Continuity and Rupture

Pentecostal Practice, Community, and Memory in Pinochet's Chile

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Abstract

This paper explores the penetration of Pentecostalism's discursive emphasis on rupture and discontinuity into the everyday lives of believers in authoritarian Chile. I argue that Pentecostal memories of the Pinochet dictatorship reflect a less categorical conceptualization of rupture and reveal the dense web of connections and identities that adherents utilized to find meaning and solutions to the struggles they faced in daily life. I further argue it is necessary to gauge Pentecostals' religious identities and cosmologies during the period through a wider historical framework. They were intimately folded into the long history of violence, oppression, and marginalization in which they were embedded.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, memory, violence, Chile, community

Introduction

Since the end of the Chilean dictatorship in 1990, the memory question – what people think about the military *coup d'état* on September 11, 1973 and the brutal aftermath driven by the regime of Augusto Pinochet – has generated a great deal of research on the ways the conflict marked the lives of distinct social groups and questions concerning how the great trauma of the period is remembered today. Many scholars present the coup as a fundamental break in Chilean history, but more recent studies on memory construction stress continuities between the military dictatorship and earlier patterns of life by directing attention to preexisting socio-political practices through diverse lenses, such as gender, ethnicity, environment politics, among many others. These works propose a wider historical

framework for the coup, reading accounts of dictatorship as evidence of long-standing social, cultural, and political processes woven into the fabric of Chilean society years and even decades prior to the overthrow of Salvador Allende Gossens. In this sense, discussions about how knowledge of the dictatorship is produced, particularly among those most affected by the brutal repression of the regime, look past the dictatorship itself to examine the longer history of violence, insecurity, marginalization, and resistance that characterized the lives of many Chileans before 1973. It is the "historicity of their experience" in pre-authoritarian Chile, to borrow a phrase from historian Peter Winn, which colored their encounters with military rule, and ultimately frames their perceptions of the period today.

Scholars and observers have looked to the role religion played in the lived experiences of state repression. The Catholic Church and Liberation Theology, with few exceptions, remain the primary interlocutors through which to examine memories of the violence and trauma (Aguilar; Contreras, Angélica, and Ramirez; Ruderer and Straßner). Evangelicals now represent nearly seventeen percent of the adult population in Chile (Censo 2012, up from six percent in 1970, of which Pentecostals comprise between 60 and 70 percent) and overwhelmingly reside in the marginalized communities that suffered the brunt of the regime's oppressive policies, but their narratives, responses, and memories of the dictatorship have largely been overlooked (Corvalán; Cleary and Sepúlveda).[1] The pervasive notion that Pentecostals supported the dictatorship or at the very least were tacitly passive concerning its human rights violations (Fediakova; Espinoza Orihuela; Lagos Schuffeneger 1978, 2001) and the wide-spread perception that Pentecostal conversion produces socially hermetic and politically quiescent citizens (O'Neill; Pine; Lalive d'Epinay) are often held up as reasons for passing over Pentecostal responses in favor of groups like the Catholic Church which opposed the oppressive state.

Echoing the common language scholars use to describe the coup, arguments that portray Pentecostals as socially inert ground their findings in the so-called world-breaking and world-making tendencies of Pentecostal belief (Robbins: 127). They view conversion as the starting point of the construction of a new worldview in which discourses of discontinuity and rupture define outward expressions of Pentecostal faith. Conversion is the beginning of a powerful breach of past identities, practices, and social domains, in which constitutive elements of *being* Pentecostal – faith, practice, church, and history – are increasingly circumscribed. Furthermore, this break is continuously re-enacted through Pentecostal praxis. Although scholars question whether such a change necessarily engenders a clear rupture, most contending that new systems of meaning are built from existing beliefs and practices (Engelke; Lindhardt; Robbins; Meyer; Peel); the underlying conclusion of these analyses is that Pentecostal conversion and practice are temporal markers that enable

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[1] The common term in Latin America to refer to non-Catholic Christians is evangelical, although it should not be read as a synonym for North American or European style evangelicalism. Here, I use the term "evangelical" to refer to non-Catholic Christians, whereas I use "Pentecostal" when referencing the specific subgroup, as well as the proper names of individual churches. The grouping of all non-Catholic Christian groups together has been carried into Chile's census gathering, making it difficult to determine with any certainty the exact number of each subgroup. Most scholars agree that Pentecostals constitute the vast majority of evangelicals, although exact figures are speculative at best. The Pew Research Center found that 67 percent of those classified as Protestants in Latin America identified as Pentecostal.

believers to articulate binaries between God and Devil, us and them, modern and traditional, and past and present (Meyer: 317). While scholarly focus on Pentecostal rupture and discontinuity has been a very useful tool for analyses, particularly for those that explore the movement's discursive relation to modernity, I think it has had the unintended consequence of producing a double blind: concealing the ways Pentecostal pasts are sieved through the act of conversion and the ways these new configurations are re-scripted into daily experience.

The purpose of this article is to reconsider the conventional tendency in the literature on Pentecostalism that privileges narratives of rupture as a defining characteristic of religious identity and practice. My research is based on nearly forty oral histories that I gathered from urban and rural members of the Misión Iglesia Pentecostal (MIP – Pentecostal Mission Church). Using a recent methodological turn in Chilean memory studies, which situates memories of the Pinochet regime within a broader historical framework. I argue that Pentecostal memories reveal the importance of the collective encounters of hardship and survival experienced in daily life and that the meanings Pentecostals attach to these events are drawn from a shared history of life on the socio-economic periphery. It is necessary, then, to engage Pentecostal religiosity along a wider axis, looking at Pentecostal responses to military rule as part of a longer tradition of strategies shaped by the interplay of economic uncertainty, state repression, physical dislocation, and faith. Like most Chileans, Pentecostals looked to what they knew to make sense of and respond to the harrowing events before them. In the context of dictatorship, where urgency, necessity, and persecution often shaped the contours of everyday experience, they mobilized configurations of long-standing identities, connections, and even hopes and desires one might assume were left behind in the demands of the conversion break. Ultimately, divisions between us and them, church and community, the past and the present were untenable (if in fact, they had ever truly existed) as they ran up against the violent, life-altering realities of repression and hardship.

