city.”⁵²

The Baptists’ focus on the upper classes extended to rural areas as well. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a boom time throughout Brazil: sugar in Bahia, dairy products in Minas Gerais, rubber in Manaus, shipping in Rio and Pará, manufacturing in Recife and, overshadowing all else, coffee in Sao Paulo. Elites were building their fortunes throughout the country, and Baptists were intent on following them. Even rural areas had their aristocracies with liberal elites who were eager to help the Protestants. For example, in 1911 in Castanhal, Pará, Julia Menescal, the wife of a merchant navy captain who spent most of his time away from home, held down the Baptist fort. Converted in 1900, she dedicated herself to keeping up “the work,” as the missionaries called their efforts, in the absence of a pastor, and serving as “the pastor, Sunday school superintendent, general visitor, and what not.” Another woman, Dr. Amelia Calvalcante, a medical doctor, also supported the work “in her own sphere and way.”⁵³ These were upper class women, a demographic which the Baptists were very interested in reaching, as demonstrated by the Bahia mission’s efforts to develop a cooking school in order to

⁵¹ Laura Barton Taylor to R. J. Willingham, 26 June 1900 and Ginsburg, “Annual Report of the Pernambuco Baptist Mission for 1900.”

⁵² Helen Bagby Harrison, *The Bagbys of Brazil* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), 134.

⁵³ Ginsburg, “Report of North Brazil Mission,” 1911.

attract, in the words of a fundraising brochure distributed in Missouri, “the high class of Bahia women—those cultured, wealthy, lovely women of leisure who have come from the aristocracy of Europe.”⁵⁴

It must be noted that the Baptist concern with the “better class” had begun as a matter of political exigency as much as one of snobbery. The precarious situation of Protestants in nineteenth century Brazil meant they needed powerful allies in order to protect them from Catholic attacks and to keep them out of jail. Mainline Protestant missionaries had established schools in Brazil not only because they needed to train Brazilians to serve as pastors, but also because they needed a way to ally themselves with Brazilian elites. These elites, for their part, were eager to embrace the missionaries because of the liberal, republican ideologies they represented, viewing the missionaries both as harbingers of progress and as challenges to the hegemony of the Catholic Church.⁵⁵ As a 1971 report commissioned by the mission board of the Methodist church explains, nineteenth century Latin American intellectual elites, who “admired and endeavored to introduce into the subcontinent the political, economic, and cultural forms for Anglo-Saxon countries. . . abetted – in some cases, even invited – and protected the entry and work of the Protestant missions.”⁵⁶ It was not difficult for the early missionaries to befriend wealthy and educated Brazilians; most wanted progress, which to many of them meant making Brazil politically, economically, and ideologically more like the United States and Europe. This

⁵⁴ “Building Project, Bahia, Brazil,” Woman’s Missionary Union, Kansas City, Missouri, April, 1935, pp. 5-6 (IMB microfilm 880/231AR).

⁵⁵For more on the political relationship between liberal elites and foreign missionaries, see bibliography for works by Jean-Pierre Bastian, David Gueiros Vieira, Antonio Gouvêa Mendonça, and Adam Anderle.

⁵⁶ “River Plate Study Group Report” for the World Division of the Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church (Buenos Aires: July 2, 1971), published in “The Missionary and Social Justice: Latin America” in *The Future of the Missionary Enterprise* series, *IDOC-North America* 51 (March 1973): 40).

required weakening the power of the Catholic Church by turning to Protestantism instead.⁵⁷

While Protestant missionaries had a negligible affect at first, converting and baptizing very few, they were influential in other ways, particularly the way in which they helped powerful Brazilians publicly enact their struggle against the Catholic church and then advising them on transitioning from empire to republic. It was not uncommon for politicians to turn to missionaries for political advice, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Brazil was in its early days as a republic.⁵⁸ As the young Republic developed, Brazilian elites continued to seek missionaries' advice. In particular, Baptist missionaries were asked for input on the development of a national public education system. According to Z. C. Taylor, Baptist missionary to Rio, in 1900 the Baptist school was "constantly visited by prominent men who recognize[d] it as a model."⁵⁹

