

Beyond the Pulpit: Pentecostal Growth and Economic Transformations in Brazil¹

Francisco Costa

Angelo Marcantonio

Rudi Rocha

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This chapter investigates the relationship between economic transformation and the surge of Pentecostalism in Brazil. We aim to offer a concise yet comprehensive exploration of the forces shaping the growth of Pentecostalism and its political power. In doing so, we portray the nuanced dynamics underlying the interplay between economic challenges, religious expansion, and political influence.

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, Brazil has undergone a significant shift in its religious landscape. The Pentecostal share of the Brazilian population has more than doubled, and Pentecostal churches have grown exponentially in both number and influence. These churches have acquired radio stations and TV channels, ensuring extensive media exposure, and have expanded their reach by opening new temples in various countries. Today, Pentecostal denominations have substantial political engagement and representation in Brazil, thriving with broad support from both the legislative and executive branches. Elected politicians have actively courted Evangelical and Pentecostal leaders, benefiting from their influence. Under President Jair Bolsonaro, a former Presbyterian preacher was appointed to the Supreme Court, fulfilling Bolsonaro's promise to nominate an "extremely evangelical" member.

Brazil's religious transformation is part of a broader global trend where Pentecostalism has experienced rapid growth worldwide, particularly in developing nations. Similar shifts have been observed in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, where economic, social, and political factors converge to facilitate the

¹ Costa, FGV EPGE, francisco.costa@fgv.br; Marcantonio, FGV EAESP, angelo.junior.2024@fgv.edu.br; Rocha, FGV EAESP, rudi.rocha@fgv.br;

spread of Pentecostal churches. This expansion reflects a global movement, where religious institutions provide social and spiritual support in regions marked by economic uncertainty and institutional decline.

This chapter aims to provide a concise yet comprehensive exploration of Brazil's Pentecostal upsurge by drawing on previous academic research in economics and related fields. We seek to identify the factors that explain this rapid and intense growth, map some of its known repercussions in politics and society, and highlight questions that warrant further investigation.

We first delve into the multifaceted causes behind the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil, particularly since the 1990s. The literature identifies several economic factors as determinants of this phenomenon. For instance, Costa et al. (2022) argue that economic distress caused by Brazil's 1990s trade liberalization contributed to a significant conversion of Catholics to Pentecostalism in the 1990s. This economic lens is further complemented by research on the substitutability between religious institutions and state-provided social services (Cavalcanti et al., 2022), as well as the role of Pentecostal churches in filling gaps left by declining labor unions (Ogeda et al., 2024). We also discuss the influence of tax incentives on the growth of Pentecostalism. Corbi and Sanches (2021) show how government subsidies have played a critical role in altering the competitive landscape between Catholic and Evangelical churches in Brazil.

In addition to economic factors, the rise of Pentecostalism in Brazil has been significantly influenced by exposure to religious content, particularly through media channels. Since the late 1960s, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches have utilized radio and television broadcasts to extend their reach and influence. Notably, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), leveraged media as a critical tool for expansion. We discuss research by Mello and Buccione (2023) and Komatsu (2019) demonstrating that exposure to religious programming, such as that broadcast on Record TV and Aleluia radio, has led to measurable increases in Pentecostal affiliation across Brazil, especially in rural areas with limited access to physical churches. Additionally, we discuss Solá (2023), who explores the impact of Bible translation efforts by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) on Pentecostal growth, particularly among

Indigenous and “brown” populations, further underscoring the role of media and religious content in driving the expansion of Pentecostalism.

We then discuss the consequences of Pentecostal growth in Brazil, particularly in terms of cultural and political dynamics. As characterized by Smith (2023), Pentecostals and Evangelicals exhibit distinct cultural traits compared to Catholics, with higher levels of religious observance and conservative views on issues like gender roles, same-sex marriage, and abortion. These differences have contributed to cultural clashes and political divisions within Brazilian society. The influence of religious media, such as radio and television, has further shaped behaviors and attitudes, leading to shifts in workforce participation, fertility rates, and educational outcomes, particularly among women. As Pentecostalism continues to grow, its cultural and political impact is expected to deepen, influencing electoral outcomes and contributing to the broader socio-political landscape in Brazil.