Christians Apart: Living as an MIP Pentecostal in Pinochet's Chile

I first encountered the *Misión Iglesia Pentecostal* (MIP) while researching ecumenical movements in Latin America. As is common among Pentecostal churches, the MIP was formed after a schism with its mother church, the Evangelical Pentecostal Church (*Iglesia Evangélica Pentecostal* – IEP), in 1952. Its leaders saw the establishment of the new church as a reaction against the closed character of the IEP and pushed for a revision of its principles. The founders, guided by several disaffected leaders of the IEP and a group of young pastors, encouraged a policy of *puertas abiertas* (open doors) that would rid the church of its "denominational pride" and establish a communion with other churches that shared the same principles (MIP: 5-6). According to sociologist Frans Kamsteeg, such a move fostered the construction of a community that "lent itself to an ecumenically oriented vision that would alter its institutional identity and interactions with society" (97). With such a perspective, it is hardly surprising that MIP joined the international ecumenical organization, the World Council of Churches (WCC), in 1961; it was one of the first Pentecostal churches to do so (WCC: 41).

Socio-economically, MIP members mirrored their working-class surroundings. Members subsisted as best they could – as teachers, street vendors, domestic servants, casual

laborers, or workers in the factories and industrial parks that ringed their neighborhoods. Like their non-Pentecostal neighbors, MIP congregants struggled to find comfort in quotidian life defined by economic uncertainty and physical precariousness. In the 1950s and 1960s, Chile was embarking on a reorganization of its economic strategy toward production of basic goods to offset Europe's slowing demand for its raw materials after WWII; factories and industrial sectors began to grow up on the periphery of Santiago and other urban areas. Early studies concluded the major Pentecostal growth in Chile came from the string of migrants that accompanied the processes of urbanization and industrialization (Lalive d'Epinay; Willems). Lacking basic resources and little recourse to traditional social structures, the socially dislocated members of society looked to revivalist religion.

Converts to Pentecostalism were attracted to the MIP's unique and open character. One adherent from the southern town of Antuco who converted in 1960, described her attraction to the church in the following way: "After the [1960] earthquake, I realized I needed to look for God. The Mission's doors were always open and I went in one day. They took me by the hand and welcomed me. I have never left" (Carmen, interview June 17, 2015). Another member expressed interest in the MIP's "openness to the community . . . to work with everyday problems" (Jaime, interview May 20, 2015). The church's message appeared to resonate with the marginalized sectors of society, struggling to improve their living conditions and find a stable place in the changing socio-economic landscape. The MIP experienced considerable growth during the period. It expanded its congregations in Santiago and added churches in southern Chile that likewise witnessed significant expansion. Exact figures for membership are lacking before the 1990s, but interviews with members paint a picture of steady growth during the church's first two decades; from a few hundred in 1952 to nearly five thousand in the 1970s (Enrique, interview August 7, 2015).

The military overthrow of Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973 and the radical disjuncture it produced at all levels of society altered the trajectory of the MIP and its members. As one member expressed to me, before 1973 the church's focus had been "unity in Christ with other churches," afterward "it was solidarity with everyone" (Pablo, interview April 6, 2015). To meet the challenges that accompanied such upheaval, MIP leaders, with aid from European ecumenical organizations like the WCC and the Dutch Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation, established the *Servicio Evangélico para el Desarrollo* (SEPADE – Evangelical Service for Development).[2] From the late 1970s through the mid to late 1980s, SEPADE was an important provider of emergency aid to local populations. The rationale behind the program grew from a specific reading of the Bible that placed social service at the center of the Christian mission. Although the organization attempted to meet the most burdensome effects of Pinochet's repressive policies, its leaders also sought to empower transformative action by fostering opportunities for participation in community development that would cultivate a Christian social ethic among Pentecostals (SEPADE). To this effect, SEPADE implemented soup kitchens, food banks, summer camps for young children, scholarships, as well as basic skills workshops and leadership courses to meet the needs of impoverished communities throughout Chile (see Kamsteeg).

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[2] The organization was founded as the *Comisión Técnica Asesora* (CTA – Technical Advisory Commission) and later renamed SEPADE in 1978 to reflect a more expansive vision and far more institutional reach.

During interviews, MIP adherents constantly stressed the fact that members and non-members alike utilized SEPADE aid. Local MIP congregations supplied both physical spaces and volunteers, all of which brought the fullness of the regime's oppression into their daily lives.