However, by the time the Pentecostals arrived, Brazil was no longer a monarchy, nor was it still a fledgling democracy. There were problems to be sure, especially in the rapidly growing cities where poverty and disease flourished while political unrest was the order of the day, but on the whole, earlier missionaries had already made much Brazil more hospitable to Protestantism

⁵⁷ As historians David Gueiros Vieira and Antonio Mendonça have argued, the insertion of Protestantism into 19th century Brazil was not a case of missionaries forcing their liberal beliefs on unwilling Brazilians, but rather one of powerful, liberal Brazilians encouraging missionary activity because they viewed wealthy Anglo-Saxon countries as models of modernization and progress. See Mendonça, *O Protestantismo, a maçonaria e a questão religiosa no Brasil* (Brasília: Ed. Universidade de Brasília, 1980), 73 and Gueiros Vieira, "O liberalismo, o maçonaria e o protestantismo no Brasil no século dezenove," in *Iglesia, Religión y Sociedad en La Historia Latinoamericana, 1492-1945: Congreso VIII de Asociación de Historiadores Latinoamericanistas de Europa, tomo tercero*, ed. Adam Anderle, (Szeged, Hungría, 1989), 132.

⁵⁸ For example, some high-ranking Brazilians sought the North Americans' thoughts on constitutional reform, as happened with William Bagby. As his daughter recalls, "Aristides Lobo, who became Secretary of the Interior, called on Father shortly before the establishment of the republic and talked at length about the Constitution of the United States and about reforms which later were put into effect." After the republic was established the contact between liberal politicians and missionaries continued, as the missionaries, again according the Bagby Harrison, "contributed democratic ideas of state and church government and influenced, however inconspicuously, the destinies of the budding nation." (Harrison, *The Bagbys of Brazil*, 82-3.)

⁵⁹ Z.C. Taylor letter to unknown correspondent, circa Summer 1900.

by forging relationships with elite Brazilians. Pentecostals, then, did not face the same pressure to build relationships with powerful Brazilians who could protect them. Nor did they want to. Vingren and Berg, neither “white” nor upper-class themselves, were not interested in ingratiating themselves with powerful men. They cared little about “the best people” or “the ruling class.” They opened no schools and sought no students, and their mission was far less concerned with politics and ideology than it was with spirituality. Pentecostals simply wanted to spread the news of baptism by the Holy Spirit to as many people as possible.⁶⁰ One reason why they succeeded so well, I believe, is that Vingren and Berg were men.

Along with class preferences, beliefs about what constituted proper work for women significantly affected the types of projects that missionaries undertook. Political, theological, and socio-racial considerations were three factors which led Baptists to focus on founding schools; the fourth is that women missionaries were determined to play a significant and direct role in mission efforts. Their work was taken seriously and encouraged, with “woman’s work” given separate attention in the reports made each year to the Board. Given that women could neither travel unaccompanied, nor hold public prayer meetings, nor found churches, nor serve as pastors, women who wanted to participate in missionary activities could do one of two things: they could help educational efforts by founding and teaching at schools or they could evangelize by making home visits. The former option offered more institutional power and was therefore more attractive to many. Its pursuit precluded the latter option. Running schools took enormous amounts of time, energy, and resources.

If these Baptist women had gone to Brazil simply to accompany their husbands, things might have turned out differently. But this was not the case. Most of the Baptist women were

⁶⁰ Their motivation was certainly complicated, probably more complicated than my formulation allows. However, my purpose here is to establish what they DID without venturing onto the shaky ground of determining WHY they did it – a question whose answers rely too much on psychology and conjecture for my comfort.

there because they felt called to be missionaries. Indeed, in some cases, such as that of William and Anne Bagby, it was the wife who had convinced the husband to go.⁶¹ In several other cases, such as that of Edith and Billy Allen and Emma and Solomon Ginsburg, the women arrived in Brazil as single missionaries and met their husbands once they were already appointed by the mission board. In fact, missionary marriages became such a problem that at one point the Board considered a making a policy of appointing no single women because too many complications ensued when they fell in love.⁶² Ford joked to Edith Allen:

I think I'll open up a matrimonial bureau and marry them all off before they go to the field. It would save us a lot of confusion and future worry. What do you think of the idea?⁶³

The female missionaries were, many (if not most) of them, independent and strong-minded women who were determined to serve.

