

## NEO-PENTECOSTALISM AND PROSPERITY THEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA: A RELIGION FOR LATE CAPITALIST SOCIETY\*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The 'theology of prosperity' – the belief that God bestows material blessings on the faithful – is one of the most dynamic movements in Latin American Neo-Pentecostalism today. This 'theology' – as much aspirational strategy as actual teleology – is not *sui generis* to Latin America, nor is its rapid expansion limited to the region; indeed, the transnational flows of ideas and practices is a *sine qua non* of modern neo-pentecostalism, and part of its dynamism. Unlike earlier missionary movements, however, the energy of Neo-Pentecostalism and prosperity theology in general is multidirectional and polylocal; Latin American practitioners are as likely to be influenced by African or South Korean innovations as they are, themselves, to influence the practices and beliefs of believers in North America or Europe. While the multidirectional currents of Neo-Pentecostal thought are a topic worthy of discussion in their own right, the focus of the article is limited and more narrow, honing in on the expression of a single Neo-Pentecostal doctrine, prosperity theology, within and across the Latin American spiritual landscape. We shall begin our discussion, then, with one of the most vigorous international proponents of prosperity theology, the Brazilian mega-church, the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*.

### II. A IGREJA UNIVERSAL DO REINO DE DEUS

The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURD) is one of the most rapidly growing denominations in the early twenty-first century. Like the other emerging mega-churches, the IURD, which was founded during the mid-1970s, is part of the Protestant movement that emerged not from the Reformation, but from the Neo-Pentecostal<sup>1</sup> revival of the 1960s. This is a modern-day variation of Pentecostalism that stresses the miraculous transformation of life, in spirit and body, and even of lifestyle (Hollenwenger

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1968). As we shall see, the IURD promotes a type of belief that does not emphasize the traditional kinds of questions posed by theology, such as: What controls the universe? Who or what is God? Why does God permit suffering? Is there an afterlife and who gets in? Rather, it speaks to the material wants and needs of people living in a world in which success is measured almost exclusively by affluence and consumption, where sin and grace are defined, respectively, by poverty and wealth.

The Brazilian denomination espouses what might be called a postmodern version of Christianity, sometimes known as 'emerging church,' in which a malleable theology can be tailored to local spiritual concerns, engagement with society, and where church planners enjoy some flexibility in modifying and reinterpreting church dogma to coincide as closely as possible to local conditions, culture, and expectations (Gibbs and Bolger 2005:15-26). The IURD is one of the fastest-growing Christian denominations in the world, now one of Latin America's most important and perhaps audacious cultural exports. It began its international expansion in 1985 by starting a congregation in neighboring Paraguay; by 2011, the IURD had 'planted' churches in every Latin American country including Haiti, in more than half of the countries on the African continent, in the United States and Canada, in the Far East (Japan, the Philippines, India), and in twelve countries in Europe, building a presence in 180 locations world-wide (Mariano 2004:140). In 1995, the denomination had established an estimated 221 churches abroad, a number that had nearly doubled by 1998 to 500 and doubled again to 1000 in 2001, an astonishing rate of growth that has continued to the present day. Moreover, the expansion of the church into virgin mission territory is more than merely symbolic: in at least ten<sup>2</sup> of these countries, the denomination has fifty or more congregations (2004:141); Mexico, that most 'Catholic' country, has 95 congregations, more than sixty of which are located in the greater Mexico City metropolitan area.

As perhaps Latin America's most well-known Neo-Pentecostal denomination, the IURD expansion in the United States and Western Europe might be taken to evince a type of reverse missionary movement. One might suggest that it serves as example of the postcolonial reversal of the spiritual manifest destiny of the nineteenth century. As its rather presumptuous name implies, the IURD is a denomination with vast global aspirations, and it effectively employs a sophisticated mixture of marketing, message and performance to advance its interests; that is to say, evangelize. The IURD is an effective vender of "credence goods"<sup>3</sup>(Gill 1999:39) precisely because of its ability to gauge the spiritual and physical needs of its target clientele with acuity, and to generate a theology that fits a given market niche – so long as the theology still fits within the loose parameters of the IURD's dogma, as