The political ramifications of Pentecostal growth in Brazil have been profound, with significant implications for electoral outcomes and legislative behavior. Pentecostals’ conservative views on issues such as abortion, gender roles, and sexuality have driven their increasing political involvement, both in the executive and legislative branches. We examine the strategic role of media exposure and electoral rules in facilitating the rise of Pentecostal candidates, whose representation in Congress has surged since the 1980s. Costa et al. (2022) demonstrate how economic distress in the 1990s has led to increased electoral success for Pentecostal candidates, ultimately shaping Brazil’s political landscape, including the 2018 election of Jair Bolsonaro. Further studies by Komatsu (2019), Mello and Buccione (2023), and Solá (2023) underscore the growing impact of religious media and Pentecostal affiliation on voting behavior, particularly in rural and Indigenous communities.

While the existing studies provide insights on relevant phenomena in Brazil, evidence is still fragmented and knowledge on the relative importance of the different drivers to explain Pentecostalism growth is still limited. There’s still much to understand on the determinants of Pentecostal rise in Brazil, on how Pentecostal denominations established themselves in religious markets worldwide and if the massive

religious conversion to more fundamentalist beliefs could hinder secular rights and restrain religious freedom in Brazil.

The chapter is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil between 1991 and 2022. Section 3 discusses the causes of this growth. Section 4 explores the consequences. Section 5 concludes.

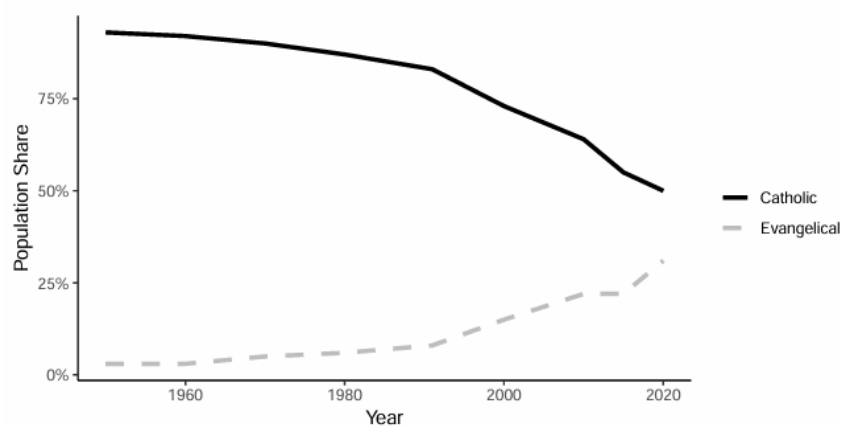
2. Pentecostalism in Brazil

Scholars commonly use “Evangelical” to group all Protestant Christians in Latin America (Boas 2023; Mariano, 2014), with Pentecostalism understood as a ramification of this group. Pentecostalism differs from mainline Protestants due to its emphasis on mystical gifts of the Holy Spirit – speaking in tongues, divine healing, and prophesying (Pew, 2006; Boas, 2023). In Brazil, within all the Evangelical denominations, the number of Pentecostals individuals surpasses all other non-Pentecostals. Brazil has the largest Pentecostal population in Latin America (Pew, 2006), serving as the epicenter of this upsurge and providing important insights into the growth of Pentecostalism in the region.