Such indomitable women were the founders and principals of the Southern Baptists' first six schools in Brazil.⁶⁴ Laura Barton Taylor, for example, once her children were grown, taught English classes day and night in order to save enough money to open a school. In a 1900 letter she wrote:

Mr. Taylor tried to persuade me from such a course for more than two years and finally consented, only because he said I would not be happy without it. After making all calculations as to cost, ill health, etc. I told him I would be willing to make every sacrifice and work in every imaginable way (to save money to build the school) for at least five years.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Harrison, *The Bagbys of Brazil*, 10-30.

⁶² Ruth Ford to Edith Allen, 25 February 1938, IMBMC: Allen.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Maggie Rice, 1888, Rio de Janeiro; Emma Ginsburg, 1895, Campos; Bertha R. Stenger and Mary B. Wilcox, 1898, Belo Horizonte; Laura Taylor, 1898, Bahia, Emma Ginsburg, 1901, Pernambuco, and Anne Bagby, 1902, São Paulo. Recorded in Harrison, *The Bagbys of Brazil*, 121.

⁶⁵ Laura Barton Taylor to R. J. Willingham, 26 June 1900.

Once established, the school depended on Laura Taylor for its success; in 1901 her husband wrote in a letter, “. . .we have been occupied with Mrs. Taylor’s health, for if she does not get a good rest the whole school will fall.”⁶⁶

Anne Bagby was similarly determined. Upon moving to São Paulo, after twenty years spent raising six children (and burying two more) and keeping house, she became hungry to return to missionary work. As her daughter recalls, “Men had been wonderfully blessed in their pulpit approach to the masses, she [Anne Bagby] commented; a school would furnish her a comparable, if not superior, influence.”⁶⁷ Anne Bagby cited the fact that President Salles’ own children attended mission schools as evidence that schools could spread the gospel to the upper, powerful classes, for “Roman Catholic children could patronize a gospel [Protestant] school when attendance at an evangelical [Protestant] church would mean excommunication.”⁶⁸ Once her *Colegio Progresso Brasileiro* was founded in 1902, Bagby was so dedicated to the school that, with the Board’s approval, she chose to forego her 1908 furlough in order to put the money which would have purchased her family’s passage to the U.S. toward purchasing the school building instead.⁶⁹ As soon as women were no longer tied to the home by child-rearing duties, they (re)joined the mission work proper by founding, running, and teaching in schools. In accordance with gender norms, men were nominally in charge, but it was the women who ran the show.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Z.C. Taylor to unknown correspondent (first 3 pages missing from archive), circa 1901, IMBMC: Taylor.

⁶⁷ Harrison, *The Bagbys of Brazil*, 120.

⁶⁸ Harrison, *The Bagbys of Brazil*, 121.

⁶⁹ Harrison, *The Bagbys of Brazil*, 124. This instead of the rent she and her husband had been paying out of their own pocket! (Harrison, *The Bagbys of Brazil*, 121.)

⁷⁰ For example, Harrison recalls, “While Mother was absorbed in her educational mission Father, though nominally

The officialization of the schools in 1930, a result of the Vargas revolution, which required the Protestant schools to adapt their curriculum to new government requirements, only complicated the situation, creating a situation in which the “spirituality” of the schools suffered even more than it already had as a result of the need to hire Catholic teachers and satisfy Catholic parents.⁷¹ Their schools tied the Baptists down to particular places, determining where missionaries lived and with whom they interacted, reinforcing a top-down evangelical strategy which came to absorb more than just the women, affecting all mission work across gender lines and limiting Baptists’ opportunities to evangelize. The educational project eventually came to involve men who entered the classroom as professors—taking them away from traveling and public preaching—once colleges were founded to serve the graduates produced by the Baptist secondary schools, for higher education was not women’s work. A great deal of the Baptists’ energy, time, and funds were dedicated to the educational project, with little spared for other activities, a fact which some missionaries found difficult to accept. For example, Edith Allen wrote in 1933:

What hurts me most, though, is that with the great amount of regular teaching, etc. we do not have time for the contacts with the students and with the church members that is so necessary and valuable both for them and for us. I love the visiting in the homes more than anything other phase [sic] of the work and we are always well-received- how we *do* need to be multiplied many times over.⁷²

Allen and her contemporaries became trapped by their schools.