In his study of SEPADE nearly two decades ago, Frans Kamsteeg claimed that MIP leaders "overestimated their capacity to radically and rapidly change beliefs and practices of church members who had been soaked in Pentecostal tradition . . . they neglected the impact of Pentecostal habitus" (158-59). He further argued that SEPADE's attempts to reframe the importance of the individual conversion experience in classic Pentecostalism as an ongoing work of social engagement did not penetrate local Pentecostal practice. No doubt, he is correct to point out the diverse reactions to social engagement that existed within the MIP; many members openly refused to participate in SEPADE programs, while others embraced the new message whole-heartedly. Throughout the interviews I conducted, leaders and lay members, rural congregants and urban believers, SEPADE workers and those that abstained from such work, all spoke about the dictatorship as a time that marked them personally and spiritually. Time and time again, my informants reflected on changes in their religious meaning making – most of these experiences occurring outside the walls of the church and the structured social service programs of SEPADE. Everyday life and the church were clearly linked, but religious practices and actions were intimately bound up in the local context in which MIP Pentecostals were situated. They engaged the dictatorship according to the complexities of their worldviews – religion, politics, culture, and economics were all at play. Members did not live their lives only in the church or SEPADE programs, although both exerted great influence, for the simple fact that everyday circumstances made this impossible. Kamsteeg acknowledges that his interpretive claims are limited when considering how the unique political context of the dictatorship may have altered localized configurations of Pentecostal practice (235), but his argument is also steeped in a reading of the Pentecostal habitus that simultaneously overestimates the power of its discursive emphasis on rupture and downplays the plasticity of everyday Pentecostal practice. As I hope will become clear, MIP Pentecostals' memories of the dictatorship express considerable reconfiguring of their religious imaginaries and practices, but also a high degree of continuity as they moved through the shifting currents of everyday life in Pinochet's Chile.

Given Kamsteeg's conclusions and the powerful and ubiquitous stereotype of Pentecostals as supporters of the regime (Fediakova; Espinoza Orihuela; Lagos Schuffeneger 1978, 2001), one might expect MIP Pentecostal memories to align with what Steve Stern refers to as "memory as salvation" – seeing the military regime and its actions as a lamentable, but necessary "wall raised by God against atheist impiety," or simply complicit with forgetting the conflictive and harrowing events of the past (108; see *El Mercurio*: 24). This interpretation is further compounded by the fact that Pentecostals' social and temporalizing strategies are usually evaluated through discussions of discontinuity, typically through a break that accompanies conversion (Haustein; Marshall; Meyer). Pentecostal emphasis on rupture constructs a dualism of us and them that, generally, means interpreting one's old habits, rituals, family, friends, and most certainly one's past as part of a morally problematic, fallen world to be avoided.

Such interpretations are pervasive in the literature on Latin American Pentecostalism. Numerous works highlight Pentecostals' withdrawal from what they consider to be immoral, dangerous, and even traumatic social contexts, including their own pasts (Smilde; Chesnut; Corten; Burdick; Lalive d'Epinay). For many believers, the social world is an arena of life that is inhabited by corrupt forces that may threaten their spiritual wellbeing and pious aspirations. Kimberly Theidon describes these boundary constructions among former members of guerrillas and paramilitary units in recently demilitarized zones in Western Colombia. Observing the significant growth of small Pentecostal churches in Urabá, where political violence has taken a heavy toll on the entire region in recent decades, Theidon concludes that the Pentecostal discourse of rupture is appealing for individuals with conflictive pasts because it is intimately bound up in managing "individual memory and the social containment of the violent past" through "the displacement of agency onto God himself" as "a powerful means of deflecting reprisals and of locating accountability for desertion in a serious moral authority" (457). The understanding that God alone has the power to judge and determine retribution for violence enables converted ex-combatants to leave their actions in the past and focus on building new moral relationships.

Similarly, Brendan Jamal Thornton, studying Pentecostal identity and authority in the Dominican Republic, suggests "Pentecostals must continuously reaffirm their piety by substantiating their claims to sanctity as part of realizing an exceptional status" (93). Here, again, discontinuity is portrayed as a boundary marker in Pentecostal praxis, a way to underscore a rupture between the church and a nefarious world. Generally, these studies claim that discontinuity is a defining dimension of Pentecostal practice and identity, usually manifest through a break "from the larger community that they once imagined themselves to be a part of" (Garrard-Burnett 1993: 208). Moreover, many scholars conclude that withdrawal from social worlds outside the church, as well as the relationship with the past that believers maintain while being Pentecostal, that is, after conversion, are part of a continuous re-enactment of discontinuity that is ingrained in Pentecostal practice and, therefore, necessary to sustain the Pentecostal worldview. Essentially, the Pentecostal vision is given credence and validity by continuously exercising the break with the world outside the church; their memories of the past are characterized by silence and evasion, diametrically opposed to Pentecostalism's project in the present. Once closed, the past and all it delineates is best forgotten.

A key component of these analyses is the recreation of a new religious self through conversion. As Joel Robbins has noted, Pentecostal Christianity has both world-breaking and world-making facets, which introduce cultural logics while being organizationally local and responsive to local concerns (127-28). Through acts of rupture – repentance and atonement – converts leave their old identities behind. Such interpretations are undoubtedly effective for describing personal conversion narratives, particularly among individuals with such violent pasts as those described by Theidon. However, I find them lacking when thinking about how Pentecostals internalize conflictive and traumatic events in which they do not bear the onus of responsibility in the situation, like so many individuals in authoritarian Chile. An unintended consequence of elevating rupture to the guiding principle of Pentecostal discourse and practice has been to obscure the webs of cultural meanings that individuals construct and in which they are suspended. By suggesting that discontinuity is an

ongoing project of Pentecostal practice, studies have neutralized Pentecostal recourse to long-standing identities, connections, networks, and rituals outside traditional Pentecostal religiosity that may be called upon or deployed to meeting challenging circumstances. As I will demonstrate, these configurations figure prominently in MIP Pentecostals' memories and suggest that the past, the present, the church and the world were deeply co-implicated in their experiences of the dictatorship.

