On Elective Affinities: Pentecostalism and Immigration. The case of Pentecostal African churches in Catalonia

Maria del Mar Griera*

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Abstract

Protestantism is the most widespread minority religion in Catalonia. There are more than 430 Protestant churches in the country, more than a half of which belong to the Pentecostal vein. The growing importance of immigration is a key to understanding both the rise in Protestantism and the predominance of Pentecostalism. The worshippers at the new Protestant churches in Catalonia are mainly from Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe, regions where Pentecostalism is growing considerably. This article seeks to explore the emergence and success of the so-called "ethnic churches" based on an analysis of African Pentecostal churches in Catalonia. It is based on the fieldwork carried out by the project El mapa religiós de Catalunya *(ISOR) ("The Religious Map of Catalonia") and on the ethnographic work performed at African churches in Catalonia.*

Key words: sociology of religion, Pentecostalism, immigration, ethnic churches.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the surge in migratory flows to Catalonia has led to a notable rise in religious diversity and its visibility. One of the religious minorities whose ranks of followers have grown the most steeply in Catalonia is Protestantism. Countless individuals from Latin America, Africa and other parts of the world have joined Catalonia's Protestant churches and have boosted both the numerical importance and social prominence of these churches. According to the results of the study *El mapa religiós de Catalunya* (ISOR) ("The Religious Map of Catalonia"), today in Catalonia there are more than 430 Protestant churches,[1] making Protestantism the most important religious minority in the

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country. Also worth noting is the fact that more than half of the Protestant churches in Catalonia, a total of approximately 238 churches, belong to the Pentecostal vein.

Another fact worthy of our attention is the emergence and growth of what are called *ethnic churches* in Catalonia. In the sociological literature, *ethnic churches* refers to churches that are mainly made up of individuals from a certain ethnic group or geographic region, which are also led by pastors from this same geographic region or ethnicity. In this sense, Catalonia is the home to many churches with members from Latin America, Asia – especially the Philippines – and Africa. In this article, we shall mainly focus on African churches,[2] despite the fact that many of the conclusions are also applicable to the Latin American and Asian churches.

This article first presents a field study conducted when carrying out the research for the *El mapa religiós de Catalunya* project;[3] this fieldwork led us to visit almost all the Protestant churches in Catalonia and interview their members.[4] It also presents the fieldwork performed in African Pentecostal churches in Catalonia between 2002 and 2004. The fieldwork in this case consisted of an in-depth ethnography[5] of one African church and an exploratory field study on the other African churches in Catalonia.

The article sprang from the desire to understand the elective affinity between Pentecostalism and the migratory processes observed in Catalonia, which has also been noted in other contexts by a variety of researchers (Aubré, Hunt, Cantón Delgado, etc.). These authors share the hypothesis that the characteristics of Pentecostalism make it a highly attractive religious movement for people who have undergone migratory processes. Thus, based on studies that use both qualitative (Hunt, Aubré, Bastian, etc.) and quantitative (Odgers) methodologies, Pentecostalism has been revealed to have a greater influence among people who have undergone migratory processes. The majority of studies have centred on Latin America (Odgers, Bastian, Martin), although studies that take Europe as the point of reference have also become more common in recent years (Hunt, Aubré, Adogame, etc.). However, despite the rising proliferation of studies in this field, our understanding of the nature of the relationship between

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[2] Despite this, in this case we can see the paradox of wanting to label churches which sometimes are comprised of individuals from different African ethnic minorities as "ethic", as well as churches that often avoid the label "African" because they have chosen an "expansionist" mission or one in which they aim to attract other groups (even though they seldom achieve this objective).

[3] *El mapa religiós de Catalunya* is a study performed in the ISOR research centre (UAB), supervised by Joan Estruch. The preliminary conclusions were published in the book *Les altres religions. Minories religioses a Catalunya* (2004). The updated version of the research was recently (March 2007) presented in public.