In 1935, Allen took it upon herself to speak for the group of them, stating “I believe that now most of us, if we could choose, so far as our own personal inclinations are concerned, would

head of the school and certainly indispensable to the life of the institution, devoted his time to preaching,” (*The Bagbys of Brazil*, 133.)

⁷¹ Edith Allen to O. E. Maddry, 10 October 1938 and to Ruth Ford 12 October 1938, IMBMC: Allen.

⁷² Edith Allen to T. B. Ray, 17 October 1933 (italics mine).

prefer to be in different ‘evangelistic’ work rather than the institutional work we are in.” They remained where they were, in their educational and publishing institutions, because they accepted the Board philosophy that “the Cause” would be best served by preparing others.⁷³ Meanwhile the Pentecostals did what Allen and others wished they could be doing – visiting homes, holding prayer meetings, having one-on-one conversations – evangelizing full time.

In the 1930s, the Baptists’ work became hampered even further by Great Depression. By 1933, according to Edith Allen, “Our missionary force [was] nearly at its row’s end with no reinforcements and no hopes of any anytime soon.”⁷⁴ At the same time, the Pentecostal movement was growing exponentially.⁷⁵ While it would be too simple to claim a simple inverse correlation between Baptist reduction and Pentecostal growth, the two are not unrelated. Was it purely a coincidence that 1930, the year in which Baptists began curtailing their work in Rio in response to the crisis, was the same year that the Assemblies of God moved its national headquarters to that city from Pará? Perhaps. Still, the fact that mainline Protestant power decreased at the very same time that Pentecostal power was increasing bears investigating.

Baptist missionaries were dependent on the United States for money. Almost all of their funds came either came from or were approved by the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Virginia. In keeping with policy, even when potential donors wanted to give directly to missionaries they were often put off until the Board could be consulted. Of course—given the state of communications (and the expense of sending telegrams)—this slowed things down tremendously. For example, a man who was interested in donating money to help build a new

⁷³ Edith Allen, “Notes from Rio de Janeiro,” *The Baptist Courier*, 5 December 1935, 7, IMBMC: Allen.

⁷⁴ Edith Allen to O. E. Maddry, 5 December 1933, IMBMC: Allen.

⁷⁵ I refer again to Rolim’s figures: 0 Pentecostals in 1900, 44,311 Pentecostals in 1930, and 705,031 Pentecostals in 1960. (Rolim, *Pentecostais no Brasil*, 104.)

church in Rio was told “to wait a little longer” by his pastor who did not “want our Baptist people to help a man personally unless he is all right with the Board” because he “believe[d] that we ought to consult our Mission Board about our missionaries so as to guard against embarrassing the Board in any way.”⁷⁶ In no way were the Baptist missionaries financially independent.

Thus, because their financial well-being was completely tied up with the state of the U.S. economy, the Great Depression dramatically affected the Baptist mission work. 1931 was, according to corresponding secretary T. B. Ray, “the hardest year in our Foreign Mission Board work I have ever known:”

The awful burden of debt is about to kill us, and then we have added to this debt during the present year nearly \$200,000.00. We thought we had cut down enough to take care of the situation, but we missed it. We didn't calculate that our people would drop in their gifts as much as they have done during this year. I think we must have surely gotten just about down to the bottom.⁷⁷

But it got worse. In 1932 the Southern Baptist Convention ordered the Foreign Mission Board to cut the 1933 budget to 12 percent below 1932 expenditures. This meant that the 1933 budget was less than half of the 1930 budget, a decrease so dramatic that Ray confessed concern that, even if they were “able to appropriate enough to keep the work alive,” it would not be “anything like the support that is deserved and called for by the needs.”⁷⁸ Appropriations for “native work” were halved, thirty missionaries were kept at home “on indefinite furlough without salary,” and no money at all was allotted for those who were supposed to return in 1934.⁷⁹ By February of 1933

⁷⁶ Unknown author (illegible) to R. J. Willingham, written on letterhead from “Office of Administration, William Jewell College, Liberty, MO,” 18 June 1910, IMB microfilm 873/227AR. The letter concerned the Brazilian pastor Soren, who was visiting the U.S for medical, educational, and fund-raising purposes.