Recent studies are pushing back against such stark appraisals of Latin America Pentecostal social engagement. These works examine Pentecostalism through relational networks and social settings that exist in everyday life (Garrard-Burnett 2016; Scarritt). James Huff, in his work on Pentecostals in rural El Salvador, highlights the simple fact that Pentecostals and Catholics "live next door to one another, frequent the same health clinics, and exchange brief greetings at the local market . . . [which] problematizes the themes of rupture and disruption" in understanding religious social relationships (28). His study explores the transformation of one Pentecostal church into an important social space for community development and, consequently, a theater where previously segmented community social networks are being bridged. Edin Abumanssur's study of Pentecostalism and organized crime in the outskirts of São Paulo offers a more nuanced interpretation. He examines multiple networks necessary to manage life in urban peripheries, concluding that churches and organized criminal groups are methods of social interaction that Pentecostals trigger in different situations. These apparently incongruent social spheres tend not to be mutually exclusive (409).

Rather than focusing on Pentecostalism's idiosyncratic practices such as prayer or street preaching, recent studies highlight the complexities of Pentecostal quotidian experiences in which traditional binaries that separate the church and the world are infinitely more porous. From this vantage point, the Pentecostal emphasis on discontinuity as a discursively constructed narrative is very different from how it is enacted in daily life. Nevertheless, the orthodox view that Pentecostals typically withdraw from the surrounding milieu and distance themselves from their own pasts has penetrated deeply into social scientific literature. The result obscures religious innovations and improvisations, as well as a reservoir of practical and imagined knowledge that Pentecostals draw from to traverse such social dualisms.

Before returning to the specific church studied here, it is necessary to cast a second glance at a parallel and notable theme in research on Chilean Pentecostals and the dictatorship – their approval of Pinochet and his repressive policies. There is public evidence to support the claim that a majority of evangelical institutions offered their blessing to the new government. Within days of the coup, a large group of evangelical leaders published an open letter to the regime in the conservative newspaper, *La Tercera de la Hora,* to express "support for the actions to re-establish order in the country" and called for "patriotic cooperation with the new government"(6). Some pastors claimed that they received revelations that Pinochet would convert to Pentecostalism and recognized the armed forces as "the wall raised by God against atheist impiety" (*El Mercurio*: 24). From the beginning, Pinochet and the armed forces presented themselves as an instrument of God in the struggle against communism – an issue that, according to Chilean sociologist Humberto Lagos Schuffeneger, resonated with many Pentecostals (1971: 35). Moreover, the Catholic Church's outspoken critiques of the regime's oppressive policies mitigated Pinochet's ability to claim a

clear divine mandate and forced the government to search for other forms of socio-religious legitimation. This antagonism opened a previously closed space for evangelical churches to play a new role in the political arena (Catoggio: 25). Many Pentecostal circles viewed the coup as an answer to their prayers for liberation from the grip of Marxism and descent into godless chaos; leaders also saw it as an opening in Chilean politics where evangelicals could begin to exercise some degree of influence.

However, there is also reason to question how profoundly lay members shared these postures. Studies conducted after the return to democracy demonstrate that Pentecostal support for the dictatorship was less sweeping than one would assume from their leaders' rhetoric. Based on surveys conducted in Santiago in 1972 and 1991, Timothy Steigenga and Kenneth Coleman found that evangelical Protestants supported Allende's government in greater percentages than Catholics. Although evangelical attitudes appeared to shift toward political quiescence during the dictatorship, it is worth noting that a majority supported the return to democracy in 1990 (477). In a similar study, Arturo Fontaine Talavera and Harald Bayer found that many evangelicals held a negative opinion of Pinochet and his government (even higher than Catholics) (36). Such findings suggest believers' opinions may have diverged from their pastors' positions, focusing instead on the everyday pressures and experiences of their daily lives. Additional research highlight the diversity of evangelical reactions to the regime (Ossa; Cleary and Sepúlveda). Sociologist Miguel Mansilla and theologian Luis Orellana chart a "second path of Pentecostalism in contrast to the static functionalist model" (105). Pointing to the general climate of fear and repression that penetrated deep into the lives of all Chileans, they suggest that the actions of an active and oppositional Pentecostal minority, to which the MIP no doubt belonged, exerted influence among Chilean evangelicals far beyond their small numbers. They remind us, moreover, "what silence and passivity mean is not approval but fear, and when this fear is mixed with misery and poverty it is transformed into hatred and rebellion" (113).

Considering this last reflection, a recent turn in research on memory production is useful for thinking about what Pentecostals were expressing to me as they recounted their stories of faith and hardship under military rule. Rather than interpreting the events of 1973 as a radical disjuncture in Chilean history, these studies examine the coup and the protracted dictatorship that followed within a wider historical framework. They look to the country's social, cultural, and political currents in the years leading up to the military overthrow as a lens to understanding the significance of the event itself (Frazier; Loveman and Lira). They situate the importance of the coup within the interstices of the socio-political projects of the actors themselves – their memories are inseparable from the experiences, hopes, desires, and emotions that they carried into their post-coup lives. In this way, memories of the dictatorship are gauged according to each actors' historicity – a facet of Pentecostal religious identity that is often obscured by the power of its "world-breaking" tendencies.