articulated by its founder, Edir Bezerra Macedo, who founded the church in Rio de Janeiro in 1977 – and, as importantly, each congregation remains loyal to the church’s organizational hierarchy, especially in matters of church finances. All IURD churches, however share one common focus: the material well-being of its members, who in turn support the church and its pastors. In all the churches within its global empire, the primary focus of the IURD is on success, health, and, equally importantly, on ‘the pursuit of [material happiness]’. As such, the IURD is one of Latin America’s and thereby one of the world’s foremost proponents of a variant but highly popular form of charismatic belief known as prosperity theology or prosperity gospel.

### III. THE ORIGINS OF PROSPERITY THEOLOGY

While Latin Americans may associate prosperity theology with Neo-Pentecostal churches and with the IURD in particular, it is in fact originated, at least in its modern manifestation, in the United States. Money-based evangelism has a long history in this country and dates back at least as far the nineteenth century, when preachers who advocated what then was called the Gospel of Wealth urged believers to expect God to reward their faith with “acres of diamonds.”<sup>4</sup> The simple calculus of *faith+donation=the good life* has long been a minority current in American evangelical Protestantism and has been a common denominator in North American televangelism for nearly a century (Carpenter 1997). The subtext of prosperity as an outcome of faith has a long history in American Protestantism that dates at least as far back as the Puritans, who (eventually) found alimentary abundance as much as religious freedom in their new land. The modern manifestation of ‘prosperity theology’ dates back to the early twentieth century, having its origins around the time of the Azusa Street Revival (1906), the movement that launched modern Pentecostalism. Prosperity theology’s roots are also closely linked to the emergence of religious media, where early preachers such as Charles R. Fuller, the first religious radio host and founder of Fuller Theological Seminary, Aimee Semple McPherson in the years prior to World War II, and Reverend Ike in the years after the war, crafted ministries based around the idea of God’s raining down blessings upon His faithful people (Noll 2000:100-104). Reverend Ike (Frederick Eikerenkoetter), who even after more than fifty years in the business still promotes himself as ‘the Success and Prosperity Preacher,’ was among the first to openly interpret Jesus’ words, “I am come that you might have life more abundantly” (John 10:10) as an altar call to material and personal aggrandizement.

The distinguishing characteristic of contemporary prosperity theology is the miraculous quality of the blessing; material welfare is not merely a Horatio Alger-like byproduct of virtuous living, but it is, ipso facto, God’s

supernatural gift to the faithful, not unlike other gifts of the Spirit such as glossolalia or faith healing. Although the concept of reliance on and trust in God for physical sustenance has deep biblical roots, the idea that God rewards his faithful with money and material well-being is a distinctly twentieth century notion that built up with the advent of radio and television evangelism, where early pioneers of both religious media such as Rex Humbard, Kenneth Hagin in the 1930s and, later, especially Oral Roberts, exhorted their audiences to send in money to support their technologically expensive ministries; in time, this evolved into a 'theology' that demanded money as a proof of faith, which God would then return to the giver tenfold or more. It was Roberts' protégé, televangelist Kenneth Copeland, who in the mid-1960s first articulated one of the main tenets of modern prosperity theology by proposing what he called 'Word-Faith' teaching. This is the belief that faith is literally a mighty power or force that can be released through the spoken word – thus, one can obtain what one wants when the power of faith is released to obtain one's heart desire, even if that desire is material or even crass. Because it comes from God, the thinking goes, the fulfillment of any want is 'Christian' and evidence of God's power and might. Theologian Harvey Cox has described it this way: "The idea is that through the crucifixion of Christ, Christians have inherited all the promises that God made to Abraham, and these include both spiritual and material well-being. The only problem is that Christians have too little faith to appropriate what is rightly theirs. What they need to do is state that claim loud and clear" (1995:271-272). As US televangelist Jim Bakker used to exhort his viewers, "When you ask the Lord for a camper, be sure and tell Him what color you want."

