

***The Sound of Tambourines:  
The Politics of Pentecostal Growth  
in El Salvador\****

PHILIP J. WILLIAMS

On a typical Thursday evening in Mejicanos, San Salvador, *evangélicos* throughout the city are glorifying God to the sound of tambourines and electric guitars. Along Mejicanos's Calle Principal the *hermanos* of the Fuente de Vida Eterna Pentecostal church remind the congregation that "Jesus is there for us if only we seek him out. The blind man sought out Jesus and was healed. We too can get back our sight if we seek out Jesus." Beyond the Punto Dos bus terminal in Colonia Buena Vista, the local Asambleas de Dios is holding a evangelistic campaign, imploring residents to repent and accept Christ as their savior. Farther up the Calle Mariona, the pastor of the Luz de la Biblia church draws a distinction between plastic surgery and "divine surgery": "Plastic surgery brings only superficial changes, whereas divine surgery brings profound change, a total transformation. Only God's divine surgery can cleanse us." Around the corner, members of the Catholic base community grumble about the Pentecostals' insults against the church and its saints. "The *hombres separados* try to hide from the world in their little groups. Instead of seeking unity, they only sow division." Outside, a group of *hermanos* from the Iglesia Elim peers in on its way to a prayer meeting.

During the past decade, the ground has been shifting under Mejicanos as in the rest of El Salvador. Beneath the civil war and economic disparity, a revolution of sorts has been taking place. This revolution has manifested itself not only in the dramatic growth of Pentecostal churches but also in the expansion of Catholic

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charismatic groups and the resurgence of base communities. The scope of the religious changes taking place in El Salvador is not without parallel elsewhere in Latin America. Not surprisingly, scholars of religion and politics in Latin America have been turning their attention to Pentecostalism.

As Cleary points out in his introductory chapter, explanations for the growth of Pentecostalism vary. From the pioneering work of Emilio Willems and Christian Lalive d'Epinay to more recent studies by David Martin and David Stoll,<sup>1</sup> scholars have debated the usefulness of the concept of anomie in explaining Pentecostal growth in Latin America. Simply stated, in societies experiencing rapid social change the resulting dislocation produces an erosion of norms and insecurity. The feeling of insecurity and uprootedness is particularly intense among poor migrants to urban centers. Pentecostalism offers these migrants a substitute community, providing new norms to confront their situation.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than rehashing the arguments, I want to make several points. First, the model of anomie may account for only certain Pentecostals and forms of Pentecostalism.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, it may be useful to distinguish between individual and social anomie. Second-generation inhabitants of cities may experience anomie for reasons other than social dislocation, for example, a personal crisis with alcohol or drugs. And finally, a situation of anomie, whether individual or social, is not a sufficient explanation for an individual's decision to convert to Pentecostalism. There is nothing inevitable about uprooted individuals' choosing a Pentecostal church over some other church or social organization.

Scholars also have disagreed over the years regarding the capacity of Pentecostals to subvert the traditional social order. Whereas Willems and, more recently, David Martin view Pentecostals as latent carriers of liberal-democratic values and practices, Ireland<sup>4</sup> and others are skeptical of such interpretations. Studies of Pentecostalism in Central America also dispute the view that Pentecostals are capable of moving from symbolic protest to a more structural challenge of the traditional social order. Roberts, in his study of Pentecostals in Guatemala City, found them reluctant to participate in community organizations and distrustful of political activity in general.<sup>5</sup> Churches counseled members to ignore social problems rather than to collaborate actively in resolving them. Stoll's study of the Pentecostal boom in Latin America and especially his chapter on Guatemala provide a necessary corrective to the notion of Pentecostalism as nurturing democratic values. The brutal dictatorship of the Pentecostal leader Gen. José Efraín Ríos Montt, with the open support of some Pentecostal leaders, raises serious doubts about any direct relationship between Pentecostalism and liberal democracy. Studies by Martínez and Valverde<sup>6</sup> of Pentecostals in Nicaragua and Costa Rica depict them as apolitical and hardly a force for structural change. Martínez does make a distinction between church leaders, who are more likely to seek relationships with political elites, and members, who are indifferent to political involvement. However, leaders' political participation, rather than challenging the traditional social order, tends to be supportive of the status quo.

*Historical Overview of Pentecostal Growth*

El Salvador, like its Central American counterparts, would seem an ideal candidate for demonstrating the usefulness of the concept of anomie in explaining Pentecostal growth. The dramatic increase in the numbers of churches and members since the late 1970s parallels the deepening conflict and economic crisis in the country. The relationship between social dislocation and Pentecostal growth seems to help explain even the early history of Pentecostal churches in the country. Pentecostal churches in particular sprang up originally in the Western coffee-growing regions. After the 1870s these areas experienced the dramatic expansion of coffee production. Government decrees abolishing Indian communal lands and ejidal land in 1881 and 1882 opened the way for coffee producers to increase their holdings. As coffee production expanded in the western region, the Indian population suffered increasing displacement, joining the growing pool of landless and land-poor peasants forced to work in the coffee harvest.<sup>7</sup> It was here that the first Pentecostal churches took root.<sup>8</sup>

Pentecostalism arrived in El Salvador around 1904.<sup>9</sup> Frederick Mebius, a Canadian missionary, began preaching among coffee workers in Las Lomas de San Marcelino, on the slopes of Volcán Santa Ana. After splitting with the Central American Mission<sup>10</sup> because of his Pentecostal beliefs, Mebius went on to establish some two dozen congregations with approximately 2,000 members by the late 1920s.<sup>11</sup> In December 1929 the churches split, about half of them remaining under Mebius's leadership and the other half following the Salvadoran Pentecostal leader Francisco Arbizú and the Welsh missionary Ralph Williams. The latter founded the Asambleas de Dios, affiliated with the Assemblies of God in the United States, in 1930. The other major Pentecostal denomination, the Iglesia de Dios, consisted of churches under Mebius's direction. It was formally endorsed by the Church of God of Cleveland, Tennessee, in 1940, following the arrival of the American missionary H. S. Syverson.<sup>12</sup>

Pentecostalism remained a largely rural phenomenon until the 1950s. In 1956, following an evangelistic campaign by the North American evangelist Richard Jeffrey, the Asambleas de Dios organized several new congregations in San Salvador. By 1960 the Asambleas reported twenty congregations with 1,200 members in the capital." During the 1960s the Asambleas de Dios shifted attention to San Salvador, transferring its national offices and Bible institute there in 1965.<sup>14</sup> The evangelizing efforts of the Centro Evangelístico, a thriving congregation in the heart of San Salvador, contributed greatly to the steady growth throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Under the leadership of the American missionary Juan Bueno, members of the Centro Evangelístico initiated prayer meetings in their homes, inviting neighbors to attend. Once a core group was established in a particular member's neighborhood, the Centro Evangelístico offered support to form a new congregation. In this way the Centro Evangelístico "mothered" dozens of churches throughout San Salvador,<sup>15</sup>