[4] The fieldwork for *El mapa religiós de Catalunya* was supervised by Joan Estruch and conducted by the author of this article in conjunction with other members of the ISOR-UAB research team, including Agustí Iglesias, Joan Gómez, Maria Forteza, Jordi Puig, Eloi Moya, Glòria García-Romeral and Anna Massallé, Clara Fons and Blanca Luque.

[5] The ethnography consisted of two visits per week to the church (Bible study and Sunday service) for one year, as well as a life history of one member of the church, numerous interviews with the pastor and informal conversations with all the members. Likewise, it also included attendance at or meetings with numerous members of the community at special church festivals and other occasions.

these two issues (Pentecostalism and immigration) still has numerous gaps. Ethnographic studies located in specific places, such as this one, offer new clues to understanding the idiosyncrasy of this elective affinity, while they also pose new questions that pave the way for new avenues of research. However, before analysing this elective affinity, we should clarify a series of more generic considerations on the analysis of religious phenomena in our society which will help us to more thoroughly understand the subject at hand.

1.1. Preliminary considerations

Dealing with religion in migratory contexts has become the paradigm when ethnifying – reifying – the cultural distances between the mythical personages of "secularised locals" and "fanatical immigrants". These two conceptual constructs are in opposition, namely a rationalised, enlightened Western individual and a "peripheral", fundamentalist and culturally delayed immigrant. Examining the importance of religion in contexts of migration entails first dismantling these two analytical perspectives which, though quite tempting because of the totalising explanatory capacity of their theories, entail a series of misunderstandings and errors which could very easily lead us to simplistic and simplifying explanations.

First of all, it is important to unmask the tendency to perceive religions as an archaic feature of the past which continue to survive in times that are not theirs "by accident". This vision, as noted by Joan Estruch (1996), is the result of an ideologised interpretation of the theories of secularisation which identify the advent of modernity with the emergence of an "unalienated" man free of "irrational beliefs". It is a paradigm where religion has no place except in museums. "Immigrants", then, would be part of these collectible art objects; since they come from a Third World where the magical and irrational forces of the gods of nature prevail, they carry with them a religious tradition worthy of being part of folkloric festivals and cultural reports yet without any importance other than becoming museum culture. A certain condescension leads us to state that "they should be forgiven the audacity" of wanting to maintain their religion in a Europe that has become the paradigm of secularisation because "as they integrate they will cease being religious". Two key questions oppose this reasoning. First, theories of secularisation are in no way contradictory with a religious reformulation in our societies, as Estruch says: "ours is an age of religious crisis, but crisis in the sense that a metamorphosis of religion is underway, and not in the sense that religion is being abolished".[6] Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the newcomers to our society forcefully abandon their religious beliefs and practices once they are settled here. Perhaps their beliefs and practices are reformulated, perhaps certain elements shed importance and others come to the fore, perhaps the regulatory side of these beliefs becomes more flexible (or not) and perhaps their religious adhesion can diminish in importance at first and then rally. What is certain is that it would be well-nigh impossible to establish a homogenous pattern for everyone who has undergone a migratory process, while we also have to bear in mind that substantial changes

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[6] I have examined this question in depth in other places (Griera and Urgell, 2002) and therefore will not dwell on it here. For a more detailed analysis of the process of secularisation and its consequences on today's society, see Estruch (1996).

can occur within what has been called the *migratory cycle* itself. In no way, however, can we clearly state that arrival in a secularised society means leaving behind religious beliefs and practices.