While Copeland first began to promote Word-Faith in the mid-1960s, it was not until the economic dislocations of the last decades of the century that it began to catch on to a significant degree in the developing world. Within Latin America, it was in the late 1980s and early 1990s that Word-Faith prosperity gospel began to displace the more other-worldly focus of conventional Pentecostalism, which anticipates the imminent end of the temporal world and focuses instead on the coming of the Kingdom of God in the next. Given a context such as that of Guatemala in the early 1980s, for example, one can easily see why it would have made more sense to look for the arrival of the Seven Horses of the Apocalypse than to expect God to send over a new car and a nice middle-class job. In this regard, prosperity theology exists in what Edin Abumansur has called an "absence of macro-temporalness." Abumansur writes, "The neo-Pentecostal discourse encourages the investment of time, money and attention in this life. Emphasizing the life to come, the final judgment, eternal suffering in the way

that the [other] Protestants do would be totally out of keeping with this theology of prosperity” (2002).

With the important exception of health, 'historical' Pentecostals in Latin America are, by and large, famously indifferent to the matters of this world – a tendency that has caused their detractors to accuse them of advocating a theology that was 'pie in the sky' and confused many observers for their failure to mobilize what could be a potentially significant bloc of power to alter the political and economic landscapes of their home countries (Freston 2001). Neo-Pentecostals, by contrast, are very much people of this world, which they believe is as much full of promise as it is of suffering. Within the framework of 'name-it-and-claim-it' gospel, it is your own fault if you are poor, sick, or unhappy, since you have clearly not had faith enough or nerve enough to ask God for a better life. For the proponents of prosperity theology, as Daniel Míguez has pointed out, the rhetorical distance between money as the root of all evil and money as the manifestation of God's grace, has proved to be remarkably short (2001:4).

#### IV. PROSPERITY THEOLOGY IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Prosperity theology spread wildly, not only Latin America, but also Africa and Asia, in the last decades of the twentieth century. By the second decade of the twenty-first, it has become the main focus of many of the fastest growing Evangelical 'non-denominational' churches in the global South, the message of prosperity in many new churches far surpassing that of holiness, aesthetic behavior, sin and salvation, that were the traditional foci of Protestant, even Pentecostal, theology (Gilly 1999). In the 1990s, as neo-liberal economic reforms in Latin America reshaped both economic policies and ordinary people's access to the system, one can argue that prosperity gospel emerged in force at least partially as a reaction to changes in market forces. Certainly, this was the case elsewhere in the developing world, especially in Africa and Asia, where economic transition and corruption in the case of the former and unprecedented economic advances in the case of the latter have forced people into new methods of coping with new global realities. One of these methods, quite clearly, is prosperity theology.

The movement is especially evident in sub-Saharan Africa, where prosperity theology has grown spectacularly in recent decades in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, and Kenya, all places where AIDs and postcolonial political and economic systems and corruption have wreaked havoc on traditional family and community structures.<sup>5</sup> Nigeria, in fact, is home to what some claim to be the largest Neo-Pentecostal church in the world – the multinational Living Faith Church Worldwide, Inc., also known as Winners Chapel. Founded by David Oyedepo in 1983, the church in Lagos

seats nearly 50,500 people – nearly twice the size of the largest Neo-Pentecostal church in the United States, Joel Osteen’s Lakewood Community Church in Houston, Texas, which meets in the renovated Astrodome and seats only 16,000 of its 30,000 members at a time. In Lagos’s Winners Chapel, services are almost always standing-room only, filled with worshipers who come to hear Pastor David’s message: Where God instructed Moses to ‘Go and set my people free,’ God told Oyedepo, ‘Make my people rich.’ Living Faith Church has ‘branches’ in 40 countries, including the United States (Gifford 2007 and 2004).