The other large Pentecostal church, the Iglesia de Dios, grew more slowly than the Asambleas and was less successful in establishing congregations in San Salvador. Soon after his arrival in 1940, Syverson founded a large central church in Cojutepeque, some fifteen miles southeast of the capital. In 1944 he established a Bible school and national offices in Santa Tecla, a small town just west of San Salvador. However, most of the churches founded during the 1940s and 1950s were located in isolated rural areas, which were deemed less hostile to the church's evangelizing efforts. After growing rather slowly during this period, church membership increased more rapidly during the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1976 the Iglesia de Dios claimed a total of 183 churches with a membership of over 8,000.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, the Asambleas de Dios and the Iglesia de Dios, along with other Pentecostal churches, grew steadily, surpassing the Central American Mission and the traditional denominations. By 1967 it was estimated that Pentecostals accounted for 70 percent of all Protestants in El Salvador, with a total communicant membership of 35,800.<sup>17</sup> The late 1970s saw very rapid growth in Pentecostal church membership. Although not wholly reliable, church growth data from the evangelical churches themselves do give an approximation of the trends during the 1980s.<sup>18</sup> A study by the Confraternidad Evangélica Salvadoreña (CONESAL) reports that the average annual growth rate for evangelical church membership was 22 percent from 1978 to 1982, 15.7 percent from 1982 to 1984, and 12.5 percent from 1985 to 1987, all well above the 5.5 percent rate for the 1960-1967 period.<sup>19</sup>

Estimates for evangelicals as a percentage of the total population during the late 1980s range from 12 to 23 percent. Not surprisingly, the highest estimate, 22.6 percent, comes from CONESAL. The CONESAL study draws on membership figures from the churches themselves. After calculating the total number of baptized members – estimated at approximately 315,000 – this figure is multiplied by a factor of 3.5, resulting in a total evangelical population of 1.1 million. The factor used represents the average number of nonbaptized family members or friends for each baptized member; however, it is suspect given that most church growth studies use a factor between two and three (Table 10.1).

A private survey conducted for the 700 Club in San Salvador in July-August 1990, based on a stratified sample of 3,693 respondents over the age of ten nationwide, estimates evangelicals at 17.4 percent of the total population.<sup>20</sup> The survey also includes a breakdown for the capital, other urban areas, and the countryside (see Table 10.2). Of particular interest is the percentage of Salvadorans not claiming any religious affiliation, 32.1 percent.

Finally, one of a series of surveys by the Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (IUDOP) at the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, conducted in June 1988, was devoted to religion.<sup>21</sup> The survey of 1,065 respondents from seven of El Salvador's fourteen departments estimated an evangelical population of 16.4 percent and included a breakdown by department (Table 10.3). Coleman et al., analyzing twenty-two surveys conducted by the IUDOP during the 1980s, estimate the evangelical population at 12 percent.<sup>22</sup> This figure, which

TABLE 10.1 Religious Affiliation of Salvadorans According to Various Surveys (percentage of population)

<i>Survey</i>	<i>Evangelical</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>No Affiliation</i>
CONESAL, 1987	22.6	n.a.	n.a.
IUDOR 1988	16.4	64.1	14.7
700 Club, 1990	17.4	47.3	32.1

*Sources:* CONESAL: CONESAL, "Estudio del crecimiento"; IUDOP: Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública, "La religión para los salvadoreños," no. 17, San Salvador, October 19, 1988; 700 Club: 700 Club, "Estudio sobre hábitos religiosos en El Salvador: Julio-Agosto," unpublished report, San Salvador, September 27, 1990.

is an average of the survey estimates, does not take into account annual growth trends and is clearly too low. From the available data it appears that a more accurate estimate would be in the range of 15-20 percent, with Pentecostals accounting for approximately 75 percent of the total evangelical population.

### *Explaining Pentecostal Growth*

The dramatic growth of Pentecostalism in El Salvador after the mid-1970s is undoubtedly related to the deepening political and economic crisis that plunged the country into a unending cycle of violence and despair. The crisis enveloping Salvadoran society affected every Salvadoran family to some degree. Poor Salvadorans saw their sons dragged off by the military to become cannon fodder in the hills while the wealthy sent their sons and daughters abroad or retired behind their walls and barbed wire. The social dislocation resulting from the war and economic crisis created increasingly precarious conditions for the majority of Salvadorans.

The crisis manifested itself in the massive displacement of the population during the 1980s. Even before the conflict began in earnest, the increasing concentration of landownership associated with the expansion of nontraditional export crops (cotton, sugar, and beef cattle) had produced a growing number of landless and land-poor. In addition to increasing rural-urban migration, more and more Salvadorans crossed into Honduras in search of land. On the eve of the Soccer War in 1969, some 300,000 Salvadorans are thought to have migrated to Honduras. The expulsion of 130,000 Salvadorans by the Honduran government in the aftermath of the war only added to the increasing land pressures.<sup>23</sup> Between 1961 and 1975 the landless population grew from 11.8 to 40.9 percent of rural families. By 1981 landlessness affected approximately 60 percent of the rural population.<sup>24</sup>

Not surprisingly, the armed conflict greatly exacerbated these tendencies. By the late 1980s over 25 percent of the population had been internally displaced or forced to flee the country.<sup>25</sup> As a result of the huge influx of migrants from the combat zones, the population of San Salvador's metropolitan area swelled from

TABLE 10.2 Religious Affiliation of Salvadorans (percentage of population)

<i>Area</i>	<i>Evangelical</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>No Affiliation</i>
San Salvador	21	47.3	28.4
Other urban areas	15	50.2	32.4
Rural areas	15	39.8	40.2

*Source:* 700 Club, "Estudio sobre hábitos en El Salvador."

560,000 in 1971 to over 1.2 million in 1990.<sup>26</sup> The deepening economic crisis translated into unacceptable levels of unemployment and deteriorating conditions for the majority of the population. Open unemployment reached 24 percent of the economically active population in 1989, while the percentage of households living in extreme poverty stood at 64.1 percent in 1985.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the armed conflict and military repression produced a growing number of victims, to the point that by the end of the war few Salvadorans would not know a friend or family member victimized by the conflict.