Angela Vegara, for example, highlights continuities between police repression in the decade prior to the coup and the violence after 1973. She argues that "experiences of violence and repression were deeply embedded in the collective memory of the Left and social movements" long before dictatorship and contributed to the growing aspirations of Allende's project (52). Likewise, Peter Winn draws on oral histories he collected in the 1970s from workers at a textile mill in Santiago to assert that Chileans who lived Allende's

revolution "as the most important experience of their lives and were marked by it forever" were also "forced to live the counterrevolution with even greater intensity" (55, 66). Winn's work on memory and textile workers in Allende's Chile is particularly valuable. His central argument is that we cannot fully grasp the complexity of industrial workers' memories of the dictatorship without first understanding their emotional investment in Allende's project. Winn's conclusion poses interesting questions for analyzing Pentecostal memory production: Why are certain memories deemed significant and not others? What were members expressing as they engaged the violent context of the dictatorship? What physical and imagined resources did they draw from to respond to the everyday challenges of life under military rule?

The oral histories I collected make it clear that the dictatorship had important implications for the ways MIP Pentecostals perceived not only their faith, but also their place in society. Time and time again, members spoke of feelings of impotence, fear, and urgency, but also optimism, hope, and anticipation; and although these sensations were woven into and translated through their Pentecostal discourse and practice, they were rarely expressed without reference to their neighbors, friends, and acquaintances with whom they shared a long history of social and economic struggles. It is not simply that it was impossible to live in Pinochet's Chile without interacting with the world outside the church. It is the fact that they had never completely done so, although the nature of this relationship varied according to age and geographic location of the respondent. In line with Winn's argument, the Pentecostal memories of the dictatorship presented here suggest that a wider vision of Pentecostal identity and practice is necessary to examine the relationships, meanings, and motivations they utilized to negotiate the complex currents of daily life. I found that MIP Pentecostals' accounts reveal a compelling and dynamic story of religiosity that cannot be understood solely from the point of view of the individual. Their narratives uncover a long and complex interplay of religion, community identity, social practice, and marginalized experiences that formed the contours of their lives for decades, many even before their conversion to Pentecostalism. Rather than breaking with their own pasts or social communities, MIP Pentecostals used those encounters to sustain and nourish their religious imaginaries. Neither stood completely apart from the other.

MIP Faith and Community in Authoritarian Chile

If we are willing to accept that Pentecostalism's discursive break with the world is less categorical as individuals negotiate *being* Pentecostal, we must also look to how past identities which were already constituted within existing cultural and social structures seeped through such a breach. Bourdieu, in his concept *habitus,* refers to this as a "system of durable, transposable dispositions . . . which generate and organize practices and representations" that reflect the original socialization experiences that characterize a certain group (53). The dispositions of habitus, he argues, shape and orient human action, although he also acknowledges that they do not determine it. In the case under study here, there is little doubt that Pentecostal conversion and the military coup were disruptions of pre-existing dispositions, which also eventually constituted their own forms and practices. When thinking about the complex overlay of practices, dispositions, and hopes that were at play in Pentecostals' reactions to the dictatorship, we must also direct our investigative lenses to the

weight and intensity individuals and groups invested in their own identity and social constructions, even as they were limned through moments and periods of radical change like conversion and the dictatorship. After all, as Martin Lindhardt notes "new identities, beliefs and dispositions cannot be created totally *de novo* but always build up on existing beliefs and practices" (2009: 28). As MIP Pentecostals lived through the violence of the military regime, these "existing beliefs and practices," which are often hidden by Pentecostalism's discursive focus on rupture, were called upon as strategies for survival, accommodation, and resistance. Perhaps nowhere was this more obvious than in the frameworks MIP Pentecostals use to discuss their memories of the period, where community identity and shared experiences of suffering dominate accounts of their faith and experiences of military rule. Their life histories demonstrate that the discursive boundaries so often used to delineate Pentecostal praxis, identity, and community in scholarship were untenable in daily life. Their notions of what it means to be a community, a Christian, and even a Chilean were constantly re-engaged and reframed.

Take for example the history of Paula, a seamstress from Santiago and convert to the MIP, whose husband was detained by the regime for nearly nine years. She describes her experiences in the following way:

> I felt welcomed by God and by the members of the church that were there at the moment. Pastor [Romero] was there and I grew with them and everything they gave me affirmed my faith. God placed very special people in my path . . . I can say that the church never closed its doors. I arrived here in 1974. I was alone and pregnant. Like I told you, my husband was detained by the military. I remember that there was a great sense of community also with people outside the church, many people from around the church also came (interview August 5, 2015).

In Paula's account, the church occupies a central element of her memories of her life and faith. It is also clear that her conception of that community extended beyond the walls of the MIP congregation. In Paula's memory, the barriers between the church and its neighborhood are less rigid than traditional interpretations of Pentecostal sociality might lead one to believe. Despite ubiquitous stereotypes of Pentecostals as hermetic and quiescent, shunning this world for the next, Paula's reflection demonstrates that against the backdrop of military rule the two were not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the divisions between the church and the broader community, as well as the ways people moved between both, were dynamic and constantly shifting.

Many other members I interviewed echoed Paula's experience. The significance of members' engagement with the wider community varied by age and exposure to the regime's repression. The oral histories that I collected revealed that shifting conceptions of community were intimately connected to Pentecostals' personal religious experience. Social crises produced by the dictatorship and SEPADE initiated social programs that sought to meet these needs and offered numerous opportunities for members – young and old, rural and urban – to rescript traditional Pentecostal religious, social, and political boundaries. In many instances, these spheres overlapped. In this process, Pentecostalism's traditional emphasis on a direct, personal relationship with God retained it prominence, but took on

new significance and meaning. MIP youth, for example, remember very clearly the profound change they experienced when they participated in the church's social aid activities. For example, Maria José from Santiago spoke about her participation in these programs as follows:

> It was a period of tremendous activism. We were always in the church, on Tuesday and Thursday. On Saturdays we went to prepare the food for the soup kitchens for the community and then go back to the church to end the activity with a prayer. It was a job of sorts, but we understood that it was our day-to-day life. All of this had to do with the fact that we lived the reality of the dictatorship as young people . . . because we lived in the areas, everyone knew us and we were very present in the neighborhood (interview April 23, 2015).