Notwithstanding its size and popularity, Living Faith Church in Lagos is only one of many large, evangelistic Neo-Pentecostal denominations that claim tens of thousands of members in Africa and abroad. Yet if Africa is ground zero for prosperity theology, the teaching have also fallen on ready ears in much of the rest of the global South, the areas once known as the ‘developing world.’ One of the leading proponents of the message is Paul (David)<sup>6</sup> Yonggi Cho, the telegenic Korean preacher and pastor of the 830,000 member Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, a nation that in itself had only a small Christian minority until after the Korean War in the mid-1950s and which now has a Christian majority of both Catholics and Protestants (Bushwell 2006). The numbers make clear that Cho’s message appeals to a broad spectrum of Koreans. Today, one in every 20 residents of Seoul is reportedly a member of the church, and Yoido Full Gospel Church reportedly adds 3,000 new members every month (The Economist 2007).

Like Oyedepo, Cho emphasizes the material aspect of discipleship, stressing the “three-fold blessing of Christ: health, prosperity, and salvation,” underscored by certain aspects of traditional Korean shamanism and Western showmanship (in Jenkins 2006:91). Famous for the pageantry of his worship services as well as for his message, Cho enjoys a world-wide following that possibly exceeds that of any North American televangelist except, perhaps, Benny Hinn, a preacher of Lebanese extraction who is one of the current stars of California-based Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), which beams Christian programming, much of it based in prosperity theology, throughout Africa, Latin America, and Asia on a daily basis. Through television, the global influence of both Cho and Hinn is considerable, especially in the matter of the liturgical theatrics that take place during many Neo-Pentecostal services.

Within Latin America, the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* is, with its new 10,000-person *Catedral Mundial da Fé* in Rio de Janeiro, ironically located on a street named for one of the premier figures of Liberation Theology, Av. Dom Helder Camara,<sup>7</sup> and its multinational reach, is, arguably, the region’s most avid and aggressive proponent of prosperity

theology. However, there are many other large denominations that also stress that gospel. Indeed, in the Pew Forum's 2006 survey of Pentecostalism in 10 countries, 44 per cent of Brazilians and a whopping 56 per cent of Guatemalans responded that they "completely agree" with the statement: "God will grant material prosperity to all believers who have enough faith" (Pew Forum on Religion and the Public Life 2006:144). In April 2007, for example, one 15,000-member Neo-Pentecostal church in Guatemala City, the *Fraternidad Cristiana*, inaugurated a new sanctuary, fondly referred to as the 'Mega Frater', in an up-and-coming suburb of Guatemala City that holds more than 12,000 people. In this as in all these cases, the membership numbers may be somewhat exaggerated, since for most Neo-Pentecostals, church size and expansion – sometimes called '*iglecrecimiento*' – are a highly desirable and tangible indicator of success.

But the huge mega-churches like the Mega Frater alone do not tell the whole story. Latin America, of course, is home to a larger number of observant Christians of all stripes than any other region of the world, and, increasingly, many of these subscribe to at least some of the teachings of prosperity theology. So pervasive is its influence that historian Andrew Chesnut has suggested that "virtually no church, not even the Catholic Church, has been untouched by its teachings" (Cited in Trammel 2007).

#### V. PROSPERITY THEOLOGY: AN OPTION FOR THE RICH?

Both critics and fans of prosperity theology agree to its most obvious appeal: it promises success and valorizes material gain. If Liberation Theology called for a 'preferential option for the poor,' this is the option for the rich. In this context, a faith is immediately rewarded with gain: as the pastors say, "God will meet you at the point of your need" (Gifford 2007). While in the (recent) past within Latin American Pentecostalism, this 'point of need' was usually health (*sanación*), it is now financial prosperity (*prosperidad*) (Chesnut 2003).