As life conditions for the majority of the population became increasingly precarious, it is not surprising that a growing number of Salvadorans searched for solutions to their physical and spiritual insecurity. However, there was nothing inevitable about their looking for support to the Pentecostal churches as opposed to the Catholic church. The churches' differing responses to the crisis are essential for an understanding of the relationship between the crisis and Pentecostal growth.

During the late 1970s, under the leadership of Archbishop Oscar Romero, a significant sector of the Catholic church adopted a position of prophetic denunciation, speaking out against the military regime's human rights abuses and in support of far-reaching social transformation. In response, the regime stepped up its persecution of church leaders, pastoral agents, and members of Christian base communities. The increasing repression culminated (but did not end) with the assassination of Romero in March 1980.<sup>28</sup>

In the wake of Romero's death, the church leadership in the archdiocese began to distance itself from the popular movements with which he had sought a relationship of solidarity. That sector of the church most committed to his pastoral initiatives found itself in the most difficult of circumstances. Its pastoral work among poor Salvadorans had become increasingly dangerous to all those involved. Not surprisingly, in those parishes where Romero's message had resonated most, pastoral agents and base-community members were forced to go underground, closing their doors to new members.

An example of this kind of "tactical retreat" occurred in the San Francisco de Asís parish in Mejicanos, San Salvador. In the mid-1970s, a Salvadoran seminarian and a Belgian nun began organizing "initiation" courses in the parish. On October 30, 1976, the first meeting was held with the participation of some fifty parishioners who had completed the courses. Those who accepted a "Christian

TABLE 10.3 Religious Affiliation of Salvadorans by Department (percentage of population)

<i>Department</i>	<i>Evangelical</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>No Affiliation</i>
Ahuachapán	9.9	59.4	24.2
Santa Ana	26.4	54.7	15.7
Chalatenango	5.0	73.3	13.3
San Salvador	16.0	67.3	11.1
Usulután	20.1	53.2	22.1
San Miguel	13.8	68.1	15.0
Morazán	12.8	79.0	4.7

*Source:* IUDOP, "La religión para los salvadoreños."

commitment" returned home to evangelize fellow parishioners. As more and more members of the emerging base communities began to participate in popular movements, repression against the parish increased. The parish priest, Father Octavio Ortíz, was killed in January 1979 while on a youth retreat in San Antonio Abad. His replacement, Father Rafael Palacios, was gunned down in Santa Tecla only six months later.

Although a group of Passionist Fathers took over the parish in late 1979, pastoral work was constrained by the climate of repression. Periods of reorganization and consolidation of the base communities were, followed by periods of intense persecution in which pastoral work was forced underground. In response to successive waves of repression, the parish adopted a number of security measures. Instead of meeting in members' homes, base communities met in the parish hall. There was great apprehension about recruiting new members, as they might turn out to be *orejas* (informants). The priests were unable to visit parishioners in their homes or to organize masses in the countryside for fear of reprisals. In short, pastoral work became highly centralized, and the church lost a significant presence in the *colonias*.<sup>29</sup>

Other sectors of the church were not so receptive to Romero's pastoral line. In some parishes, priests and religious maintained a highly sacramentalist approach to pastoral work. Instead of organizing grass-roots initiatives intended to increase lay participation in the life of the church, some priests and religious were content to wait for parishioners to come to them. A good example is the Corazón de María parish in Colonia Escalón. Although the majority of the parish's inhabitants live in squalid conditions, the bulk of the active members are upper- and middle-class Salvadorans. According to the parish priest, poorer inhabitants *se automarginan* (marginalize themselves) because they feel uncomfortable in a parish dominated by the wealthy.<sup>30</sup> Only recently (in late 1991) did the parish begin to devise new strategies to reach out to the poorer sectors, largely in response to a survey that found that 22.3 percent of households located in the *zonas marginales* of the parish were evangelical.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time that the Catholic church was losing its institutional presence among poor Salvadorans through either tactical retreat or pastoral neglect, the Pentecostal churches were launching an offensive to win over converts for Christ. Churches like the Asambleas de Dios were well positioned to take advantage of the Catholic church's tactical retreat. During the 1960s and 1970s the Asambleas de Dios had laid the groundwork for a significant expansion of its presence in San Salvador. In addition to the Instituto Bíblico, the church began a Christian dayschool program, the Liceos Cristianos, and was successful in attracting a growing number of middle-class converts through the activities of the Centro Evangélico, a thriving congregation in the heart of San Salvador.

Throughout the 1980s, with technical and financial assistance from their counterparts in the United States, Salvadoran churches organized massive evangelistic campaigns aimed at saturating the airwaves and filling soccer stadiums with new converts.<sup>32</sup> In 1980, the visit of a Puerto Rican evangelist, who preached to a full house at the Flor Blanca stadium in San Salvador, signaled the growing strength of the Pentecostal movement and served as an important impetus for future growth. By 1992 some of the larger churches had developed the mobilizational capacity to fill the stadium on their own.

Even more important than the evangelistic campaigns and use of the mass media were the efforts of Pentecostal churches at the grass roots.<sup>33</sup> Members of local churches visited neighbors in their *colonias*, invited family members, friends, and coworkers to attend services, and organized prayer groups in their homes. Unlike members of Catholic base communities, Pentecostals rarely faced persecution by the regime, which looked favorably upon the growth of Pentecostal churches. Contrary to some Catholic leaders who spoke against the regime, Pentecostal leaders were careful to maintain congenial relations with the government.<sup>34</sup>

Also important in explaining Pentecostal success in winning over new converts was the appeal of the Pentecostal message. Pentecostal churches offered both a *reason* and a *solution* for the crisis afflicting Salvadoran society. The suffering of the Salvadoran people followed biblical prophecy. The war and economic crisis were a sign that the Second Coming was imminent. Conditions were going to worsen before the apocalypse. Secular solutions that sought to transform society were useless when the world was full of sin. The only solution was to prepare oneself for the Second Coming. Salvadorans must repent, stop sinning, give up their vices, and accept Christ as their savior. In addition to guaranteeing their salvation, accepting Christ might bring other positive benefits, including material improvements and a renewed family environment.