⁷⁷ T. B. Ray to Edith Allen, 9 December 1931, IMBMC: Allen.

⁷⁸ T. B. Ray to Edith Allen, 1 October 1932, IMBMC: Allen.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

the Board reported that more missionaries would be called home should income continue to decline as it did in January. Ray summed up the situation when he wrote, “We face a fearful situation with reference to our whole foreign mission program.”⁸⁰

The situation became so dire that in 1933 the Board asked missionaries to sell Board property. As recorded in the minutes of a special meeting of the South Brazil Mission, the Board requested “in any case where it may be done without damage to the work that mission properties be sold and the proceeds reverted to the Board.” The money would be “applied on the debt in the banks here in Richmond.” A request was made at the same time that “a detailed list of native workers and expenses” be sent to the Board, which suggests that the Board was considering cutting the salaries of Brazilians who worked with missionaries just at the time when they were most needed.⁸¹ Although there was talk of making efforts to replace furloughed missionaries with Brazilians, given the Baptists educational requirements and limited funds, it was difficult.⁸²

The Pentecostals’ financial situation was extremely different. They were not dependent on funds sent from the United States and could receive donations directly and immediately, without waiting for letters to be exchanged, meetings held, and donations approved. Furthermore, almost all of their money came from their church members in Brazil rather than from the United States and, because they were not running a worldwide mission project as the Baptists were, nearly all of it stayed in Brazil.⁸³ Nor were Pentecostal numbers negatively

⁸⁰ O. E. Maddy to William Allen, 17 February 1933, IMBMC: Allen.

⁸¹ Minutes from “Called Meeting of Executive Committee South Brazil Mission” 6 January 1933, IMB microfilm MM30.

⁸² O. E. Maddy to William Allen, 17 February 1933: “I wish very much indeed that some native preacher could be sent into the region covered by Brother Sherwood [furloughed missionary] and the Executive Committee of the South Brazil Mission will take whatever steps are necessary with the money in hand, to take care of this situation.”

⁸³ The AD did send a few missionaries to Portugal; the first to go left Brazil in 1913. (Conde, *História das AD*, 36).

affected by the Depression the way the Baptists' were; all Pentecostal pastors already were Brazilians, so there was no need to replace missionary pastors who were unable to return to their posts. In sum, the fact that neither their financial nor their human resources were in any way dependent on the United States meant that the Great Depression affected Pentecostals far less than it did the Baptists.

This is not to say that the depression did not affect Brazil. It did. But it did not affect Pentecostals in the same way it affected Baptists. One reason for this is that most Brazilians were used to want and gave in spite of it. There is evidence which demonstrates that, while donations from the U.S middle- and upper-classes fell precipitously in the 1930s, donations from poor Brazilians remained the same (and even improved). In 1932 Allen had exclaimed, "I can't get over how these folks manage to give out of nothing."⁸⁴ Later that same year, her husband, reporting on the Federal District convention, wrote that "contributions held up pretty well. . . [and were] almost up to the last year's level in spite of worse conditions economically due to the unstable situations."⁸⁵ Baptist fund-raising in the United States plummeted with the disappearance of discretionary spending, but Brazilians continued to give. This suggests that Pentecostal income, which relied nearly exclusively on Brazilians, most likely remained stable in the 1930s.

Another reason that Pentecostals suffered less than the Baptist missionaries in the 1930s was that the political instability of the time, beginning with the Revolution of 1930 military coup and continuing through the early Vargas years, made it more difficult for foreigners to come and stay in Brazil. Visa problems kept missionaries in the U.S. for most of 1932. Referring to the turmoil,

⁸⁴ Edith Allen to T. B. Ray, 5 September 1932.

⁸⁵ William Allen to T. B. Ray, 12 November 1932, IMBMC: Allen.