Secondly, this is an analytical perspective that identifies religious resurgence as a defensive refuge against the advent of what was been called the *society of risk*, *post-modern society* and other names. This is a discourse which does not interpret the new religious realities as vestiges of a collapsing past but instead associates them with the "need for security" in a world in perennial crisis. Even though these attempts at analysis offer very powerful conceptual tools for understanding the role of the new religions in the 21st century, we cannot fall into the ingenuousness of stating that the survival of the religious *only* reflects alienating and alienated defensive qualities. This is once again an interpretation of the religious world under the bias of enlightened Voltarian ideals. It is what some have called the *emergence of an identity of resistance* (Castells, 2003), which rises up in reaction to the material vulnerability and emotional weakness suffered by individuals in the face of the changes of the new "network society". It is also what Berger would call *cognitive retrenchment* against the effects of what he calls the *pluralistic society*.[7] These theories are very useful in understanding certain changes in our society, but we have to apply them cautiously and critically to avoid "victimising" anyone with a religious affiliation.

In short, when thinking about religion and immigration in today's context, we have to be cautious before making certain statements and placing on diverse "implicit assumptions" that tend to operate in theorisations on these issues "under quarantine". In some ways, as Cantón Delgado (1998) says, "it would be much more useful to approach the analysis of these organisations from the perspective of strategy instead of rule and from symbolic appropriation instead of imposition".

2. Elective affinity? Ethnic churches and Pentecostalism

The analysis of the religious map of Catalonia reveals that Protestantism has grown considerably in recent years, mainly due to the surge in churches that fall within the Pentecostal vein. It is also important to note that many of the churches that have been founded in recent years are mainly composed of people who have undergone a migratory process, and many of them have even been founded by these newcomers. Despite the fact that the figures are approximate, we can say that there are around fourteen Pentecostal churches led by pastors from Asia, around twenty churches led by pastors from Latin America and around seventeen churches led by pastors from Africa.[8] These are obviously in addition to the churches where the pastor was born in Catalonia but the majority of followers were born in other geographic regions.

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[7] This is another issue which, as Estruch (1996) has demonstrated, we have to watch carefully when applying, given that it was created in American society, which is quite different than ours in terms of religion.

[8] The figures are from March 2007. It should be borne in mind that the religious map is dynamic and ever-changing, especially in the case of Pentecostal churches, which are characterised by being extremely mobile and dynamic. Therefore, the figures should be taken as approximate.

Within the African churches scattered about Catalonia, we can distinguish four main groups: Ghanian churches (the majority of which belong to the evangelical multinational The Church of Pentecost), Nigerian churches, French-speaking churches and mixed churches.[9] The majority of these churches were founded between 1995 and 2000, and they all adhere to the Pentecostal vein of Protestantism.

One of the first sociological observations noted when analysing the effects of migrations on religious minorities in the country, and especially on Protestantism, is the fact that almost all the so-called *ethnic churches* belong to the Pentecostal vein. Indeed, all the African churches are Pentecostal. From this fact there arise a series of questions such as: Why are there no churches from other denominations? Likewise, why can we not find large communities of Africans in the Catholic Church? What is more, this mystery is heightened when, after a period of fieldwork in the churches, I came to the realisation that many of their members did not originally come from the Pentecostal tradition. The vast majority were already Christians in their home country (even though I found a few converted Muslims and people with no defined affiliation), but only a minority had been practising Pentecostals. Despite this, when they reached Catalonia, instead of finding a church in their own denomination or maintaining a loose sense of belonging, they ended up joining Pentecostal churches, and many of them became fervent practitioners. The importance of this fact is accentuated when we take into consideration that more than half of the African pastors in Catalonia were originally either members of another denomination (Methodist, Catholic, etc.) or were not particularly faithful or had no clear denomination in their homelands.