This perspective is very much at odds with conventional Christian teaching in Latin America – not only traditional Catholicism, which sanctified self-denial, discipline, and sacralized suffering, but it even, as we have seen, contrasts with old-school Pentecostalism, which emphasized heavenly rewards over the concern with the here-and-now. Above all, prosperity theology contrasts perhaps most sharply with Liberation Theology, which demanded radical changes and social justice in a world defined by 'structural sin.' By contrast, many proponents of prosperity theology disdain any concern for the current political-economic system, arguing that true believers will prosper under whatever political or economic regime is in place. The IURD's founder, Edir Macedo argues precisely this point in his

popular book entitled, *O liberação de teologia*. By contrast, other notable Latin American proponents of the theology such as Guatemala's Harold Caballeros, the pastor of the wealthy mega-church El Shaddai, whose ministry speaks directly to a precise definition of 'Christian citizenship', and whose recent run for the presidency resulted in his being named Foreign Minister in the new administration of President Otto Pérez Molina, calls for direct engagement by Neo-Pentecostals in prayer and politics for the 'redemption' of their nations (O'Neill 2010). If one can 'name and claim' blessings for one's self, Caballeros argues, then should not the same be true for one's family, one's community, and, indeed, for the entire country? Such thinking was at the heart of a nation-wide prayer campaign that Caballeros sponsored in the early 1990s called, '*Jesus es Señor de Guatemala*;' this he now considers his first real foray into politics. 'Name and claim' advocates see the prosperity gospel as its own theology of liberation: "God wants to heal you. God wants you to prosper. You don't have to wait any longer" (Trammel 2007).

Prosperity gospel is not without a theological base. Much of it focuses on a quite literal reading of the Bible: for example, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth" (Matthew 5:3-10). In such a literal rendering, the Bible functions primarily, as Paul Gifford notes, "as a repository of narratives, overwhelmingly miraculous" (Cited in Jenkins 2006:91) of rags-to-riches stories, particularly in the Old Testament, where figures such as Job, David, Daniel, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses flourish against all odds because of their faith in God's blessing. Foremost in this narrative is Abraham, whom the Bible describes as being rewarded by God with a life of fruitful material abundance because of his unwavering trust in God's promise and covenant, even when the stakes in doing so seemed very high indeed (Jenkins 2006).

In writing of the rapid advance of prosperity theology in Africa, but using an explanation that is equally germane to Latin America, Paul Gifford suggests that the appeal of the movement stems not merely from desire, but from unfulfilled human needs that are shaped by "colonialism, the cold-war rivalry of the superpowers, the world trade system, and a huge burden of debt. But ... the most significant fact ... is the dysfunctional political culture that permits an unaccountable elite to appropriate wealth and power at the expense of the people" (2007:3). Although generally quite critical of the movement, he continues, "the significant thing is the hope engendered, the vision imparted, the sense of destiny awakened ... To be told that you matter, that you belong at the top, that you will have all that you desire, must provide incentives in circumstances in which it is all too easy to give up ... Whatever the tensions and inconsistencies, these churches are clearly developing a winning formula" (2007: 4).



## VI. PROSPERITY THEOLOGY: LIBERATION IN A MATERIAL WORLD?

To return to the specific case of the IURD, the methods that the church uses to advance the doctrine of prosperity are not unique to the denomination and, indeed, are only one aspect of the church's teaching, such as its heavy emphasis on exorcism, which we will not have the opportunity to explore in this article. As with many prosperity theology churches, within the IURD, much (financially) is expected of each believer, but much can be expected in return; for example, a pastor might urge the faithful to put their entire paycheck into the offering plate in order to reap the blessing of a better-paying job or unexpected wealth in return. Unlike some denominations, within the IURD, the giving of money to the church is a central tenet of belief; it is, in fact, central to salvation. In the church's 13-point statement of belief, the issue of the giving of tithes appears before statements about the Lord's Supper or eternal life made possible through Jesus' sacrifice. In the church's own words:

Tithes and offering are so sacred, as sacred as the Word of God. Tithes and offering signify the loyalty and love that the servant has toward the Lord. One cannot disassociate tithes and offering from the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus; they signify, in truth, the blood of the saved for those who need salvation (IURD, n.d.).

