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Prosperity Theology and Neo-Pentecostalism

- 'theology of prosperity' – the belief that God bestows material blessings on the faithful
- one of the most dynamic movements in Latin American Neo-Pentecostalism today

Pentecostal Theology

- The Pentecostal theology puts a strong emphasis on religious experience that relies on a correlation between religious experience and doctrine.
- Baptism with the Holy Ghost is the core religious experience
- Demonology as one of the challenges of traditional Pentecostalism

Demonology

- Influence by Derek Prince (1915-2003) who distinguished between angels and demons
- Angels would 'never sought embodiment within the material world since they had spiritual bodies of their own'; demons, however, 'as bodiless spirits, [would] constantly sought to live within the material world and to utilise animate beings to express themselves.' (Kay 2005: 9-10).
- But difficult to proof

Neo-Pentecostalism

- Different from mainstream Pentecostalism
- Term coined by Ricardo Mariano in 1995
 - One of the main features is its Brazilian funder and leadership.
- Example: Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURD)

Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus



Demons

- Prince described demons as spirits of pre-Adamic races who 'lust for embodiment' while evil angels 'were those who were hurled out of heaven during the Satanic revolt against God described in the apocalypse' (Kay 2005: 10).
- The IURD characterizes all deities in any religion as demons, from the Greek Antic to the *orixás* of the Afro-Brazilian traditions, and describes them as descendants of Satan and the cause of all evil in the world
- Usually described nowadays as *encostos*

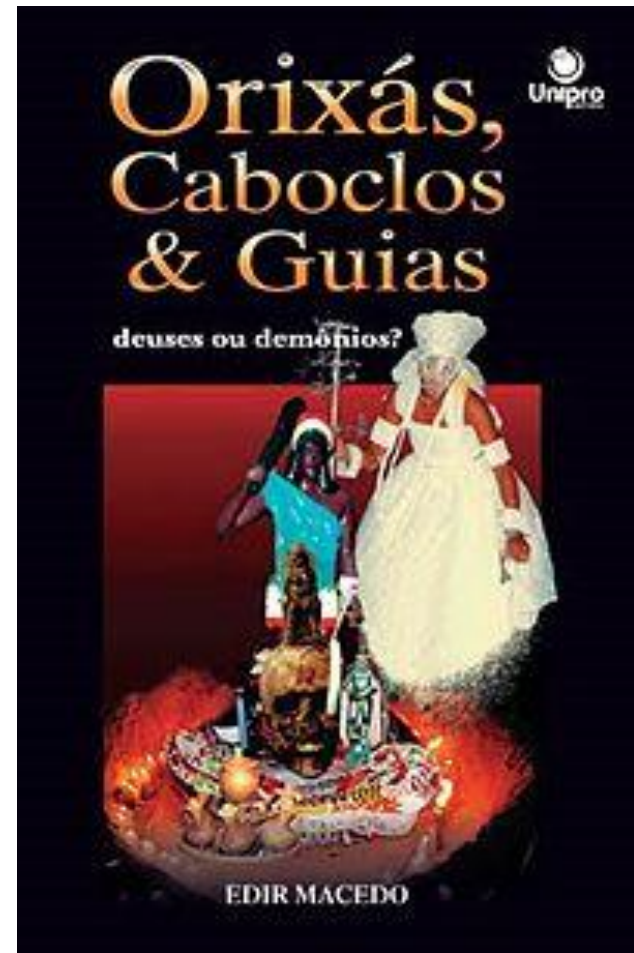
libertação

- Kramer describes deliverance 'as a liminal stage in the process of freeing oneself from the lingering influence of demons' (Kramer 2005: 102). The aim is to distance oneself from the past and to fully embrace the faith.
- -> 'dualism divides the world into those whose lives are directed by God and those who follow the devil' (Robbins 2004: 128).

Exorcism and the interpretation of the Orixás and spirits as demons

- Spiritual entities as seen as demons that need to be liberated
- The battle 'against the demons and forces of darkness that possess individuals, cities, and even regions, is not unique to the Universal Church ... [but] has become something of a Universal Church trademark' (Kramer 2005: 108-109).

- Edir Macedo, *Orixás, caboclos & guías: deuses ou demônios?* (1988)



desposseção

- Ten symptoms of demonic possession such as nervousness, headaches, insomnia, suicidal tendencies, depression, vision, and hearing voices
- -> *desposseção* in order to cleanse the body so that the Holy Spirit can enter

Women possessed by demons

- Women in IURD are predominately seen as housewives and mothers
- But also described as the main (sometimes even the exclusive) target for exorcism rituals
- Because it is their duty to keep evil away from the family

Three steps (according to Pimentel)

1. Liberation from demonic affliction
2. Manifestation of demons that affect family in their bodies
3. Liberation of these demons

- Women are a vital instrument for liberating the demons because only the manifestation of the demon in a body allows the pastor to identify the demon which is the first step of an exorcism (Almeida 2003: 323).

Back to Prosperity Theology

- Originated in the USA in the 19th century
- Gospel of Wealth - urged believers to expect God to reward their faith
- faith+donation=the good life
- Dramatically increased by the emergence of religious media

Main characteristics

- 'The distinguishing characteristic of contemporary prosperity theology is the miraculous quality of the blessing' (Gerard-Burnett, p. 23)
- -> God's supernatural gift to the faithful like glossolalia and faith healing

Harvey Cox

- “The idea is that through the crucifixion of Christ, Christians have inherited all the promises that God made to Abraham, and these include both spiritual and material well-being. The only problem is that Christians have too little faith to appropriate what is rightly theirs. What they need to do is state that claim loud and clear” (1995:271-272).

Charisma of divine healing

- according to Kay 'an automatic feedback loop' that points towards the charisma (when the person remains ill, the charisma has not done its work)
- But in Neo-Pentecostal churches a strong emphasis on the person's responsibility (when the person remains ill, the faith of the person is not strong enough)