

**The Socio-cultural Space of Pentecostalism in Transylvania:
„Holy Trinity“ Pentecostal Church in Bistrița**

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Abstract

This study investigates the social and cultural dynamics of Pentecostalism in Transylvania by exploring the processes behind the successful anchoring of a particular Pentecostal congregation in Bistrița, a Northern Transylvanian town: Holy Trinity Pentecostal Church. In order to understand the favorable social and cultural bases for the propagation of Pentecostal religious action in Transylvania in general, I elaborate a theoretical framework, which could account both for the intrinsic Pentecostal religious logic as it is articulated in a complex symbolic system and its elective affinities with broader modernization and globalization processes. The religion-specific factors that make Pentecostalism a strong competitor for local historical churches (Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant) with far-reaching socio-cultural consequences are 1) the individualization of faith 2) the articulation of a new religious authority regime and 3) the emergence of a new form of congregational life. On the basis of my ethnographic work on the Holy Trinity Pentecostal Church in Bistrița, I argue that Pentecostalism was capable of developing the above mentioned religious themes so successfully mainly through its capacity to redefine the daily life of the believer. Furthermore, I point out that the numerous confluences between Pentecostalism and processes of social differentiation and de-territorialization make possible that the moral aspirations of particular groups or individuals, going along these processes of modernization and globalization, to be still consistently expressed in religious categories.

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Introduction

As the statistical data and different sociological surveys dealing with the religious dynamics in Central and Eastern Europe (Pollack 2001, 2003; Tomka 2003) show us, the Romanian religious case is a very special one. One can speak about a strong religious resurgence after 1989 regarding the spreading of religious convictions, practices and rituals. It seems that the communist regime has not drastically eroded the religious life in Romania. The religious idiom is, certainly, a significant presence in the Romanian public space and also, still a powerful tool in articulating the individuals' personal biographies and life trajectories (Pollack 2001, 2003; Tomka 2003).

Many analysts have been tempted to consider this process as a kind of transitory effervescence that becomes visible after fifty years of an atheistic communist regime. Their answers routinely deploy broad sociological arguments about the role of deprivation and anomie in nurturing religious effervescence, especially in transitional historical moments when various economical and socio-political processes of modernization or globalization dislocate established cultural patterns producing unpredictable developments. Religion, taken as an undifferentiated (in spite of the actual existence of different and often contradictory religious perspectives) ideological reality produces within society a very harmful type of escapism. At the same time, the Orthodox Church (the majority's church) assumes these religious phenomena as a sign of an authentic and massive Orthodox national revival which, as such, legitimates any kind of religious claims of shaping the socio-political sphere of the Romanian society. Nevertheless, this monolithic image provided by both perspectives could be very misleading. On one hand, religion is homogenously assimilated to a transitory ideology accompanying post-'89 social and political transformations; on the other hand

religion is entirely assimilated to the Orthodox Church's national aspiration (Pollack 2001; Dungaciu 2003; Martin 1998, 2005b; Voicu 2001; Rogobete 2004).

The present research intends to disclaim this monolithic imagine by being concerned with the investigation of the socio-cultural dynamics related to the spreading of evangelical movements in Transylvania after 1989. It focuses especially on the Pentecostal movement which is the most numerous evangelical denomination in Transylvania (2002 Romanian Official Census). As the Romanian Official Censuses and various reports (1992, 2002 Official Romanian Census; Rusu and Tarnovschi 2002) indicate, in the post-socialist period evangelical denominations¹ (Baptist, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventist) doubled their number of members, becoming from this perspective a very significant social and cultural phenomenon. The most numerous evangelical congregations are situated in Transylvania (2002 Romanian Official Census) especially in the Northern and Western parts of this region. A traveller through present-day Transylvania may observe that in almost every village there is a small evangelical chapel if the typical big and modernist evangelical church is missing. It seems that the post-socialist politic and socio-cultural context was in many ways a very fertile ground for a powerful emergence of the evangelical religiosity. First of all, for a better evaluation of this phenomenon one has to take a look at the general situation of religion in Transylvania and then to refer to the various modalities in which religion is located in the societal processes that have affected Romania, and especially Transylvania after 1989.

The religious field of Transylvania was strongly configured by historically established ethno-religious pluralism. Every ethnic group (Romanian, Hungarian, German etc.) had its proper religious affiliation and, consequently, its particular way of assuming this affiliation.

¹ Many times the evangelical denominations are also called neo-Protestant denominations especially in the literature preoccupied with their situation in Eastern Europe.

Following the activities of German Baptists in the late nineteenth century, the Baptist denomination becomes part of the Transylvanian religious field. They were followed at the beginning of twentieth century, around 1920, by the establishment of the first small Pentecostal congregations (Tomka 2003; Martin 1998; Pope 1992). For that matter, besides the Orthodox Church, which maintains a religious quasi-monopoly, there are many other active denominations in Transylvania - Protestant, Roman and Greek Catholic and evangelical - which supply the religious field of Transylvania with powerful and influential patterns of religious behavior. This ethno-religious pluralism complicates the actual relationships between religion and different processes of modernization that have affected Transylvania along the time. One can say that every religious denomination has its own trajectory (Martin 1978, 1998, 2001, 2005; Tomka 2003).