In other words, the Pentecostal churches provided a solution that was within the grasp of most poor Salvadorans. They did not have to risk their lives by joining a political movement or trade union. Instead, they had to put their own lives in order before using up their energy on more collective solutions. For many poor Salvadorans, whose life conditions had not improved during the past several years

and who were tired of hearing the empty promises of corrupt politicians, the message was appealing. And for those poor Salvadorans who had grown increasingly skeptical of the Catholic church's exhortations to struggle against structures of oppression and injustice and had seen so many Catholic victims of that struggle, the message was attractive. One Pentecostal described his own conversion as follows, "In the Catholic Church I wasn't able to satisfy my feeling of emptiness. I felt this emptiness, this need for something more in my life. The situation of the war created a certain fear. The only solution was Jesus Christ. It was a necessity. Now I feel the presence of God in my life."<sup>35</sup>

The Pentecostal churches were an especially appealing option for poor women. First of all, they offered women consolation and solidarity. Most churches organized women's groups that provided a mutual support system for poor women. In fact, for many women, attending services was therapeutic. One woman commented, "How many times have I come to church ill or with a headache after a hard day but always gone home feeling better (*más tranquila*)?"<sup>36</sup> The women's groups also provided opportunities for participation and possibilities for assuming leadership positions within the churches. Besides organizing their own activities, the women's groups usually were responsible for one of the weekly services, and women in general played a prominent role in most of the services. Finally, those women who succeeded in converting their spouses generally experienced a dramatic improvement in their lives. As one woman commented, "My husband used to drink. When he came home drunk all he wanted to do was fight. Now we have peace in our home. My husband no longer wastes our money on alcohol, and now he cares about our children. We're still poor, but at least our children are growing up in the Gospel."<sup>37</sup>

In the context of a crisis and the Catholic church's diminished institutional presence, Pentecostal churches took the offensive with a powerfully convincing but simple message. It was a message that was easily comprehensible to poor Salvadorans and contrasted with the Catholic church's more abstract message about "evangelizing social structures." As more and more Salvadorans found solace in the Pentecostal churches, word spread. The boom was under way.

### *Poor Pentecostals in Comparative Perspective*

The data that follow are drawn from field research I conducted between 1991 and 1992 in El Salvador as part of a larger research project on grass-roots religious movements.<sup>38</sup> Although my survey of Pentecostals included members from both lower- and middle-class congregations, given the overwhelmingly "popular" composition of Pentecostal churches I will present data only on members of lowerclass ones. Of the eleven congregations selected, five were located in lower-class neighborhoods and six in *zonas marginales* of San Salvador and Mejicanos. Seven were affiliated with large denominations (Asambleas de Dios, Iglesia de Dios, Iglesia Pentecostal Unida). In order to assess the relative impact of religious affil-

iation on political attitudes and behavior, I also include data from a survey of lower-class Catholic base communities located in the San Francisco de Asís parish in Mejicanos, where most of the Pentecostal churches selected were located. Two of the four base communities were located in *zonas marginales*.

The data in Table 10.4 are revealing with regard to the migrant status of Pentecostals and base-community members. Members of base communities were more likely to have been migrants to the capital (64 percent) than Pentecostals (45 percent), suggesting that base communities are at least as successful as Pentecostal churches in attracting migrants. Moreover, of those Pentecostals that could be classified as migrants, 32 percent had converted before arriving in San Salvador and another 45 percent had converted seven or more years after arriving in the capital. In fact, only three of the fifty-one Pentecostals surveyed had converted as recently arrived migrants. Although the data are in no way conclusive, given the small size of the sample, they are highly suggestive and raise serious doubts about explanations of Pentecostal growth based on theories of social dislocation (Table 10.4).

Personal crises and the churches' aggressive evangelizing efforts, as opposed to social dislocation and uprootedness, seem to be more important in explaining individual conversion. Twenty-seven percent of Pentecostals cited personal crises (with alcohol, drugs, prostitution) as the primary factor behind their conversion. Typical are the following:

I liked to drink. I was a womanizer. My home was going down the tubes. I was destroying myself. I didn't even think about my kids. On June 12, 1979, God had mercy on me. He called me. I felt God's touch. I accepted Christ into my life. Afterwards I felt His strength.

\* \* \*

I was a sinner. I wasn't a Catholic. I never attended mass. One day I was invited to an evangelistic campaign. I went to have a look. During the celebration I became aware of my situation, that I was corrupted. I understood the message that only the believers would be saved. God was offering me an opportunity, a way of escaping from sin. It was then that I accepted God.

\* \* \*

I accepted Christ in 1986. It was a total transformation in my life. I lived in sin, dissolution, sex, pornography, thinking that I was a know-it-all. But one day God made me understand my true spiritual condition, and it was then that I felt ashamed of my life. I gave my life to Christ, and He broke all the chains that enslaved me. It was something indescribable.

Another 25 percent pointed to the evangelizing efforts of family members or friends as determinant and 16 percent to the efforts of the churches themselves.

TABLE 10.4 Background Characteristics of Members of Pentecostal Churches and Catholic Base Communities (percentage of respondents)

	<i>Pentecostals</i> (n=51)	<i>Catholics</i> (n=47)
Gender		
Female	47	53
Male	53	47
Age		
Under 21	8	13
21 to 30	24	26
31 to 50	54	41
Over 50	14	22
Place of origin		
San Salvador	55	36
Elsewhere	45	64
Family income		
Under 1,500 colónes	62	81
1,501-2,500 colónes	18	11
Over 2,500 colónes	11	5
Don't know	9	3
Formal education		
None	6	14
Primary (complete or incomplete)	43	41
Secondary (complete or incomplete)	31	32
Postsecondary	20	14

The context of the war and economic crisis was not unimportant. Eighty-two percent of those surveyed had converted to Pentecostalism between 1976 and 1990, paralleling the crisis. The data, then, tend to support the argument that both personal crises, aggravated by the increasingly precarious life conditions associated with war and economic decline, and the aggressive evangelizing efforts of church members contributed significantly to the boom after the mid-1970s.

Also important in understanding the growth of Pentecostal churches is the level of satisfaction among church members. Ninety-four percent of Pentecostals said that their life conditions had improved since converting. Respondents pointed to both spiritual and material improvements in their lives:

With the Lord I feel sure of myself, more confident. Before I wasn't married, but with the Lord I married a Christian. Before I lived with bitterness, hatred, vengeance, and many other things which the Lord has eliminated from me.

\* \* \*

I can say that what I earn is little but I never go lacking because God provides me with everything I need.

\* \* \*

Before I used to drink a lot and waste my money on liquor. God has blessed me. Now I have a small house that I was able to finance through a social fund.

\* \* \*

Before knowing Jesus Christ we rented a house. Since converting we have our own house and vehicle.