If we examine the sociological literature on this issue, we realise that this is a behaviour that can also be found in African churches in the United Kingdom (Hunt, 2002a; Hunt, 2002b; Hunt, 2002c) and Germany (Adogame, 1999; Adogame 2004). It is also one of the reasons wielded to defend the existence of an elective affinity between the condition of being a migrant and the creation of and participation in Pentecostal churches. Below we shall further analyse this relationship and explore the factors that have led to the existence of this elective affinity.[10]

3. The Pentecostal movement: Doctrinal and organisational flexibility

Pentecostalism is the Christian denomination which has shown the steepest and steadiest growth in recent years. This Protestant vein, which has been in existence a little over a century, has shifted from being a redoubt of the more

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[9] A *mixed church* generally means that the pastor is from a country with a minority presence in Catalonia, such as Sierra Leone or Liberia, and that they therefore have the ability to attract all the English-speaking believers who do not feel "comfortable" in the Nigerian or Ghanian churches (the services in the latter are in Ashanti, so individuals who do not speak Ashanti have a hard time accessing them).

[10] The concept of *elective affinity* was introduced into sociology by Max Weber, who extracted it from Geothe's novel *Elective Affinities*. In Goethe's own words, it can be defined as "those natures that, when they meet, immediately grasp onto each other and reciprocally affect each other" (Goethe, 1997, ch. IV).

marginal classes in the USA to becoming one of the branches of Christianity with the strongest capacity for mobilisation and expansion around the world. In Europe, it began to expand in around 1920 through the preaching of a Norwegian pastor. In Catalonia, it had a minor presence in the 1930s but did not become an important vein until the 1970s. Pentecostalism was mainly located in the outskirts of Catalan cities, and numerous American missionaries were working in Catalonia between the 1970s and 1980s. Most of them were Spanish-speaking churches, and during the 1990s they joined forces through the organisation of pastors, COMEC. Today some of them have considerable number of worshippers from abroad. However, as we have noted above, the newcomers often decide to create their own Pentecostal church.

One of the factors that explains this elective affinity – between migrants and Pentecostalism – is both the doctrinal and organisational flexibility that characterises the Pentecostal vein. In fact, as many authors have noted, flexibility is a crucial factor in understanding how Pentecostalism has grown and flourished.

In this vein, British sociologist Stephen Hunt (2002*b*, p. 22) states: "What is unique about Pentecostalism, at least through a reading of the academic literature, is its ability to do so in numerous different contexts and this is permitted by its emphasis on the charismata and its theological flexibility". The flexibility of Pentecostalism becomes clear in two important issues: organisation and doctrine.

First of all, Pentecostalism is characterised by its enormous organisational flexibility. That is, there are neither structures nor hierarchies that condition its development. Pentecostalism is a movement that has spread like a web and has no explicit mechanisms for membership. That is, no institution and/or body has the power to grant or remove the label of Pentecostal to or from any church or organisation that defines itself as such.

Therefore, the fact that there are no regulated mechanisms to define who can be a pastor, as well as the fact that there is no entity with enough worldwide legitimacy to identify who can and who cannot use this label, means that the mechanism for joining Pentecostalism consists of one's own self-adscription to the movement coupled with abstract identification with the worldwide Pentecostal community. Consequently, it is relatively easy for anyone who wants to create their own church to call it Pentecostal. No one can question their use of this label or call them to account for their activities. Therefore, in the cases studied, when a person has "felt the calling"[11] to become a pastor, they have organised their own church without having to follow a given procedure, pursue certain studies or adhere to any statement of principles. The majority of Pentecostal churches in existence in Catalonia today have emerged from the desire of one person (who, in the majority of cases, has no training as a pastor), and they have been considered Pentecostal churches as soon as they had at least one worshipper (regardless of whether they had an established place of worship, of their regularity and of their commitment to certain organisations). The effects of this organisational flexibility on the expansion of Pentecostal churches becomes clearer when we attempt to make the analogy of what it would entail

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[11] "To feel the calling" is part of the usual language within the Pentecostal community. "Feeling the calling" can involve visions, dreams, prophecies, etc.

for these pastors to create a Catholic church (which would be impossible under their current conditions) or a church belonging to certain Protestant denominations (they would have to reach an agreement with their Catalan and international counterparts, adopt a predetermined structure, identify with specific doctrinal principles, etc.). Somehow, the creation of Pentecostal churches operates according to a free-market model quite different to the "functionarial" model of Catholicism and the semi-regulated model of traditional Protestantism. This free-market model is what creates the conditions needed for the swift expansion of this kind of church.