Neo-Pentecostals are members of more recently founded Pentecostal denominations – the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) is a classic example. They tend to specialize in exorcisms and have introduced “prosperity theology” to the Brazilian religious market (Chesnut, 2003). Neo-Pentecostals are more receptive to pursuing financial and material prosperity and have a postmillennial theological orientation more conducive to political participation. They believe Christ will return after 1,000 years of peace and prosperity, making it their mission to help create a better world now, thus encouraging political engagement (Boas, 2023). Pentecostals generally stand out for more traditional moral values. They tend to read biblical texts more literally than Catholics and are more conservative on issues related to homosexuality, abortion, and gender roles. Smith (2023), Boas (2023), and Smith and Boas (2023) identify these beliefs as the main religious cleavages in the Brazilian electorate that influence ongoing “culture wars” in local politics.

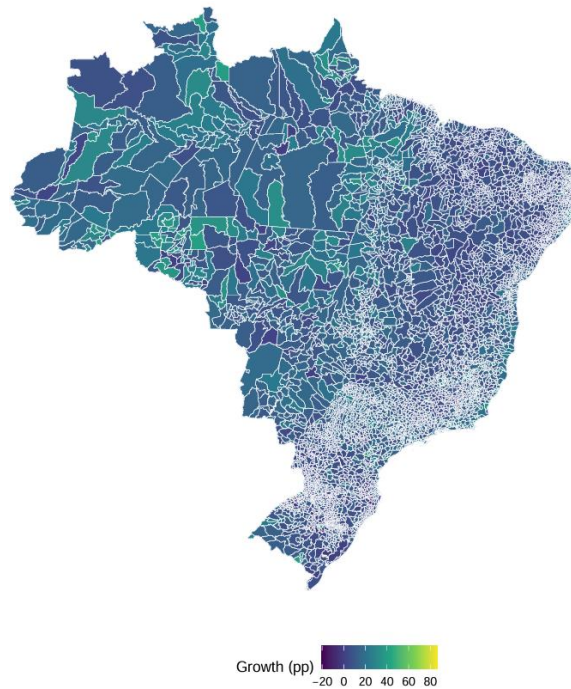
Figure 1 shows the evolution of Evangelicals in Brazil between 1950 and 2020. This figure uses Demographic Census Data from the period between 1950 and 2010 and Datafolha surveys for the most recent period. It shows two inflections in the number of Evangelicals, one during the 1990s and a second more recently. Figure 2 shows that the growth of the Evangelical population was widespread in the country.

Figure 1. Evangelical and Catholic shares of the Brazilian population (1950-2020)



Note: For the period between 1950-2010, we considered the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) estimates and for the rest of the series (2017-2020) we considered DataFolha's national surveys concerning religious denominations.

Figure 2. Growth of evangelical share according to Brazilian Census (1991-2010)



Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)

3. Causes

Recent literature in economics, sociology, and political science has been exploring the drivers of Pentecostalism growth and its implications. In this section, we categorize the causes identified by the literature into economic factors and exposure to religious content, highlighting some recent works that address this phenomenon.

a. Economic factors

Costa et al. (2022) analyze the impact of the 1990s trade liberalization in Brazil—a significant economic policy change that affected various industries and regions (Kovak, 2013; Dix-Carneiro and Kovak, 2017)—on the growth of Pentecostalism. Between 1990 and 1995, the Brazilian government reduced trade barriers across different industries, with the most protected sectors experiencing the greatest impact. Regions with a higher concentration of these industries were hardest hit, leading to reductions in wages and formal employment, with effects lasting until 2010.

The results of Costa et al. (2022) indicate that regions exposed to larger tariff reductions saw greater increases in Pentecostal affiliation. This growth occurred at the expense of Catholics and traditional Protestants—denominations with a shared background with Pentecostalism. This supports Iannaccone’s (2006) argument that, given the costs of switching religious beliefs and the religious capital accumulated, conversion tends to occur across similar religions. According to the authors, these findings align with statistics from The Pew Research Center (2006), which show that many Pentecostals have not always belonged to their current religion. The trade shock’s impact persisted until 2010, indicating its long-lasting effects on Pentecostal growth.