Pentecostals also expressed a high level of satisfaction with their churches' ability to address members' needs. Whereas 67 percent of Pentecostals believed that their local church addressed members' needs, only 43 percent of base-community members thought so.

The data in Table 10.5 on political attitudes and behavior are also revealing. As expected, Pentecostals were much less likely than base-community members to participate in political parties, trade unions, and neighborhood associations. Likewise, only 14 percent (compared with 94 percent of base-community members) believed that the church should denounce social injustice. Several respondents qualified this by saying that "the church shouldn't involve itself in politics." Nevertheless, a low level of participation is not synonymous with political conservatism. Although Pentecostals were much less likely than base-community members to support political parties on the left (FMLN-CD), only 2 percent expressed support for the right-wing ARENA party. The overwhelming majority of Pentecostals (63 percent) said that *no* party was capable of resolving the country's problems. Typical responses were that *sólo Dios* (only God) could resolve the country's problems or that political parties and politicians served only their own partisan interests. Equally surprising was that Pentecostals were not much more likely to support the status quo than base-community members. Only 8 percent of Pentecostals believed that the government responded to the people's needs. And finally, 41 percent cited socioeconomic inequality/poverty as the principal cause of the war.

What if anything can we conclude from these data? It seems clear that Pentecostals' low level of participation in secular associations is a result of something other than political conservatism. Like base-community members, Pentecostals were highly critical of the ARENA government and (albeit in smaller numbers) cited socioeconomic equality/poverty as the leading cause of the conflict. However, unlike base-community members, Pentecostals expressed deep skepticism about the ability of any political party to address the country's problems and saw little point in denouncing social injustice. Their overwhelming disillusionment with politics in general and their rejection of secular solutions help to explain their unwillingness to participate in secular associations with political agendas.

TABLE 10.5 Political Attitudes and Behavior of Members of Pentecostal Churches and Catholic Base Communities (percentage of respondents)

	<i>Pentecostals</i> (n=51)	<i>Catholics</i> (n=47)
Believe government responds to people's needs	8	4
Believe the church should denounce social injustice	14	94
Causes of the war		
Socioeconomic inequality/poverty	41	64
Lack of love/understanding	24	13
Political power ambitions	10	2
Lack of spiritual direction	10	0
Biblical prophecy	8	0
Social discontent	4	0
Others	4	8
No opinion	4	13
Participation in secular associations		
Political party	0	19
Trade union	0	11
Neighborhood association	10	36
Voted in last election	69	66
Party preference		
ARENA	2	0
PDC	0	0
FMLN-CD	0	44
Party of the people	0	15
Opposition party	2	0
Evangelical party	2	0
No party	63	26
No opinion	31	17

The degree to which Pentecostalism influences members' political attitudes and behavior is more difficult to measure, and the data presented here can only be considered suggestive in this regard. Although the data suggest a fairly strong correlation between religious affiliation and degree of political participation among Pentecostals and base-community members, they do not necessarily demonstrate a causal relationship between the two variables. It may be that Pentecostals were already skeptical of politics and mistrustful of secular solutions prior to converting. The religious content of Pentecostalism, which tends to shun participation in associations with political agendas and reject secular solutions, may simply serve to reinforce a predisposition toward nonparticipation. For base-community members there does seem to be a strong correlation between active participation in the church and political attitudes; however, further research in this area is warranted.<sup>39</sup>

*The Political Impact of Pentecostal Growth*

Despite most Pentecostals' disillusionment with traditional politics, the dramatic increase in church membership and the churches' growing institutional concerns have led some Pentecostal leaders to seek a more public role in the country's political life. This is especially true among the larger, more institutionalized churches such as the *Asambleas de Dios*. As its outreach programs have expanded over the years, the *Asambleas de Dios*'s relationship with the state has assumed greater significance. Maintaining harmonious church-state relations can bring concrete benefits to the church. An example of this is the church's network of church schools, which receives financial support from the government's *Fondo de Inversión Social* (Social Investment Fund–FIS). More important, as I suggested early on, congenial relations with the regime in power guarantee the churches freedom to carry out their evangelizing mission. Not surprisingly, then, most church leaders have been reluctant to criticize government abuses.

Restraint in criticizing the regime is not simply the result of political conservatism. Although most Pentecostal leaders are conservative, they also hold to an eschatological vision that is radically different from that of the Catholic church. A missionary for the *Asambleas de Dios* explained: "We believe that things will get worse before the Second Coming. Meanwhile, our job is to prepare the people, attending to their immediate needs. We're not feeding the poor to change society. Why change the structures of society? We don't believe the Kingdom can begin here on earth. Even if 95 percent of the people converted, there would still be human failure and sin."<sup>40</sup>

Given this eschatological vision and Pentecostals' widespread distrust of politics, it may seem surprising that after 1990 two evangelical-inspired political parties emerged. Does the establishment of these two parties signal a new direction in the political participation of Pentecostals? What are their chances of success, given the experience of evangelical movements in Peru and Guatemala?

The first of the evangelical-inspired parties to emerge, the *Movimiento de Solidaridad Nacional* (National Solidarity Movement–MSN), was founded in February 1991 by a group of mostly evangelical businessmen and professionals, including the rector of the *Universidad Evangélica* and the director of *Crusada Estudiantil y Profesional para Cristo* (Campus Crusade for Christ).<sup>41</sup> Several of the founding members had been active in the Christian businessmen's organization, *Hombres de Negocio por un Evangelio Completo*. In fact, the MSN's president, Edgardo Rodríguez, had served as national party president for six years. In addition to evangelicals, the MSN also counted Catholic charismatics, including Rodríguez, among its founders.

The MSN received legal status in February 1992 after collecting the required number of signatures (3,000). During 1992 it concentrated its efforts on building organizational bases throughout the country and enhancing its public exposure through the media. Positioning itself as a party of the center, the MSN presented

itself as an alternative to the traditional political parties. MSN leaders hoped that, as in Guatemala and Peru, the large number of voters disillusioned with professional politicians would be attracted to a party of Christian businessmen and professionals with no political past.<sup>42</sup> Despite their efforts, the party received only 1 percent of the national vote in the March 1994 elections and failed to win a seat in the Legislative Assembly.