Secondly, the doctrinal flexibility of Pentecostalism also fosters the creation of individual churches and their swift expansion. In some ways the only thing that doctrinally identifies Pentecostals is their belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit (they are not the only Protestant denomination that believes this) and the corporalisation of relations with the Holy Spirit (such as through speaking in tongues or states of ecstasy, emotional climax – crying or laughing or both at the same time – etc.). This doctrinal minimalism makes it easy for Pentecostalism to absorb the elements and particularities of each setting where it is established, which render it liable to taking root quickly and becoming a sounding board for the demands of the community that gathers around it. In some ways, what all these churches share is the expressiveness and emotion of the worship services, but in order for this to flow as "naturally" as possible among the members, the channels of this expressiveness must be culturally appropriate. These channels are what have led the African churches to be perceived as "warmer" and "more accessible" by their members. The doctrinal adaptation materialises in such different ways as including songs and musical styles from their own tradition, using their own language (Ashanti, English or French) and adapting the cultural traditions of the home countries to the church, including variations in the ritual of baptism and the wearing of traditional garb for important events.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) highlight the sociological importance of perceiving the spontaneity linked to cultural and social patterns and the need to frame this within the parameters of the social construction of reality. From this standpoint, it is easy to understand that in churches where the contextual elements of worship (language used, music, atmosphere, members, etc.) are culturally familiar to the participants, "the Holy Spirit will be welcomed the most readily". Thus, for example, when the members of an African church in Catalonia were asked why they had built their own church instead of going to the local churches, they always referred to the lack of warmth in the other churches and the difficulty of "finding the Holy Spirit in such a cold atmosphere". The warm/cold perceptions reflect "feeling out of place" versus "feeling at home".[12] This is similar to the responses offered by the members of the Church of Philadelphia when they were asked the reasons for the existence of specifically Gypsy churches.

The organisational flexibility of Pentecostalism offers us clues for understanding the advantages of this vein compared to more "regulated" models of Christianity (Catholicism and historical or established Protestantism) when new churches are founded. However, this is a sterile argument when attempting

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[12] See Schutz's distinctions between the two concepts.

to extricate the motives that explain the growth and success of Pentecostalism among migrants. The other argument wielded, the doctrinal and ritual flexibility of the churches, offers more clues for understanding their success among migrants, especially since this flexibility is what offers the possibility of creating what Stephen Hunt in his analysis of British African churches calls a *homogenous club* (Hunt, 2002a; Hunt, 2002b; Hunt, 2002c), places where certain conditions are re-created that enable the migrants to momentarily experience the feeling of "being at home", and also enable them to socialise and share their experiences in the process of adapting to Catalan society.[13]

3.1. Pentecostalism and migratory processes

Another key element that can help us to understand the elective affinity between immigration and the founding of ethnic churches is the role played by these churches in the care of their flocks. From this perspective, we can notice the importance of churches as "protective" social institutions that act as a buffer against marginality and precariousness. Membership in an established community lays down networks that can mobilise resources which become useful in solving the most pragmatic issues that newcomers may face at the beginning of their migratory cycle. What is more, in the majority of African churches in Catalonia, these networks are institutionalised and included as part of the church structure. Thus, the majority of times there is a church commission, often called the welfare commission, whose purpose is to ensure that people in need are given shelter, work and basic foodstuffs. At the church's Sunday services, it is common to set aside time for announcements on job offers and requests and room rentals. Any information of this sort that might be relevant is shared in this way. What is more, generally speaking the church keeps up a network of ties with groups of lawyers, other churches, associations, NGOs and other groups that can help the welfare committee in its job and expand the church's capacity to deal with the precarious situations of its members. From this standpoint, we can identify the role of the church as a "defensive mechanism" to ensure the "survival" of the newcomers in the host society. The church's role in this sense is crucially important early in the migratory cycle.[14]

However, the establishment of "protective networks" parallels the mission of many of the "ethnic associations" that already exist. So from this vantage point, it is relevant to wonder what distinguishes an "ethnic association" from an "ethnic church" in terms of the roles they play in migrants' adaptive processes.