Many young members, like Maria José, spoke about this period in which they worked closely with people from outside their religious community with a certain degree of nostalgia. New friendships were made and ties with the neighborhood were expanded. More concretely, activities with the wider community broke down barriers, which were often religious but also social and political. Pentecostals did not view themselves as a separate group in their neighborhoods. It was precisely the physical and emotional insecurity the regime hoped to promote among certain sectors of the population that led MIP members to engage non-believers. The convergence of the violent realities of life under the dictatorship that drove increased social contact with people traditionally considered outside their faith produced a reinterpretation of religious understanding among some MIP members – to be truly faithful meant engaging conflict and community more broadly.

This was the case of Carolina. Born in a rural community in southern Chile, Carolina is a homemaker and has been a member of the Ochagavía congregation in Santiago for over fifty years. She was heavily involved in a range of SEPADE and congregational social outreach programs like the *comedores* (soup kitchens) and *talleres* (workshops). As the uncertainty of the dictatorship crept deeper into her life, Carolina's engagement with the community took new form. After her husband was forced into exile for owning a car repair shop frequented by communist party members (although he was not directly involved in politics), she volunteered to hide a copy machine in the back of her house that local political dissidents used to produce flyers and pamphlets that opposed the regime. When I asked why she would participate in such risky behavior, she told me that her "faith could not be separated from her community . . . it was part of [her] existence, just like religion, the two were mixed." Here we see that Carolina freely intermingled religious practice and community-driven activities. She participated in social activities based on her faith and her community, both contributed to her interpretation of the gospel. Before moving on, however, she added: "We died of fear in the first years. One could not even talk to other people you did not trust . . . Our lips were sealed" (interview April 14, 2015).

As Carolina's reflections demonstrate, the military's restructuring of the economy and society likewise attempted to undermine, or at the very least diminish class interests and community identity. Over the course of my fieldwork, however, it became exceedingly clear that it had quite the opposite effect on MIP Pentecostals. Members engaged in SEPADE's

social relief practices consistently refereed to a certain sense of pride about their demonstrations of faithfulness and loyalty to the community in hard times. Several of my informants told me that even during the most difficult years of the dictatorship, the communities cared for each other, sharing whatever they had. Pablo, a taxi driver and long-time congregant of the church in the small southern village of Canteras described the period as "a time when one could not survive alone. We all had to work together. . . . We redefined what was meant by the people of and community" (interview June 19, 2015). Although the level of violence in rural areas like Canteras differed considerably from urban centers like Santiago, Pablo's account parallels the history of many impoverished communities. The solutions they deployed to confront the problems before them revealed their values and their deepest qualities. MIP members invariably spoke about this as part of their Christian mission to alleviate suffering, but always with reference to the people that populated their lives, members and non-members alike. These were not people that appeared in Pentecostals' communities at the onset of dictatorial rule. They lived next door to Pentecostals, frequented the same shops, and exchanged greetings as they passed in the streets. Elsa, a member who took part in the original land seizure of Santiago's La Victoria *población* (shantytown) in 1952, described her experiences in the community in the following way: "I have been here since the beginning. So have my neighbors. We took this land together and worked together since then. They are not members of the *Misión,* but they are like my brothers and sisters" (interview April 16, 2015).

Earlier, I alluded to Peter Winn's call to recognize the power of the hope of the Allende years as a marker for the extent to which people felt the most egregious violations of the military regime. In communities throughout the country, like those of Pablo and Elsa, shared experiences of survival and resistance penetrated deep into individual identity. MIP Pentecostal memories resonate strongly within this frame. By answering God's call to serve the community, members were participating in the recapitulation of their own pasts as members of a persecuted community – they understood the needs of the people around them because of their own suffering. It was on this deepest level that the men and women of the MIP consecrated their devotion to God; they recognized their own histories by directing religious practice into community action as service in God's name.

Guided by their self-understanding as members of a marginalized group *and* evangelicals, MIP Pentecostals searched for ways to counter the unswerving force of the dictatorship. The structural violence of neoliberal economic measures, state repression, reduced access to governmental services, and limitations placed on them by other church members limited the ways they could act. Young MIP Pentecostals felt this most acutely and were intimately familiar with the restrictions placed on their social, political, and religious identities by the dictatorship. Such limitations were part of the very fabric of their upbringing as they came of age during a period of Chilean history defined by social and political quietism. Younger members also spent their formative years during the initial implementation of radical neoliberal economic reforms. Those who were born in the late 1950s and 1960s knew nothing other than limited opportunity and daily struggle. They bore the brunt of physical and economic repression. They were forced to witness the suffering of their neighbors, friends, and family, who formed their social networks, and struggled to come to terms with their own frustrated desires to imagine a future beyond the dictatorship.

One member described it as a "schizophrenic way of living" (Gabriel, interview January 16, 2015). Indeed, there was very little social space for these young people to express their grief, anger, discontent, or hope. The specter of military reprisals diminished the opportunities available to them, truncating what might have been a vibrant life, much less the ability for collective or shared action. Cultural production in repressed communities, as Myriam Olguín writes, retreated behind closed doors and into the shadows, although it never completely disappeared (16). Away from the public eye, young and old Chileans, including Pentecostals, forged a new culture of resilience. The new religious configurations that emerged, although perhaps unrecognizable in normative readings of Pentecostal praxis, were situated at the crossroads of collective frustration and dreams of something better.