One of the MSN's greatest limitations was its weak connection to the Pentecostal community. Most of its leaders came from non-Pentecostal churches. This was a severe limitation, given that Pentecostals account for at least 75 percent of the Protestant population. It seems also that the decision to organize the party was made without consulting leaders from the largest Pentecostal churches. Moreover, the fact that the MSN's president was a Catholic created a great deal of distrust in the Pentecostal community.<sup>43</sup>

A potentially more promising development for politically activated Pentecostal leaders was the decision of Jorge Martínez to found his own political movement in January 1993. Martínez, a prominent Pentecostal with close ties to the Pentecostal community, had served as vice minister of agriculture and of interior during the Alfredo Cristiani government. He is the first Salvadoran Pentecostal to occupy a cabinet position in the government. Martínez is well known in the Pentecostal community, frequently preaching at churches around the country. During his tenure in office he was able to travel extensively, making invaluable contacts for a future presidential bid. Up until the fall of 1993 Martínez and his party, the Movimiento de Unidad (Unity Movement), concentrated their efforts outside of the capital, avoiding the media limelight.<sup>44</sup>

Unlike the MSN, Martínez made no bones about his ties to the Pentecostal community and his efforts to attract support among churches. Several prominent members of the wealthy Iglesia Josué (affiliated with the Asambleas de Dios), including the director of the 700 Club, and a number of pastors from the Asambleas de Dios actively supported Martínez's candidacy.<sup>45</sup> Although Martínez believed that his party was well placed to tap Pentecostal disillusionment with the traditional parties, its performance in the March 1994 elections was not much better than the MSN's, only 2.4 percent of the vote nationally. It was, however, enough to guarantee the party one deputy in the Assembly.

The parties' poor showing in the elections raises doubts about their potential impact on national politics. Despite widespread disillusionment with traditional political parties, it appears that Salvadorans in general and Pentecostals in particular did not view the evangelical-inspired parties as a viable alternative. Such a conclusion is supported by the data in Table 10.5 showing that only 4 percent of poor Pentecostals expressed support for evangelical parties. Personal interviews with both members and pastors of Pentecostal churches also revealed little enthusiasm for Pentecostal participation in electoral politics.

Another factor worth considering is the impact of Jorge Serrano's political demise in neighboring Guatemala. The debacle of Guatemalan evangelicals' first

foray into electoral politics may have influenced Salvadoran voters to some extent. Probably more important was the nature of the electoral campaign itself. Given that the elections had become something of a referendum on ARENA, small parties had little opportunity to make their presence felt. Not surprisingly, media attention focused almost exclusively on ARENA and its two principal challengers, the Christian Democrats and the FMLN. Finally, some voters inclined to vote for the evangelical-inspired parties may have switched their loyalties to one of the larger parties to avoid "wasting" their votes. Whatever the case, the evangelical parties' poor electoral performance should result in a reassessment of their continuing political participation.

*Interpreting Pentecostal Growth:  
Some Final Reflections*

As I have pointed out, interpretations of Pentecostal growth vary widely. Part of the confusion in the literature may be a result of the paradoxical nature of Pentecostalism. Droogers argues that although the paradoxical elements of the Pentecostal phenomenon often appear to the researcher as contradictions, from the perspective of the believer they may seem complementary. In fact, the religion's paradoxical character may add to its appeal, since it affords believers wider latitude to satisfy their needs.<sup>46</sup>

My own research on Pentecostalism in El Salvador revealed a number of elements that may appear contradictory to the outside observer. However, after many conversations with Pentecostals and after having attended numerous services, I came to realize that the very paradoxical nature of the religion may have contributed significantly to its growth in recent years.<sup>47</sup>

1. Spiritual refuge versus symbolic protest. To the outside observer, Pentecostalism seems to represent a spiritual withdrawal from worldly things and a rejection of secular solutions. Nevertheless, this spiritual withdrawal is not the same as conformism or total withdrawal from the secular world. As was made clear by the data presented in Table 10.5, although most poor Pentecostals do not support the status quo, they are unlikely to put their trust in secular solutions. Instead, they continue to live "in the world" but distinguish themselves by adopting a radically different lifestyle. Preaching against sin, they venture out into the world, denouncing worldly things and calling on people to transform their lives as they have. However, despite their denunciations and their rejection of secular solutions, most Pentecostals submit to secular authorities. As Ireland suggests, there are clear limits to Pentecostals' transformative capacity, making it unlikely that symbolic protest would evolve into a direct challenge of the traditional social order.

2. Authoritarianism versus democracy. Here again there are elements of both. On the one hand, Pentecostal churches provide important opportunities for lay participation often lacking in Catholic churches. Members typically lead church services and sometimes even preach. Personal testimonies also give services a participatory flavor. Moreover, Pentecostals are constantly reminded that their communication with God is direct and does not have to be mediated through an ordained minister. And finally, although some of the larger denominations now require that their pastors complete a minimum period of training and apprenticeship, in most of the smaller independent churches members can aspire to become pastors with little or no formal training.

Despite the egalitarianism evident in many Pentecostal churches, pastors are the highest authorities in the churches, and many behave in a very authoritarian manner. In some churches pastors make decisions in consultation with lay leaders, but in others pastors decide with little or no input from church members. At a minimum, pastors exert significant influence over which members are given positions of responsibility within the church. This tends to foster the development of patron-client relations whereby members are "rewarded" for their loyalty to the pastor. Maintaining these patron-client networks takes on increasing importance as aspiring pastors compete for members' loyalties. Often the result of such competition is a final showdown or split in which members' loyalties are manipulated by church leaders.

Pastors exert influence over their congregations in other ways. In many churches, pastors control church finances with little or no accountability to the membership. This may not present much of a problem in small rural areas, where congregations are small and tithes are barely sufficient to support the pastor and his family. However, in larger urban churches, members' tithes are more than adequate to support the pastor and his family. Not surprisingly, some pastors use church finances to reward loyal members instead of investing in church facilities and program development.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, despite members' "direct communication with God," pastors typically impose "correct interpretations" of biblical passages and are rarely tolerant of divergences. Members are reluctant to challenge the pastor's authority in interpreting the Bible, knowing that loyalty will increase their chances of assuming positions of greater responsibility in the church.

Pentecostals may experience emotional freedom during church services, but at the same time they must submit to a very strict code of ethics. Although spontaneity reigns during worship, Pentecostals' lives outside of church are highly regimented. Moreover, for those who stray

from the path, sanctions can be severe; it is not rare for them to be denounced in church.