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[13] When entering and leaving services, there are many conversations on the difficulties of adapting to Catalan society, advice from those who are further along in the migratory cycle to those who have just arrived, etc.

[14] For example, one pastor at the church told me: "If there are anybody who need food, flat, job... they help them. This is very necessary here... For example, when somebody arrives here and doesn't have a place to sleep or a job... then this group organize the things..."

3.2. Community and association: Revisiting the classics

To answer this question it is useful to revisit Tönnies' conceptualisation of "community" and "association", which were later fleshed out by Max Weber. The latter defined *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* "as different kinds of social relations, the former stressing the subjective feeling of shared belonging, and the latter the match of rationally motivated interests through values and/or purposes" (De Marinis, 2005, p. 5). The difference between belonging to an ethnic association and a Pentecostal church clearly emerges when we take this classical dichotomy as a point of reference. Indeed, this classification enables us to understand the fact that the social ties established in both kinds of organisations are qualitatively different. In an association, the link is contractual, and this weakens the strength of the emotional tie and lends a temporary, feeble feel to this membership. In the latter, the tie appears naturally, which makes it possible for a sense of security, continuity and permanence to emerge.[15] Consequently, the community is a much more effective venue for constructing universes of meaning with enough robustness to halt crises of meaning. This is the comparative advantage of belonging to a Pentecostal church compared to an association when conferring meaning on life.

Revisiting Weber, however, it would be even more useful to take into consideration his distinction between the "sectarian model"[16] and the "church model". The author stresses two criteria for distinguishing between the former and the latter: the degree of commitment required and the prevailing kind of domination. In the former, the degree of commitment required is quite high, and whoever is a member must constantly demonstrate that they have the qualities required to be a member, while in the latter, no special commitment is required to be a member; merely the fact of having been born would be a sufficient ingredient. Likewise, in the former, there is a system of charismatic domination in which the leader appears to be the "natural representative" chosen to guide the community, while in the latter the domination is bureaucratic – the leader does not need to have any quality perceived as natural; rather they must only follow the proper, established channels to become a representative.

Pentecostal churches follow the sect model, and this has countless consequences that help us to understand the central role they play the everyday lives of their members. Below we shall highlight the most important features.

First, the need for "moral quality" leads to fulfilment of strict life discipline that can encompass issues like abstaining from alcohol, not gambling, not smoking, not having sexual relations outside of marriage, fulfilling church obligations and not committing any sin, either venal or mortal. The prominence of this kind of ascetic behaviour is what led Wilson and Poblete to note Pentecostalism's potential to spur upward social mobility. There is not yet enough research to confidently assert these conclusions, but it is important to make it clear that in the stories of the church members a prominent role was

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[15] Somehow, we can point out a parallelism between what Berger calls the strength of what is "taken for granted" and the weakness of what is perceived as constructed.

[16] We shall use the concept of sect in its sociological sense, disassociating it from the negative connotations entailed in its colloquial use.

assigned to the "moral and attitudinal discipline" of the members as a guarantee of their social success and adaptation. This was also the most often repeated point of difference with their lives prior to conversion, which was identified with anomic dynamics. Based on this demand for ethical and moral commitment in day-to-day life, the members distinguished between the "good immigrants" (them) and the "bad immigrants", whom they identified with perdition (prostitution, drug dealing, mafias, etc.). According to their stories, these "bad new citizens" were the ones who thwarted the adaptation strategies of the "good new citizens" (them), since they created a negative image of immigrants in Catalan society.