Many Pentecostal religious practices were no less a declaration, affirmation, and consecration of the Pentecostal way of being a Christian and of proclaiming devotion to God, than an expression of bitterness and resentment toward the despotic circumstances they were often forced to confront. On the contrary, in many instances the two worked in tandem. Even everyday acts of resistance that might appear outside the traditional Pentecostal character could be rationalized in this frame. One member from Los Angeles expressed her irritation with military police in this way. Rosa, a convert to Pentecostalism in 1960 and the daughter of a tenant farmer, experienced some of the worst socio-economic repercussions of the government's policies. "We lived in a *población en transito* [a temporary housing development]. . . . Early one morning, the police banged on my door and demanded to enter and inspect the house for guns. My children were sleeping and they woke them up to turn over their mattresses. I could not stand the violence; there was no reason for it. It made me feel angry and impotent . . . I had to fight. I asked the Lord for strength and I spit on one of the officers" (interview May 18, 2015). Actions like Rosa's, usually considered outside the standards of being a good Christian, were a declaration that Pentecostals shared the feelings of frustration and impotence that so often accompanied life in such communities. The continuous practice of home searches, summary arrests, torture, and disappearances in the *poblaciones* throughout Chile intended to disrupt community networks that had been so significant to daily life. Military forces tried to defuse the threat of social solidarity by inducing or coercing residents to adopt individualistic practices that ran counter to their own history, but Pentecostals claimed these experiences as their own. They were both religious and political issues.

Although SEPADE social development programs offered a viable, positively sanctioned alternative for men and women of the MIP to be present in public, many were not content with such activities and looked to other sources of inspiration. It is not surprising that young MIP Pentecostals also looked to musical currents that defined resistance to the oppressive policies of the dictatorship. In 1985, a group of young members formed an evangelical folkloric rock band called *Buena Nueva* (Good News). Ruben, a teacher who joined the Ochagavía congregation in Santiago in 1983, described the group as a new way to "communicate the gospel; a social gospel and a gospel of commitment" (interview August 25, 2015). The group played throughout their local community, at solidarity meetings or *peñas,* to support local unions or political groups. Members of the group also gave music lessons in their churches to non-Pentecostals from the neighborhood. According to Ruben and another founder, Claudio (interview August 6, 2015), the group's lyrics were always

based in the teachings of the gospel, but the songwriters found additional inspiration in *Nueva Canción* (new song) artists like Victor Jara and Violeta Parra.[3] Reading through the lyrics of their music, it is not difficult to see that these young men were voicing profound concern for the situation they saw around them. The group's 1985 song, "*Las calles de este pueblo*," evokes striking imagery of a society in crisis, where the rich and powerful are gaining at the expense of the poor and downtrodden.

> The streets of this people cry hunger and pain,
> The sky is crying, who hid the sun.
> It breathes injustice and we say Oh my God!
> But in truth brother, it is not the will of God,
> It is not the will of God.
>
> It is not the will of the Father; it is the ambition of men,
> By loving themselves they have betrayed God.
>
> It is the name of Cain, who kills his brothers,
> Feeding his wealth with the hunger of Abel.
> Abel is a child, washerwoman and laborer,
> Farmer, miner, weaver, or truck driver's companion,
> The cook or chauffeur is the brother of Abel.
>
> And I that am Christian, but not for that do I not suffer
> But I have hope, Christ defeated death
> And United in our faith we will raise our voice,
> We will say that God does not want hunger, death or pain
> We will say that God does not want any exploitation.
>
> It is the will of God that we live in love
> That there is food for all
> This is the kingdom of God.
>
> And I that am Christian, but not for that do I not suffer
> But I have hope, Christ defeated death
> And together with other Christians, preaching justice.
> We will end the evil of Cain.
> We will end the evil of Cain (Sepúlveda).

This song no doubt spoke to the violent reality of young Pentecostals. It directed attention to the poverty of their neighbors and the growing inequality of society, and called people to action as Christians and members of the *pueblo*. For the young Pentecostals of *Buena Nueva*, their music was not just as a "central activity through which Pentecostal Christians seek to resolve sometimes dissonant strains of beliefs and practices by adapting, adopting, or rejecting influences from their cultural context" (Ingalls: 10). Nor was it simply a way of bringing their evangelical faith into wider society (Lindhardt 2016; Semán and

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[3] The Chilean new song movement was, according to several scholars, a folkloric style of music that described the aspirations of equality, justice, and peace of Chileans in the 1960s and 1970s (see, further, Mularski; McSherry).

Gallo). It was at times both and born out of a deep-seated need to understand and change the reality of authoritarian Chile. These young Pentecostals saw their music as part of an ongoing dialogue between their relationship with God, Chile's socio-political context, and their role as Christians to change it. In their style of music, the youth recognized their position within the conflictive environment of authoritarian Chile and attempted to alter it.

The story of Daniel, another teacher from the *población* La Victoria in Santiago, is also illustrative. Daniel's grandparents were part of the original land seizure that formed the local community, where he continues to live today. Born in 1967, he was raised in the MIP and spent his earliest years moving in and out of the church. One of his earliest memories, he said, was the "lack of bread" that seemed to afflict everyone in the neighborhood. "It is one of the worst memories I have," he told me. Beginning in the 1980s, he began to attend Bible study classes organized by the church. He recalled intense debates among the older members about scriptural interpretation, but ultimately found the experience useful for "getting to know how his daily thoughts related to the Word of God" (interview September 7, 2015). This soon led to his participation with SEPADE's development programs as a volunteer. "I was super *canuto,* dude," he told me.[4] "I walked around with my Bible and everybody in the neighborhood knew I was an evangelical. I was helping people. I was doing God's work in the community." The social practices of members like Daniel drew their meanings from and found support in their kinship with the community and identification with the shared experiences of dictatorship in Chile.