Costa et al. (2022) also identify multiple mechanisms that may explain Pentecostal growth. First, they consider Pentecostal supply-side factors, such as the expansion of churches and jobs in the religious sector between 1992 and 2014. However, they show that Pentecostal churches only began to increase in the hardest-hit regions after 2002, with this effect becoming statistically significant, providing limited support for the supply-side narrative. The second channel they address is the demographic heterogeneity in the response of Pentecostal affiliation to these shocks. This analysis considers that individuals with different opportunity costs are expected to behave differently regarding religious practices and affiliation—for example, those with lower earnings and labor force participation might be more inclined to engage in more time-intensive religious activities, often associated with Pentecostalism. However, the effects of tariff reductions on Pentecostal affiliation, when analyzed separately by gender, age, and education, show similar estimates across women and men and across age groups. These results collectively suggest that opportunity costs are not the sole mechanism at play.

Finally, the authors test the hypothesis that religious services and communities might offer club goods, providing essential services and support to members, especially during hardship. Previous economic literature has explored these ideas. For instance, Chen (2010) found that increased unemployment and financial insecurity during crises made club goods more attractive. Inglehart and Norris (2004) argued that people are more likely to turn to religion for comfort when they feel uncertain about their future.

Bentzen (2019) found that individuals were more likely to turn to religious practices and participation to cope with unbearable and unpredictable life events.

Yang and Abel (2014) revisit Lofland and Stark's (1965) identification of predisposing conditions and situational contingencies, such as tensions or crises, to understand religious conversion. Yang and Abel (2014) view religious conversion as an individual process of reconstructing social relationships, identifying key features like being at a turning point in life, interacting with members of a new religion, weakened social bonds, and increased attachment to new believers. Testing this mechanism could help determine if Pentecostalism serves as a coping mechanism in times of crises. Costa et al. (2022) estimate whether the impact of the shock on Pentecostal growth varied across regions with relatively greater provision of formal financial organizations or social assistance services. Pentecostal growth does not respond differently to the presence of financial organizations, suggesting that formal financial institutions—which help individuals cope with economic hardship—do not seem to mitigate Pentecostal growth. However, Pentecostal growth appears to be particularly mitigated in regions with greater provision of social services, including public, private, or not-for-profit organizations offering social work. The authors also found a positive correlation between Pentecostal conversion and suicide rates—a proxy for emotional distress—and a negative correlation between the variation in individuals whose conversion was triggered by trade shocks and suicide rates. The overall evidence suggests that Pentecostal growth may indicate emotional suffering and that the presence of social services mitigates its impact. This points to the role of social services provided by Pentecostal churches as a potentially significant factor in driving religious conversion.

Ogeda et al. (2024) find that the same economic shock profoundly impacted labor unions in Brazil. According to the authors, organized labor can have deep political and social influence, and in their decline, Pentecostal churches might have filled the gap. Smith (2023) portrays churches and unions as playing similar roles as sources of political socialization.

In this context, following literature that analyzes religious communities as clubs, Cavalcanti et al. (2022) argue that Pentecostal churches provide essential welfare support, acting as a safety net—especially in

informal insurance, psychological help, shelter, and job support—for people in developing countries. Using surveys conducted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Cavalcanti et al. (2022) identify several stylized facts about the relationship between time and monetary investments by Pentecostal members and the support they receive from their communities. Higher donations and more hours volunteered in the religious community are associated with a higher probability of receiving job support. They also find that greater community support correlates with a higher perceived probability of finding a job. Moreover, religious investments are positively associated with perceived returns to community support, although receiving such support alone does not seem sufficient to motivate religious investments. Lastly, they observe that a higher perceived probability of the afterlife is associated with higher donations and more prayer.

Cavalcanti et al. (2022) use this data to calibrate a structural model that studies how religious community support, such as job assistance, influences economic decisions and job prospects. The results indicate that the insurance motive is coupled with religious beliefs—when the belief in the afterlife is removed from their model, the community support channel disappears. This suggests that community support may be a key by-product of deeply rooted religious beliefs. This analysis highlights the role that religious communities and churches can play in providing social and welfare services to vulnerable individuals.