Secondly, the "moral qualities" of the members of the "sect" were also identified with the level of commitment they had taken on with the group. Because of its nature, the sect requires a high degree of commitment, which translates into strict control of compliance with the norms as well as into high levels of participation. Thus, monitoring of compliance with the norms is what Cantón Delgado (1998) calls *warm vigilance*, referring to the kind of social control that exists in these Pentecostal churches. Rarely is the pastor granted the exclusive authority to track the members' compliance with Christian ideals or to check whether they attend Sunday service; instead, everyone keeps watch over everyone else. Everyone ensures that it works this way. However, this vigilance tends to be soft, and failure to comply with any of the norms yields nothing more than admonishment. Still, if the error is considered very serious, it can lead the followers to be expelled from the church through an institutionalised mechanism.[17] Yet it is uncommon for these situations to arise. The members perceive themselves as a community of chosen ones which was founded on a mission and constantly receives "signs" that reiterate the fact that they are a "chosen community". For this reason, it is essential that no one breaks the rules. Cantón Delgado (1998) reveals that in communities of migrants and people who live in relative precariousness, this social control can be comforting in that it replaces the role of the family. In this vein, as one interviewee told me, "now I know that if something happens to me I'll be missed." On the other hand, this commitment is materialised by fostering a high level of participation in the church. Thus, despite the fact that the pace of activities is slower than in their home countries (in Africa, Pentecostal churches are usually open 24 hours a day), this does not invalidate the idea that being part of a Pentecostal church has many more repercussions on the everyday lives of the members than being part of a traditional Protestant or Catholic church. Pentecostal churches, especially the smaller ones, steadfastly promote their members' participation in the life of the community, either through participation in worship services or by taking on responsibilities in a given area. The pastor leads the church, but its day-to-day operation is the responsibility of all the members and the pastors' desire is for all the members of the church to play a role or take on some responsibility in the functioning of the organisation. Participation in the church's activities serves a twofold purpose: encouraging the members to get more involved in the church, while also serving as the point of departure for improving their personal self-esteem. To some extent, the way

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[17] In the majority of churches, there is a "justice committee" or a "council of elders" which has the authority to "impose punishment" on the members who break the rules. This punishment can range from simple admonishment to expulsion from the church.

Pentecostal churches are managed is not so different to what the new management theories in business uphold.

Thirdly, the "moral quality" certified by being a "chosen community" also materialises in Pentecostal churches through "signs" received from the Holy Spirit. This belief in God and the certainty of the baptism of the Holy Spirit – demonstrated in each service, where the participants "feel" the presence of the Holy Spirit by speaking in tongues, prayers, cleansings, etc. – infuse the worshippers with confidence and foster the construction of the personal destiny of a halo of "divine grace". That is, the important thing is to have a mission, to follow a pathway; after that, "God will provide". When something does not meet expectations, this will be interpreted as "obstacles" in the pathway which are either the work of the devil or must be avoided to demonstrate the solidity of one's personal faith. This confidence or optimism in one's destiny contributes to easing the burden that might come from the usual penury that tends to characterise the migratory process.

The believer's confidence of their destiny is closely related to the role played by salvation in the Pentecostal doctrine. Unlike the ascetic sects that Weber studied, salvation in Pentecostalism is not based on the "doctrine of predestination". Thus, salvation is not something that will be attained in another life, nor is it something that is inevitable; rather everyone who has been born again through the baptism of the Holy Spirit is *saved*. And they will continue to be saved if they do not break the ethical precepts or the Christian discipline which the church promotes. Regardless, after the baptism by the Holy Spirit, the believer is convinced of being saved, and week after week, the baptism by the Holy Spirit is recalled at the worship services and this belief is reinforced. The sanctification of everyday life – driven by this conviction of salvation and by the warm vigilance of the other converts – will instil optimism in the believer. Their participation in the community will reinforce their beliefs, the study services will offer them to tools to adapt this belief in everyday life, and testifying at church will infuse their beliefs with credibility, based on the fact that publicly admitting to previous sins and asking for forgiveness is a highly liberating experience for believers.