William Allen reported that “open-air work in general” was “hampered” due to the “unsettled conditions of the country.”⁸⁶ The large prayer-tent meetings which the Baptists had been employing so successfully at least since the beginning of 1931⁸⁷ were now limited to suburban areas.

If anything, the Depression helped Pentecostals, as they benefited from the same situation which caused the Baptists so much heartache. Not only were they less affected financially, as the 1930s brought a surge of industrialization throughout the country with the installation of Vargas, but there is also the fact that in tough times people turn to religion. Allen observed this phenomenon in 1932:

When I see how our folks down here manage to sacrifice and give, and that facing absolute want, and when I see folks coming confessing the Lord right along (we have six awaiting baptism right now) and increasing interest on all sides, in part due to the fact that folks are up against it and are turning to the Lord, some of them, as a desperate last resort, there are blessing to be found in the difficulties.⁸⁸

And if one religion is not fulfilling their needs, especially in a religiously pluralist society like Brazil, they turn to another. Those who were already inclined to embrace Protestantism—especially among the lower class—could turn to Pentecostalism. The Baptists were still rejecting them, but the Pentecostals never did.⁸⁹

The political and economic crises of the 1930s did put pressure on the Baptist missionaries to make Brazilians more equal partners. Billy Allen, finding “blessings’ in the silver lining of “these troubled times,” wrote of “the absolute necessity . . . of the native churches

⁸⁶ William Allen to T. B. Ray, 8 October 1932.

⁸⁷ See Edith Allen to T. B. Ray, 5 January 1931, IMBMC: Allen.

⁸⁸ Edith Allen to T. B. Ray, 5 September 1932.

⁸⁹ At least, I have yet to find any evidence indicating that Pentecostals – or, to be quite precise, the AD from its inception until 1935, which is the time the paper addresses – ever rejected anyone.

coming to selfsupport.” He went on: “while money was comparatively easy to get, the training for the native constituency was not quite so insistent of that point, but since hard days came many a congregation that thought it impossible to support itself had to or die, and the result is a stronger group than before.”⁹⁰ It was, however, a case of too little too late. The Baptist mission was still structured for a long apprenticeship, but how can you “stay and learn” from someone who has left?

Even the optimistic Edith Allen acknowledged “the tragedy of open doors that have closed and of millions who have not heard the gospel because there was no one to tell them.”⁹¹ Because the Baptists had dragged their feet, keeping most of the leadership power to themselves and failing to appoint very many Brazilians to the pastorate, the decline in missionary numbers and funds was an enormous blow to their work. Not so for the Pentecostals, who had experienced this pressure from the very beginning and formalized an institutional structure in 1930 which ensured that each church would act as an independent unit.⁹² While Baptist tensions simmered into the 1940s, slowing the work, whatever tensions that did exist between Pentecostals on a regional or national scale were of little consequence.

In sum, the lack of a group dedicated to funding Pentecostal mission work was more a help than a hindrance. The fact that early Pentecostal missionaries operated independently—without the support of a mission board—turned out to be an advantage, as it left a legacy of missionary independence and foreign/native partnership. While Baptist efforts to expand were

⁹⁰ Edith Allen to a Miss Coleman, 7 August 1934, IMBMC: Allen.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² In response to escalating tensions between missionaries and Brazilians, a general meeting was held in 1930 where the decision was made that all churches would be taken over by Brazilian pastors. The decision was made on scriptural grounds; as Vingren put it himself, “We all believe that each congregation should be free and independent as were all the congregations mentioned in the Scriptures, and we therefore reject all kinds of organization and establishment of denominations except the foundation of local churches.” Vingren, p. 157-8 as quoted in Endrueit, “Pentecostalism in Brazil,” 34.

slowed by their determination to inculturate and educate Brazilians before handing over the reins, Pentecostals were able to work quickly. No existing institutional structure demanded a system of united decision-making; each church was able to operate as an independent entity. No mission board demanded that time be spent on writing reports, organizing meetings, and traveling to regional and national conventions. Instead of spreading themselves thinly among projects and places as the Baptists did, the early Pentecostals focused on doing just one thing and doing it well: convincing *crentes* and others to accept the Pentecostal doctrine of baptism by the Holy Spirit.