In a different approach, Corbi and Sanches (2021) provide us with a novel perspective on evaluating the Pentecostal upsurge by using a tax incentive framework. Since the 1946 Constitution, Brazil has exempted temples of any faith from taxes. The 1988 Federal Constitution reinforced this principle, stating that religious organizations are exempt from any taxes levied on property or income related to their essential religious purposes. Corbi and Sanches (2021) explore the interplay between subsidies to churches and the structure of religious markets, arguing that churches likely grow due to financial benefits from subsidies. Depending on the form of subsidy, the asymmetries in the technologies employed by churches to build and operate their models vary, leading to different growth trajectories.

Corbi and Sanches (2021) develop a dynamic model of church entry, showing how government subsidies may have altered the balance of power between Catholic and Evangelical churches. They simulate counterfactual scenarios to demonstrate how these subsidies might have changed the competition

between Catholic and Evangelical churches. The key insight is that tax incentives shape the allocation of resources and influence churches' expansion capacity. They find that Brazil's tax exemption policy had significant consequences for distributing market share between Catholic and Evangelical churches. According to the authors, Evangelical growth did not result from superior technology compared to the Catholic Church but from subsidies that tend to benefit smaller players at the expense of larger ones.

b. Exposure to religious content

Beyond economic determinants, recent research suggests that other variables have driven the Pentecostal upsurge. Since their inception, various Pentecostal churches in Brazil have leveraged intensive media exposure to grow in numbers and influence.

Since at least the late 1960s, Evangelical churches have broadcast religious programs on radio and TV channels. Canadian preacher Robert McAllister, founder of the Igreja Nova Vida (New Life Church), pioneered this practice by broadcasting a morning show from Monday to Saturday, mirroring North American churches (Nascimento, 2019). Since the foundation of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), its main leader, Edir Macedo, has always viewed media exposure as a crucial tool for expansion (Nascimento, 2019). UCKG initially gained presence on radio stations through specific programs at designated times and eventually expanded to TV channels. The first TV show they broadcast was *Despertar da Fé* ("Awakening of Faith") in November 1978. A significant development in this media expansion occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s, when UCKG negotiated and eventually acquired Record TV (Nascimento, 2019).

Mello and Buccione (2023) exploit this episode to study the impact of religious content on Brazilian municipalities, where the placement of TV transmitters—completed before the church acquired the stations—was not influenced by church expansion. Following station acquisition, television programming shifted towards a more religious framing of content. The authors estimate that exposure to Record TV increased the share of Pentecostals in the medium and long term by approximately 2 percentage points.

Komatsu (2019) reports a similar effect to that of Mello and Buccione (2023) for Record TV's influence on conversions to UCKG, as well as the impact of the Aleluia radio station's signal coverage. Komatsu (2019) also identifies a complementarity between temples and religious media in rural areas, where access to a temple is more difficult.

Solá (2023) estimates the effect of exposure to religious content on Pentecostal growth and related outcomes by examining the impact of Bible translation into Indigenous languages by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) on Pentecostal affiliation in municipalities where Indigenous languages are spoken. SIL is described as an evangelical organization founded in the United States with the primary goal of translating the Bible into all the world's languages. Solá uses an instrumental variable approach, identifying linguistic similarities between local languages and others outside Brazil, arguing that Bible translation into a particular language is demanding and that similar translations facilitate the process. Solá's (2023) results indicate that increasing the share of the population exposed to SIL's work led to an increase in the share of the Pentecostal population. Further analysis shows that this increase is primarily driven by rising Pentecostal affiliation within specific ethnic groups, particularly among Indigenous and black populations.