Thus far, we have discussed the elements in the functioning of the church that help us to understand the role that it plays in the adaptation strategies of its members and in the construction of a meaning of life. We must clearly stress the church's emphasis on conversion (Wilson, 1970), the authority granted to the Bible, the role of the pastor and other considerations. That is, what we have explained so far helps us to get an idea of what it means for a newcomer to join a Pentecostal church. Yet before concluding this article it would be interesting to focus our sights on what distinguishes African Pentecostal churches from Catalan Pentecostal churches and from African churches from Africa.

3.3. The transcendence of the migratory process: "Saving Europe"

The story of the creation of the church adopts a perspective that stresses the "disorder" and chaos in the lives of its members before it was established and the results once it was founded. This somehow reflects the shift from chaos to *nomos*. Catalan society is perceived by the pastors and church members as a decadent, anomic and fragmented society where the people who come from

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other countries fall into "perdition". The churches are given the mission of getting these people "on the right pathway" and also of helping to restore Christianity in the West.

That is, first there is the discourse that stresses the fact that Westerners spread Christianity to African but that today Western society has fallen into "sin" and has turned its back on Christianity. This is often repeated in the discourse of both the pastors and the church members, with the stress on the desire to re-Christianise Western society. This is not exclusive to African churches in Catalonia: Afe Adogame stresses this same phenomenon in his analysis of African churches in Germany. In this sense, it is common to hear statements like: "Europe brought Christianity to Africa and now the Africans have to bring it back because nobody here believes anymore".

This story is what makes the personal migratory trajectory transcendent, since through participation in the church the individual feels like they are contributing to the restoration of Christianity on a worldwide scale and thus playing a key role in the "fight against evil".[18]

However, in parallel, their very membership in the church and the job that it performs is perceived as a mechanism of solidarity with people who have also undergone a migratory process but have "fallen into the traps of a decadent society". That is, while one aim is to "save" Europe – the place of arrival – another is to "save" those who come from the same homeland, Africa. The story goes as follows: the decline of Western society, coupled with the fraught situation that migrants face (no legal papers, no jobs, etc.), leads them to stray far from the Christian ideal of life and to "sin" (alcohol, drugs, sex, etc.).

This is a story which paints Western society as being at a far remove from God, and this, along with the difficulties experienced by the migrants, leads people who used to be practising Christians in their homelands to a life of disorder and sin. According to the stories of the interviewees, the church's actions can change this situation, as if they are endowing the migratory project and its role in Catalan society with a new transcendence. That is, their participation in the church attributes transcendental meaning to their migratory project: they must save Europe and the immigrants who have fallen into "perdition". For this reason, in some studies they have been described as "migrants with a mission".

4. Conclusions

Throughout this article we have discussed the elements which help us to understand the purported elective affinity between Pentecostalism and immigration. Our analysis of the fieldwork performed in the African churches in Catalonia reveals that the relationship between both variables (Pentecostalism and immigration) is mediated by the following elements: organisational and doctrinal flexibility, the role of the church as the promoter of networks that mobilise resources and sociability, the creation of community, the effects of becoming a "sectarian" organisation and the cosmogony underlying the creation of the church. The relationship between both variables is therefore a complex

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[18] The use of this kind of language in Pentecostal services is common. That is, the "fight against evil" or "against the devil" is something that appears repeatedly in Pentecostal discourses.

one that has been restructured by a variety of factors. For this reason, it would be interesting to bolster the results yielded in this study with further results from future studies performed in other settings with other communities of migrants and from different perspectives. In this way, we could gain a deeper understanding of the roles played by religion in the migratory process and the specificities of Pentecostalism within this issue.

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