This formula for earthly salvation, which IURD' founder 'Bispo' (Bishop) Edir Macedo has referred to this as 'the miracle of the tithe', or 'putting God to the test,' is as much sympathetic magic – essence for essence, money for money – as it is an article of faith (IURD, n.d.). In Macedo's words, "The tithe and offerings are as sacred (*sagrados*) and as holy (*santos*) as the Word of God."<sup>8</sup> According to the church, the giving of money in larger and larger amounts is both a test of faith and an act of obedience. As Macedo phrases it, "God *orders* us to test Him so that blessing can descend upon us"<sup>9</sup> (emphasis mine). Members are urged to give a donation at every service they attend, and many of the faithful attend services multiple times per week, sometimes more than once a day, since each day symbolizes a different aspect of intercession: for health, family, money, jobs, etc. It is perhaps too glib an observation to make, that such contributions do indeed produce prosperity – at least for the pastor and church administration, if not necessarily for the giver.

In economic parlance, the IURD demands heavy investments not only of economic capital, but also of human capital from its members. This aspect is critical to the growth of the church, and not only in terms of sheer numbers. As Laurence Iannaccone has pointed out, most religious human capital is "context specific" relevant only to the particular congregations, denominations, or religious tradition in which it arose, enhancing the real or

perceived value of the particular religious group that occasioned its accumulation (Iannaccone 1997:32-33). Thus, in building up consistency and attendance, the IURD carefully interweaves social and physical spaces, habit and repetition, coercion and voluntarism, into what members feel is a seamless spiritual garment. While it is easy for outsiders to criticize such thinking, we may or may not heed the words of J. Lee Grady, who, writing of the African church, warns Westerners of our “illusions of controlling our own destiny versus merely surviving,” and argues that “It seems hypocritical for Western[ers] who live in their nice suburbs to criticize [those] who want to “prosper” ... and are just beginning to experience for the first time the joys of owning a car, holding a decent job, or enrolling in college. Do we really believe it is wrong for them to want those things?” (Phiri and Maxwell 2007).

A series of testimonies from IURD church members in Brazil, Mexico, and the United States directly support this view: “From poverty in New York to owner of a bread factory (*fábrica de pan*),” one testimony announces proudly; “New home and American residency”: proclaims another. The testimony of a third: “I am the owner of a new car, through the power of God.” And another: “Today, D.S. is the owner of a label factory (*fabrica de etiqueta*) in the Barra da Tijuca [a desirable beachfront area] in the western zone of Rio de Janeiro. She has new luxury automobile, and her three children are in high school”<sup>10</sup>. And, finally, this, from an IURD member named Francisca: “I made my deal with God because I realize that he is the All-Powerful, to cure and transform our lives in every sense. Because of that I did not fear anything for my family and I had faith that one day everything would be become right. I didn’t know how, but I had faith.” Now, Francisca testifies: through her husband Reinaldo’s new faith-based success at work as a soccer player, though we are not told whether or not he is the soccer superstar, although it would not be surprising, since many of Brazil’s famous *futebolistas* are *crentes* (believers), “we were able to build a two-bedroom house in Itaguié, the best on the street. We built another one in the city, and bought another in Recreio dos Bandeirantes and on the other side of Barra da Tijuca, we built a luxury condominium, one of the best in the region. I have a chauffeur and I have now traveled six times to Paris ... “ (see endnote 10). Francisca, as we can see, is not the least bit afraid to name-it-and-claim it. Such is the power of her belief that she is harnessing the power of Almighty God to bring her all the good things that the world has to offer.

## VII. CONCLUSION

What, then, are we to make of the IURD and its reification of prosperity theology? Denounced by many church leaders, from both the Catholic Church and mainline Protestant denominations, including some