Elements of both authoritarianism and democracy also affect the relationship between local churches and national church structures. The balance between centralized authority and local autonomy varies between churches and within different denominations. In the larger, more institutionalized churches, such as the Iglesia de Dios and the Asambleas de Dios, the balance is often tipped in favor of centralized authority. In both churches I encountered younger pastors who were particularly critical of restrictions imposed from above. Even so, in the Asambleas de Dios, wealthier congregations with large memberships can exercise a great deal of autonomy from national leaders.<sup>49</sup>

Tolerating autonomy at the local level can reduce the likelihood of schisms within the churches. Whereas divisions within smaller independent churches usually lead to a complete break, in the larger denominations breakaway groups are often allowed to form a new congregation while remaining within the fold. A strategy sometimes used by the national leadership of the Asambleas de Dios is to offer upstart pastors support to found congregations of their own. This flexible approach has been successful in avoiding major schisms.<sup>50</sup>

3. Women's submission versus women's liberation. As was pointed out earlier, poor women can find new opportunities for participation and exercising leadership roles within the churches. Nevertheless, there are limits on the leadership positions to which women can aspire. In many churches women cannot serve on the church governing board, let alone become pastors. And in those churches where women can aspire to become pastors, they are prohibited from becoming ordained.<sup>51</sup>

Upon conversion, many poor women experience a dramatic improvement in their domestic environment. This is especially true where women succeed in converting their husbands. But, as Burdick points out in his study of Pentecostalism and Catholic base communities in urban Brazil, "this can happen without the man himself actually becoming a *crente* [believer]... simple moral pressure from *crente* wives is enough to moderate men's drinking, smoking, adultery, and so forth."<sup>52</sup> Women are, however, expected to submit to their husbands, and sometimes this may mean that they have to wait patiently for their husbands to convert. And even when a spouse converts, he continues to act as the head of the household. However, as Brusco argues in her study of Pentecostalism in Colombia, "in Pentecostal households the husband may still occupy the position of head, but his relative aspirations have changed to coincide with those of his wife."<sup>53</sup>

4. Rupture versus continuity. In many ways, Pentecostalism represents a rupture with the past. Most important, it signals a break with a dominant culture infused with traditional Catholic rituals and practices.

Converts can no longer participate in patron-saints fiestas or other religious celebrations. Because of prohibitions on drinking and dancing, converts cannot attend many community celebrations organized by the local neighborhood committee. Conversion may also lead to ostracism on the part of other family members. Not surprisingly, because of the radical nature of the break, many conversions involve entire families.

Besides representing a rupture with traditional culture and with past lifestyles, as was pointed out above, Pentecostalism may break down certain barriers for women, particularly in the domestic sphere. Moreover, because of the high degree of egalitarianism evident in some churches, members may overcome traditional obstacles to assuming leadership roles. At the same time, however, Pentecostalism represents a significant degree of continuity with the past. Authoritarian decisionmaking, patron-client networks, patriarchal structures, and submission to secular authorities are all reproduced to some degree within the Pentecostal churches.

Clearly, the ground has been shifting in El Salvador. The religious arena has become increasingly crowded as a result of the Pentecostal boom. Catholic church leaders, aware that the church's traditional religious monopoly is no longer a given, have begun to encourage new pastoral strategies aimed at regaining lost ground. The resurgence of base communities in several parishes in the archdiocese and the spectacular growth of the charismatic movement are examples of Catholic responses to the Pentecostal "offensive."<sup>54</sup> It may be that the paradoxical nature of Pentecostalism will produce unresolvable tensions that result in its stagnation. Just as likely, though, is, that Pentecostal churches will continue to incorporate apparently contradictory elements in a complementary fashion, contributing to their future vitality and appeal.

Back in Mejicanos, the tambourines can still be heard. At the Templo La Jordán, Brother Fidel tells the congregation of a sick man who didn't know Christ. When Brother Fidel persuaded the man to appeal to Jesus, he was healed, miraculously. "The power of Jesus can heal us, it can change our lives completely. Those of you who want to appeal to Jesus, come forward" Brother Fidel then asks the congregation to pray for those kneeling before him. Several minutes of intense, rhythmic praying follow: "Gloria al Señor, Aleluya, Amen, Gloria al Señor." Across town in the Iglesia La Hermosa, one of the "sisters" steps forward to preach: "Many people ask us: 'Who are you if you're not of this world?' No, it's not that we don't live in this world. Of course we're in this world. It's just that we don't live the way the rest of the world does."

#### NOTES

1. Emilio Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); Christian Lalive d'Epinaay, *Haven of the Masses: A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile*

(London: Lutterworth, 1969); David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990); David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

2. André Droogers, "Visiones paradójicas sobre una religión paradójica," in Barbara Boudewijnse, André Droogers, and Frans Kamsteeg, eds., *Algo más que opio: Una lectura antropológica del Pentecostalismo latinoamericano y caribeño* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 1991), pp. 23-24.

3. Droogers, "Visiones," p. 27.

4. Rowan Ireland, *Kingdoms Come: Religion and Politics in Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991). See also Judith Hoffnagel, "Pentecostalism: A Revolutionary or a Conservative Movement?" in Stephen D. Glazier, ed., *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Case Studies from the Caribbean and Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1980).

5. Bryan Roberts, "El Protestantismo en dos barrios marginales de Guatemala," *Estudios Centroamericanos*, no. 2 (1967).

6. Abelino Martínez, *Las sectas en Nicaragua: Oferta y demanda de salvación* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 1989); Jaime Valverde, *Las sectas en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 1989).

7. David Browning, *El Salvador: Landscape and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

8. Everett Wilson, "Central American Evangelicals: From Protest to Pragmatism," *International Review of Mission* 77 (January 1988), p. 96.

9. Charles Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod* (Cleveland, Tenn.: Pathway Press, 1959), p. 140. Wilson uses "about 1915" as the date of Mebius's arrival in El Salvador (Everett Wilson, "Sanguine Saints: Pentecostalism in El Salvador," *Church History* 52 [January 1983], p. 189). Nelson uses an earlier date, "about 1912" (Wilton Nelson, *Protestantism in Central America* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984], p. 40). The date I use comes from an official church history of the Church of God's missionary work in El Salvador.

10. The Central American Mission was founded by Cyrus Scofield, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Dallas, Texas, and sent its first missionary to El Salvador in 1896. See Nelson, *Protestantism in Central America*, pp. 32-34.

11. Wilson, "Sanguine Saints," p. 190.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197, and Cristóbal Ramírez, *Obedeciendo la Gran Comisión* (San Salvador: Asambleas de Dios, 1984), pp. 16-18.

14. *Luz y Vida*, no. 2 (1988), p. 9.

15. Interview with Hno. Herminio Dubón, administrator of the Centro Evangelístico, San Salvador, November 26, 1991.

16. Leonel Bernal, "Hacia un ministerio en El Salvador," M. Div. thesis, Church of God School of Theology, Cleveland, Tenn., May 1990.