What seemed at first to have been a disadvantage—the lack of strong institutional support for Pentecostal missionary work in Brazil—turned out to be an advantage. This became especially clear when the economic and political crises of the 1930s hit and the indigenous Brazilian Pentecostal movement which Vingren and Berg had jumpstarted was positioned to take advantage of the very conditions which dramatically slowed Baptist efforts. More scholarly attention needs to be paid to this critical decade as the time when Pentecostalism became a truly national religion in Brazil. Freston's widely adopted formulation of Brazilian Pentecostal history which divides its development into three waves—the 1910s, the 1950s and early 60s, and the late 1970s and early 80s⁹³—misleads scholars who then assume that nothing interesting happened in between waves, when in fact 1930 was a watershed year in both the religious and political history of Brazil. It was the year of the AD's liberation from foreign control as well as the year in which the São Paulo/Minas Gerais hold on the government was broken by Vargas, and it marked the beginning of remarkable growth and development, not only industrial but also spiritual. Ignoring the 1930s means ignoring the crucial decision the AD made in 1930 to give

⁹³ See Freston, "Pentecostalism in Brazil," 120.

full independent status to each individual church, a decision which gave Pentecostalism a completely unique institutional structure and enabled it to become the first version of Christianity in Brazil's history to fully empower Brazilians, and not just a chosen few but Brazilians of all socio-economic classes.

As for the reason why so many Brazilians choose Pentecostalism, it was partly strategy, partly timing, and partly something else. Compelling reasons have been suggested, most related to structural societal change—urban to rural migration, industrialization, the breaking up and reforming of communities—or to cultural continuities, namely the new context and form Pentecostalism provides for the continued practice of popular religion. Arguments have been made for the critical role of social class, of democratic participation, of gender, of individuals' fundamental need for health, stability, self-worth, belonging. These are all valid, mutually inclusive arguments, and I believe each one plays a role in explaining Pentecostal growth in Brazil. However, I also believe that there is another reason which must be added to the dialogue, and that is the particular history of Pentecostalism in Brazil.

By history I mean the context and conditions—the *specific historical circumstances*—of Pentecostalism's establishment in Brazil. Despite what some would have us believe, the study of Pentecostalism cannot begin in the 1960s. It must begin at the beginning in 1910, it must linger there, and it must not skip over the decisive decade of the 1930s. Only by inserting history into the discussion of Brazilian Pentecostalism can we understand what has happened to Brazil's religious landscape over the past century. It is time to recognize the simple and critical importance of the fact that Pentecostalism is not a North American import⁹⁴ but rather a national

⁹⁴ This is a controversial point, and it is true that Pentecostalism in Brazil is not without US ties. However, these US ties were far less important than those with Sweden (as Freston has shown, the AD's primary relationships, both financial and spiritual, were with Sweden, not with the United States) and none were central to Pentecostalism's development.

and nationalist religion whose founding was facilitated by the Protestantism which preceded it and which grew not only because of something particular about the faith it offered but also because of the fact that it offered a faith at all—an accessible, democratic faith which, colorblind and class-blind, was unconcerned with status, with education, with institution-building, and which was not only willing but compelled to offer agency to any who sought it.

Furthermore, while questions of motivation can never be answered with certainty, I believe it would be a mistake for a discussion of the appeal of Pentecostalism to ignore the fact of people's basic desire for faith. People want things to believe in, religious or secular, which will give their lives direction, meaning, hope. It is certainly true that, as many have argued, Pentecostalism attracts people because it addresses material and physical conditions by focusing on the present—on improving *this* life right now—which is what people who are sick or hungry or simply unhappy want and need. However, it is also true that since its beginnings Pentecostalism has appealed to Brazilians not only because of the expressive, personal, participatory, powerful religious practice it offers, but for a more simple reason as well, which is that it offers any religious practice at all. Baptist Missionary Laura Barton Taylor wrote in 1900 that “men come and plead with me to take their children and train them up in the way they that they should go, and tell me it doesn't make any difference what religion they have, only they want them (their children) to have some religion.”⁹⁵ The Baptists could not or would not serve all the people who wanted to join them. The Pentecostals could, would, and did.

⁹⁵ Laura Barton Taylor to R. J. Willingham, 26 June 1900.