4. Consequences

This section provides a concise overview of some of the main cultural traits observed among Pentecostals and Evangelicals, particularly in comparison to Catholics, drawing insights primarily, but not exclusively, from Smith's (2023) accounts. The aim is to detail how the Pentecostal upsurge might shape the cultural traits and values of a significant segment of the Brazilian population.

a. Cultural

We first briefly describe some of the cultural differences observed between Evangelicals/Pentecostals and Catholics, as well as the effects of exposure to Evangelical religious content on cultural traits. Research consistently shows that Pentecostals are more devout and religiously observant than Catholics. For instance, Smith (2023) presents qualitative evidence from focus groups conducted in specific religious

communities, showing that Pentecostals attend church more frequently than Catholics. On average, Evangelicals spend more than twice the time in church compared to their Catholic counterparts (Smith, 2018). The Pew Research Center (2006) supports this, indicating higher levels of religious observance among Pentecostals.

In the same research, Smith (2023, p.214) notes significant variability in responses within and between these communities. Pentecostal communities, on average, support the idea that men and women should have different roles in society, while Catholics exhibit considerable variation—some communities endorse gender-specific roles, while others do not. Regarding same-sex marriage, both groups generally oppose it, though Catholics show substantial variability, whereas Evangelicals and Pentecostals are nearly unanimous in their opposition. The groups also strongly disagree on abortion.

These findings align with other surveys cited by Smith (2023) from LAPOP's Americas Barometer, which show that the most significant differences between Catholics and Evangelicals concerning political preferences are related to same-sex marriage. From 2007 to 2017, the growth of Evangelical support for same-sex marriage was smaller than among Catholics. The same survey reported smaller but growing differences regarding abortion. According to Smith (2023), homosexuality and abortion are the two most important issues that divide the Brazilian electorate by religion, potentially leading to cultural clashes between these groups. Interviews with religious leaders about the church's political role and involvement in elections reveal that around 40% of Pentecostal leaders would support a specific candidate, compared to less than 20% of Catholic leadership.

Smith (2023) also highlights similarities between Evangelical legislators and citizens. Evangelical politicians tend to reflect citizens' views on abortion, same-sex marriage, and policies favorable to churches. However, they diverge from citizens' interests regarding race and economic issues. The author explains that elected politicians' opinions tend to align more with Evangelical religious leaders, who are more conservative than the general population, due to the leaders' role in choosing candidates to support.

Smith and Boas (2023) argue that moral values—such as abortion and same-sex marriage—are the primary sources of political and electoral divisions in recent Latin American experiences, contributing to cultural wars. They recall an episode in which the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that Costa Rica should legalize same-sex marriage just before a national election. According to Smith (2023), this decision was highly controversial among the predominantly Catholic population and led to a rapid shift in voting intentions, with an Evangelical preacher eventually being elected.

The authors suggest that Latin American voters' stances on sexuality politics, for example, can influence voting behavior, especially under heightened media coverage. When such issues arise on the agenda, they can push religious citizens towards conservative positions. Before these issues became widely discussed, Pentecostals and Evangelicals were not necessarily aligned with the political right. However, when sexuality and related policies gain prominence, they prompt a backlash from social and religious conservatives, shifting the religious electorate to the right.

Komatsu (2019) and Mello and Buccione (2023) explore the effects of exposure to religious media content on certain behaviors. Komatsu (2019) observes a positive effect of the Aleluia Network radio signal on entrepreneurial attitudes. However, the presence of the Aleluia Network and Record TV signals has a negative effect on the number of children per woman.

According to Mello and Buccione (2023), regions exposed to Record TV also experienced a substantial and long-lasting decline in female workforce participation while registering increased fertility rates, suggesting a behavioral shift aligned with the church's view of gender roles. Exposure to Record TV reduces the average education level for girls while leaving boys' education unaffected.