17. William Read et al., eds., *Latin American Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969) p. 150-153.

18. Unfortunately, none of the studies distinguish between Pentecostal and nonPentecostal churches.

19. CONESAL, "Estudio del crecimiento de la iglesia evangélica de El Salvador," unpublished report, San Salvador, 1987. The CONESAL study suggests that the evangelical

boom began to run out of steam over the course of the 1980s. During my field research, August 1991-August 1992,<sup>1</sup> I noticed increasing concern on the part of pastors regarding future growth. During several services that I attended, pastors talked of "stagnation" and called on members to be more aggressive in winning over new converts.

20. 700 Club, "Estudio sobre hábitos religiosos en El Salvador: Julio-Agosto 1990," unpublished report, San Salvador, September 27, 1990.

21. IUDOP, "La religión para los salvadoreños," Working Paper no. 17, October 19, 1988, San Salvador.

22. Kenneth Coleman et al., "Protestantism in El Salvador: Conventional Wisdom Versus Survey Evidence," *Latin American Research Review* 28, 2 (1993), pp. 119-140.

23. For an excellent discussion of Salvadoran migration to Honduras and the origins of the Soccer War, see William Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979).

24. Charles Brockett, *Land, Power, and Poverty* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990) p. 75.

25. Mario Lungo, *El Salvador en los 80: Contrainsurgencia y revolución* (San Salvador: Editorial Universitaria, 1990), pp. 97-101.

26. Ministerio de Planificación, *Indicadores económicas y sociales, 1990-1991* (San Salvador, 1991).

27. FLACSO, *Centroamérica en gráficas* (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO 1990), and CENITEC, "La eradicación de la pobreza en El Salvador," *Política Económica* 1, 4 (December 1990-January 1991).

28. For a discussion of this period of church history, see Phillip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion* (London: SCM Press, 1984); Jorge Cáceres, "Political Radicalization and Popular Pastoral Practices in El Salvador, 1969-1985," in Scott Mainwaring and Alex Wilde, eds., *The Progressive Church in Latin America* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989); and Rodolfo Cardenal, *Historia de una esperanza* (San Salvador: Universidad Centroamericana Editores, 1987).

29. This discussion is based on interviews with lay leaders active in the parish since the mid-1970s. They asked to remain anonymous.

30. Interview with Father Francisco Fierro of Corazón de María parish, San Salvador, April 21, 1992.

31. Parroquia Corazón de María, "Censo parroquial de las zonas marginales," manuscript, San Salvador, December 1991.

32. For a discussion of the relationship between U.S.-based churches and religious organizations and their counterparts in Central America, see Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?*

33. The director of the local 700 Club admitted that the use of the mass media was effective only if local churches engaged in follow-up work at the grass roots. Interview with Lic. Alejandro Anaya, director of the 700 Club, San Salvador, January 28, 1992.

34. The general superintendent of the Asambleas de Dios told me that "the government doesn't oppose the churches as long as they don't get involved in politics." Interview with Hno. Julio César Pérez, San Salvador, December 13, 1991. The national supervisor of the Iglesia de Dios added that "the reason the Catholic church has had problems with the government is that its denunciations are excessive." Interview with Hno. David Peraza, Santa Tecla, August 27, 1991.

35. Interview with member of the Centro Evangélico, San Salvador, March 12, 1992.

36. Interview with member of the Templo Evangélico Emanuel, Mejicanos, San Salvador, February 25, 1992.

37. Interview with a group of women at the Iglesia de Dios in Colonia Progreso, Mejicanos, July 25, 1992.

38. My field research over a twelve-month period combined semistructured interviews with church elites and members, self-administered questionnaires, and participant observation.

39. I found a highly positive correlation between years of active membership and support for parties on the left (Kendall tau  $b = 0.81$ , Prob  $> :R = 0.05$ ).

40. Interview with Delonn Rance, American missionary for the Assemblies of God, San Salvador, October 14, 1991.

41. These are Dr. José Heriberto Alvayero and Adonai Leiva, respectively.

42. Interviews with Edgardo Rodríguez, presidential candidate of the MSN, San Salvador, November 12, 1991, and July 17, 1992, and with Dr. José Alvayero, rector of the Universidad Evangélica, San Salvador, October 29, 1992.

43. Most of the pastors I interviewed had a negative or lukewarm view of the MSN. Only two out of fifteen were enthusiastic about the idea of an evangelical party. The president of the MSN, Edgardo Rodríguez, admitted that the massive support they had expected from evangelical churches had not been forthcoming. According to him, "most pastors are afraid of getting involved in politics."

44. Interview with Dr. Jorge Martínez, presidential candidate of the Movimiento de Unidad, San Salvador, July 13, 1993.

45. Interviews with Martínez and a campaign volunteer at the Movimiento de Unidad headquarters, San Salvador, July 13, 1993.

46. Droogers, "Visiones paradójicas," pp. 36-40.

47. These reflections are based on in-depth interviews, both unstructured and semistructured, with members and leaders in the churches where I conducted my survey.

48. Confidential interview with the pastor of a large Pentecostal denomination.

49. A case in point is the Iglesia Josué, where, despite the strict dress codes generally enforced in lower-class churches, wealthy Pentecostals arrive at Sunday worship dressed in the latest fashions.

50. There are limits to this strategy. In the case of the Centro Evangelístico, one of the largest and most influential congregations affiliated with the Asambleas de Dios, an ambitious young pastor and some five hundred members left the church in November 1991. Despite the church's offering the pastor his own church, his group founded its own independent congregation a few blocks away from the Centro Evangelístico. Interview with Hno. Herminio Dubón, administrator of the Centro Evangelístico, San Miguelitos, San Salvador, November 26, 1993.

51. This is the case in the Asambleas de Dios. "Ordained pastor" is the highest of the three categories of pastors allowed by the church. Interview with Hno. Julio Pérez.

52. John Burdick, "Rethinking the Study of Social Movements: The Case of Christian Base Communities in Urban Brazil," in Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez (eds.), *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 178.

53. Elizabeth Brusco, "Colombian Evangelicalism as a Strategic Form of Women's Collective Action," *Feminist Issues* 6, 2 (Fall 1986), p. 6.

54. Catholic base communities have flourished of late in the San Francisco de Asís parish in Mejicanos, La Resurrección parish in Colonia Miramonte, and Santa Lucía parish in Colonia Santa Lucía. The charismatic movement claims over 20,000 adherents in the archdiocese alone.