Evangelicals, as a modern heresy that violates the teaching of Jesus by sanctifying wealth, deifying Man, and humanizing God, sometimes quite literally: one of the US' most vocal proponents, Kenneth Copeland once claimed that God is around "6'3" and weighs about two hundred pounds (Hanegraaff 1993:121), it is attractive to dismiss prosperity theology as nothing more than a get-rich-quick scheme clothed in religious vestments. Yet, at the same time, it is hard to disregard its basic appeal, especially to people who find themselves at society's margins with few other resources for self-improvement in a world that is changing faster than they are. Whether or not one sees prosperity theology as miraculous and divine in origin, it is clear that the followers of the faith tend to learn certain skills through 'deliverance' that have enormous practical value in any context – they often learn in the churches about money management, self-restraint (in terms of sobriety and sexual behavior, if not in consumption), and personal responsibility, since the churches also teach the Biblical precept, "to whom much has been given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). As Philip Jenkins writes, "For a Northern world that enjoys health and wealth to a degree scarcely imagined by any previous society, it is preciously easy to despise believers who associate divine favor with full stomachs or access to ... schooling or health care; who seek miracles in order to flourish, or even survive" (2006:97). This is a movement that is polylocal and global in nature, as a constant cross-pollination of ideas and theologies flow readily through the networks and nodes of Neo-pentecostalism, traveling not only from North to South, but also from South to North and as both ways across East and West. It is also very much a product of its time, in an era when economic shifts and adjustments promise advancement, but where these gains often remain tantalizing out of reach for ordinary people. Under such circumstances, the miraculous provides a logical solution.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Neo-pentecostalism, as its name implies, is a variety of Pentecostalism, which is itself a form of Christianity that emphasizes the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, as displayed in miraculous manifestations such as 'baptism in the Spirit,' physical healing and ecstatic behavior such as speaking in tongues, and the like. Modern Pentecostalism is predominantly a Protestant phenomenon, having its origins in the holiness movement of the late nineteenth century and in the Azusa Street Revival of 1906. By contrast, Neo-pentecostalism has its origins in the charismatic movement, which started in the Catholic Church during the 1960s. (Although many of their beliefs and practices are similar, Spirit-filled Catholics are generally known as 'charismatic,' while Protestants are Pentecostals or Neo-Pentecostals. Neo-Pentecostalism differs from

'traditional' Pentecostalism primarily in its emphasis on the temporal world (as opposed to the traditional Pentecostal preoccupation with Christ's return and on the afterlife). Not all Neo-Pentecostals subscribe to prosperity theology but many do.

<sup>2</sup> This data is from 2004, so it is somewhat dated. At that time, the countries (outside of Brazil) where there IURD had 10 or more churches were: the United States, Argentina, Venezuela, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, and South Africa (Mariano 2004:141).

<sup>3</sup> "Credence goods" are defined as a good "for which 'quality' is not easily determined before or after purchase. Reputation of the supplier is the primary assurance of quality."

<sup>4</sup> This is the title of a speech that is considered by many to be the opening salvo of modern prosperity theology. It comes from Russell H. Conwell, a successful businessman cum popular preacher and inspirational speaker in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his speaking career, which ran from 1870 until his death in 1925, Conwell gave the Acres of Diamonds speech more than 6000 times. Conwell, who was also the founder of Temple University, did not see the speech as having to do with wealth, but rather to him it signified: "Your diamonds are not in far-away mountains or in distant seas; they are in your own back yard if you will but dig for the them." See [http://www.temple.edu/about/temple\\_founder.html](http://www.temple.edu/about/temple_founder.html)

<sup>5</sup> To give some sense of the scope, the 2006 Pew Forum on Religion and the Public Life study estimated that of Africa's 890 million people, 147 are 'renewalists' (a term that includes both Pentecostals and Catholic charismatics). According to the study, one quarter of Nigerians are 'renewalist,' as are one-third of South African, and, most strikingly, is 56 per cent of Kenya's population. The study unfortunately does not distinguish between Neo-Pentecostals and others. (See Pew Forum on Religion and the Public Life, "Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey on Pentecostals," October 2006, <http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal/>)

<sup>6</sup> A few years ago, Cho announced that God had instructed him to change his name to David, although critics claim that the change had to do with a family dispute.

<sup>7</sup> <http://iurd.org.br/acatedral.php>

<sup>8</sup> "Os dizimos e as ofertas são tão sagrados e são santos quanto a Palavra de Deus" <http://www.igrejauniversal.org.br/doutrinas.jsp>

<sup>9</sup> *Vida y Abundancia*, p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.igrejauniversal.org.br/test-prosperidade.jsp>

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