Heightened interaction with the community carried with it increased exposure to other ideological currents. Daniel told me that throughout his social work, the term "political did not mean anything more than social, more than any one ideology it was a fight against injustice." What is most interesting about his story, though, was his ability to interweave what have usually been considered disparate ideological domains into a seamless logic of Christian social engagement. By the late 1980s, Daniel was participating more heavily in the community. He was part of the *unidad de combates* (a clandestine neighborhood civil defense group) as well as the administrator for the André Jarlan community center.[5] Near the end of our interview, Cristián confessed that he carried and hid guns in the church when the military conducted random searches of the neighborhood. When I asked him if he felt that was part of God's plan, he replied: "it was for the community's protection." Moreover, even in these situations, obviously politically charged and dangerous, he felt accompanied by the Spirit. "I prayed," he told me, "that God would not abandon me, that he would keep me safe, and I asked for his approval." His story is by no means unique within the MIP. Other members, around the same age and in similar communities, engaged in such practices. Sergio, a member from a similar community in Santiago, admitted to hiding guns for socialist

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[4] The term *canuto* is often used interchangeably with *evangélico*, albeit with a negative and mocking connotation. It is sometimes appropriated by Pentecostals in colloquial conversation. The epithet is taken from the nineteenth-century Spanish missionary Juan Bautista Canut de Bon Gil who, after converting to Protestantism, became well known in Chile for his proselytizing efforts throughout the country.

[5] André Jarlan was a French priest killed in his room at the Catholic parish house by police in La Victoria in September 1984. He was known throughout the community for his spiritual guidance as well as his social service work and his death is still commemorated today (see Cavallo, Salazar, and Sepúlveda).

friends in the classrooms of the theological institute the MIP helped found in 1964 (interview September 8, 2015). For these young people, there was no contradiction between supporting political subversive practices and attending to their religious duties. In many situations, they were one and the same. Their faith could not be detached from the needs of their community, and as they often expressed to me, "had to be put in service of it" (Sergio). Older and more conservative members of the church looked on with concern, but as Daniel assured me, "even though our pastors knew, we knew they were never going to give us up." In Daniel's logic, by "doing God's work in the community," he and others could translate their radical religious practices into a worldview that was given divine sanction.

There is little doubt that the MIP's institutional responses to the social, economic, and political crises of authoritarian Chile deepened and become more urgent during the dictatorship. But even as MIP members became increasingly involved in the social activities of the church's development programs, their notions of what being religious entailed were already woven into the social and cultural fabric of the communities in which they were embedded. The dimensions of those communities had already shaped them. In the decades leading to the coup, many communities where Pentecostals resided had formed along ideological and class affiliations (Harmer: 205). In Santiago and other urban and semi-urban centers, Pentecostals had been involved in *tomas* (land seizures) to occupy land and construct homes along cities' expanding peripheries. Greater involvement with the wider community, outside their Pentecostal churches, expanded the existing nexus of their religious worldview to include a deeper reflection on the daily interactions and situations they lived and shared with neighbors. Their stories highlight the centrality of community to MIP Pentecostals' everyday life during the period and its role in framing memories of violence and conflict that defined these experiences. As one member told me: "You know, there was no difference between the church and the community" (Pilar, interview September 15, 2015).

Conclusion

This article explores the multiple ways in which the Pentecostal discursive strategy of discontinuity was reworked according to the everyday situations and experiences that Pentecostals encountered in authoritarian Chile. In examining the life histories of MIP Pentecostals and their responses to the military dictatorship, part of my aim has been to rethink Pentecostals' relationship with their own pasts; recovering their historicity and recognizing the dense web of identities, practices, and relationships that seeped into and shaped their Pentecostal worldview. The relationship between church and community is a central point of reference for MIP Pentecostals' memory production. The ways they moved between the two reveals long-standing connections and shared experiences as well as new pathways and avenues to negotiate religious identity and their practice and projection of their faith into the world. The violence, urgency, and necessity created by the dictatorship drove Pentecostals to search out new strategies of survival and resistance, but it was the dynamic interaction between their long history as members of marginalized communities and their faith that gave these strategies meaning. MIP Pentecostals have not forgotten Chile's traumatic past precisely because it gave meaning and form to the way they imagined their religious selves. Viewed this way, Pentecostal religiosity appears as much an index of continuity as one of rupture.

As I hope to have demonstrated here, not everything was cast aside to be Pentecostal in authoritarian Chile. On the contrary, much of what might have been left in the past, such as friends, families, or community ideals, seems to be the very thing MIP Pentecostals embraced to understand and feed their faith in such trying times. While I have based my analysis on a distinctive church with a unique ethos in a particular time, all of which limit any larger empirical claims about Chilean Pentecostalism, my point has been to pick up on the specific contrast in extant literature on Pentecostalism that emphasizes conversion as divisive breach in individuals' existing worldview – what comes before is usually cast aside rather than understood as a constitutive dimension of the Pentecostal worldview. Recently, anthropologist Matthew Engelke has questioned whether it is now time for scholars to start looking "past Pentecostalism," that is, to how Pentecostal ruptures are translated through existing social relationships (196). In line with this, my goal has been to suggest that observers of Latin American Pentecostalism today would do well to pay more attention to believers' historical claims and identities, which are more ingrained and more enduring within the Pentecostal imagination than previously thought. Perhaps it is time we start looking to Pentecostals' pasts as well.

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