Pentecostals tend to be more devout and religiously observant than their Catholic counterparts (Smith, 2023). Research also shows that Pentecostals are more religiously observant than other Christians (The Pew Research Center, 2006). Contemporary economic research suggests that religion might affect individual preferences and behaviors, such as stronger trust in government institutions (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2003) and preferences toward redistribution (Basten and Betz, 2013). Considering the

growing Evangelical population in Brazil and some of the previously explored cultural traits, it is reasonable to expect that these values will have political consequences and potentially shape elections. This engagement is expected to spill over into political and electoral involvement.

b. Political outcomes

Smith (2023) highlights that a dualistic view on issues such as abortion, gender roles, and sexuality may create feelings of threat and trigger political involvement of Pentecostals on both the executive and legislative fronts, as well as among religious followers. The author situates Pentecostals' deep involvement within the context of a cultural war fought by both secular and religious citizens, and within the Christian community—between Evangelicals and Catholics. In this cultural clash, factors such as the leftward shift in Brazilian society and politics (particularly on issues like abortion, sexuality, and gender roles), combined with the broad growth of the Pentecostal population, have set the stage for Pentecostal leaders seeking to influence politics.

Smith (2023) also argues that the design of Brazil's legislative electoral rules, combined with an extremely fragmented party system, pressures party authorities to accept new actors into their ranks to win elections. This creates an incentive for candidates to focus their efforts on specific population groups, such as religious congregations. The fact that Pentecostal religious leaders are often more conservative than the Pentecostal masses, and that Pentecostal organizations are centralized and hierarchical, amplifies the leaders' perspectives on these issues and influences Pentecostal politicians toward more right-wing stances.

Pentecostals have been increasingly represented in politics since the 1980s, often driven by dualistic views on contentious issues like abortion, gender roles, and sexuality. This sense of threat from opposing viewpoints has motivated their active participation in both executive and legislative arenas. Countries like Colombia, Chile, and Costa Rica have also seen Evangelical representatives in legislative seats over the past 20 years.

While a larger share of the population identifying as Evangelical or Pentecostal is a key factor in explaining political representation, Boas (2020) shows that some Latin American countries have different shares of the Evangelical population but similar political influence. Theological ideas may play an important role in shaping political interest. For example, postmillennial theology—the belief that Christ will return only after a 1,000-year period of peace and prosperity—and the emphasis on building the kingdom of God on earth can lead to political engagement. Socially conservative Evangelicals may also perceive their traditional way of life as under threat in a progressive and secular society, particularly regarding issues like abortion and same-sex marriage. These works provide a detailed and nuanced account of how religion, values, and politics interact, resulting in recent Pentecostal involvement.

Costa et al. (2022) quantitatively explore the political ramifications of Pentecostalism’s growth in Brazil, particularly in the context of economic distress and trade liberalization. They document that the shift in religious affiliation towards Pentecostalism is linked to the political empowerment of Pentecostal leaders, who have leveraged their growing influence to enter the political arena. The study documents a substantial rise in the number of Congressional candidates affiliated with Pentecostal churches, with their vote share increasing nearly 40 times from 1994 to 2014. The data indicates that the vote share for Pentecostal candidates was positively correlated with reductions in regional tariffs, contributing to their increased electoral success. This growth in electoral support also translated into a rise in the number of Pentecostal representatives in Congress.

Costa et al. (2022) also examine the legislative behavior of elected Pentecostal officials. They find that these officials proposed a disproportionately high number of bills related to religiously sensitive issues, such as family, gender, and moral values, aligning with the religious doctrines of their base. The findings suggest that regions most affected by economic downturns voted for Pentecostal candidates who then pursued a legislative agenda closely tied to their religious convictions. Finally, the authors document that Pentecostal support played a critical role in the 2018 presidential election of Jair Bolsonaro, who received significant backing from the Pentecostal electorate. The analysis indicates that Bolsonaro gained

approximately four percentage points more votes in regions with higher Pentecostal growth, highlighting the growing influence of Pentecostalism in shaping Brazil's political dynamics.

Relatedly, Komatsu (2019) estimates a positive impact of Record TV on the vote shares for the conservative Brazilian Republican Party (PRB). Mello and Buccione (2023) estimate a growing effect of Record TV signals on the share of votes for Pentecostal candidates across four national elections (2012-2014).

Solá (2023) explores the effect of Pentecostal growth on voting outcomes, building on Boas' (2020) concept of the "brother votes for brother" phenomenon. The author uses different measures of exposure to missionary efforts to instrument Pentecostal growth in municipalities. She finds a significant effect on far-right vote share and an even stronger effect on Evangelical vote share in municipalities where Indigenous languages were spoken. Further analysis suggests that this exposure to Pentecostal affiliation positively affected the vote share obtained by Bolsonaro in 2018.

Using a survey approach, Boas (2014) conducted an experiment to assess the effect of religious and professional titles on potential electoral choices, comparing the use of "pastor" (preacher) with "doctor"—for example, "Pastor Paulo" versus "Doctor Carlos." The use of titles by politicians in elections seems to help signal their identity to members of certain groups, supporting the "brother votes for brother" hypothesis. The results indicate that Pentecostals are much more likely than other groups to vote for a candidate identified as "pastor."

Considering these findings, the broad adoption of candidates' self-identification with Pentecostal and Evangelical religious groups may have positive net benefits for electoral performance that outweigh the negatives. Boas (2014) also identifies that the design of electoral institutions—especially legislative ones—creates an incentive for politicians to target specific voter groups, allowing them to secure a sufficient number of votes while potentially losing many others.

5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter aimed to discuss the roots of Pentecostalism in Brazil and map its consequences as documented in the literature. Pentecostalism is a phenomenon shaping Latin American countries in many ways and provides a relevant setting for future research. Despite significant recent developments in this research agenda, much remains to be understood about the causes of Pentecostalism growth, and its effects on human capital and economic development, particularly within the framework of Weber's thesis on the origins of capitalism. For instance, how the values promoted by Evangelical and Pentecostal churches influence health behaviors, entrepreneurial activity, substance abuse, criminal involvement, and moral conservatism still requires further investigation. This line of research is crucial because it helps explain why and how Pentecostalism has achieved such remarkable growth and influence in various religious markets.

Another important area for exploration is the role of religious institutions and communities in providing social and health services in developing countries. The substitutability between church and state in offering certain social services, as discussed by Hungerman (2005), or the role of Pentecostal churches in replacing declining labor unions (Ogeda et al., 2024), may also help explain the success of the Pentecostal movement, its political engagement, and the challenges in building state capacity in developing democracies.

Brazil can be considered a trendsetter for phenomena peculiar to the Pentecostal Evangelicalism. Pentecostalism has flourished in the last four decades in the country, where a secular state has long imposed virtually no regulations on churches. This growth was mediated by the rapid expansion of a myriad of new independent designations offering differentiated religious products. Also important, Pentecostal churches have been particularly successful in attracting new believers in a context of impoverishment, illness, conflict, and substance abuse. In that sense, Brazil provides fertile ground not only for the Pentecostalism growth in society and politics, but also for researchers.

There remains much to understand, especially among the main determinants of Pentecostal rise in Brazil and how Brazilian Pentecostals have connected with other countries to spread their presence in religious markets worldwide. While the existing studies provide insights on relevant phenomena in Brazil, evidence

is still fragmented and knowledge on the relative importance of the different drivers to explain Pentecostalism growth is still limited.

Yet, research efforts must advance. As Costa et al. (2022) argue, affiliation with Pentecostalism comes apace with a rise in religiosity and religious fundamentalism in Brazil, a secular country that has long been predominantly Catholic. Evidence indicates that the conversion toward more fundamentalist religious beliefs, as it is the case of conversion to Pentecostalism, has been reflected in terms of new attitudes towards society, political representation and legislative production. Should this process continue, in the limit, it may undermine the democratic endorsement of the secular rights that allowed for different beliefs to bloom in Brazil.

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