During the communist regime this linkages between religion (especially in the case of the Protestant and Catholic churches) and ethnic group were forced to strengthen because of the aggressive politics of integration exerted by Ceausescu's regime while, because of political pressures, the position within the religious field of the Orthodox Church was artificially "strengthened" beyond strictly religious necessities, being mainly used for ideological purposes² (Martin 1978, 1998; Pope 1992, 1999). In this period, the presence of evangelical denominations in Romania was not so culturally significant. The most important of them were legally accepted by the communist state. Their visibility was related mainly to various Western political campaigns militating for religious freedom in communist Romania. There were some evangelical communities and outstanding evangelical personalities who suffered the persecution of the communist regime (there also were leaders, like some of other denominations who collaborated with the communist regime) but their religious influence was

² During communist regime the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church was suppressed. Its members were forced to give their religion affiliation. Its spiritual leaders were sent to prison by the communist regime.

not so powerful in the religious and cultural field, partly because of the general religious situation under the communism and partly because of the powerful socio-cultural and historical ties binding historical churches and Transylvanian society (Pope 1992, Martin 1998).

Since 1989, the religious situation in Transylvania has been shaped at least from two directions. One is the socio-political pluralism imposed after 1989 which obliges the historical churches to reconsider their relationships with the state, nation and civil society. In these new conditions every denomination has to reconstruct its religious identity. For example, the Orthodox Church re-emerged after 1989 claiming its position as a national church (Martin 1998; Pope 1999). This mixture between religion and nationalism produced, especially in Transylvania, a lot of religious tensions. However, the new Romanian Constitution legally imposing the principles of religious freedom entailed, for that matter, the development of a dynamic religious pluralism. Related to this legal establishment of a free “religious market” within an open public space, the other significant challenge for the traditional religious field’s configuration, as I have already mentioned, is the significant growing of evangelical denominations in Transylvania (Martin 1998, 2005; Berger 2005). It seems that, after 1989, have emerged the proper conditions for the opening up of a new socio-cultural space for evangelical movements, especially for Pentecostalism. Being now liberated from the burden of their “politicized” identity and clandestine life during the communism, the evangelical denominations and their specific mode of religiosity seem now to be having the open space for developing their cultural potentialities (Martin 1998, 2001; Pope 1992, 1999). At the same time their growing is historically related to the fact that after 1989, Romania became exposed to the modernization and globalization processes which now shape the political, social and cultural life of the entire globe.

In this study I am particularly concerned with understanding what religious and socio-cultural niches are favorable to the propagation of the Pentecostal type of religious action in Transylvania. How is the “socio-cultural space” of this type of religious action created and maintained in this region? As I previously suggested, a better comprehension of my research questions supposes, first of all, the awareness of the particular structural and historical changes that have affected Transylvanian society. But it is also very important to add the necessity to evaluate the specific features of Pentecostalism as a global and transnational religious movement (Corten 2001; Robbins 2004; Martin 2001; Casanova 2001; Anderson 2004).

Pentecostal religious movements are a branch of Evangelical Protestantism which includes denominations such as Methodism and Baptism and their spreading is a phenomenon that takes place all over the world, especially in the Americas, Africa, South-East Asia and some regions of Eastern Europe (Ukraine and Transylvania). One cannot talk about Pentecostalism as a single denomination but, better, as a confederation of denominations (often, with different names) which are characterized by similar religious characteristics (practices and doctrines). Every local denomination is autonomous and still part of the global network. Students of Pentecostalism have identified four major distinctive features characterizing it:

- *Emphasis on conversion.* People are not born in the evangelical faith but must “voluntarily” choose it on the basis of powerful and personal conversion experiences (being “born again”).
- *Emphasis on the importance of evangelization* as an action to convert others. They believe that the experience of faith is available to everyone.
- *Emphasis on the Bible* as a text possessing the highest religious authority.

- *Emphasis on the immediate presence of God* in the religious service, encouraging congregational participation in it and expecting signs of miraculous intervention. Pentecostals are primarily concerned with “the *experience* of the working of the Holy Spirit and the *practice* of spiritual gifts” (Anderson 2004:12). Prophecies, dreams, visions, speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) are some of the forms taken by their religious experience. The French sociologist Jean Paul Willaime called Pentecostalism an “emotional Protestantism” (Willaime 1999). Many times a strong ascetic moralism embraces all these features.

(Martin 1990, 2001, 2005; Robbins 2004; Anderson 2004, Willaime 1999)

As such, Pentecostalism can be understood as “a paradigm case of a global cultural flow” (Robbins 2004:118), “the predominant global form of Christianity” (Casanova 2001:435) that starts historically in the West (in 1906 in USA) and expands to cover the globe (Robbins 2004; Martin 2001; Anderson 2004). Pentecostalism’s success as a globalizing movement, producing in receptive places a “cultural revolution” (Martin 2001), is confirmed not only by its rapid expansion, but also by the variety of socio-cultural contexts to which it has spread (Robbins 2004; Martin 2001; Casanova 2001). Throughout this study I assume that the propagation of Pentecostalism has to be understood within the broader framework of global structural processes that are now shaping Transylvania. One cannot approach this phenomenon in terms of internal/external socio-cultural factors only. A better metaphor is the metaphor of “confluences”. The space opened for Pentecostal religious action is situated at the confluences between its intrinsic religious logic and social processes of globalization and modernization. The important is to identify these points of confluence and articulation.

In the first chapter I elaborate the theoretical framework capable of comprehending Pentecostalism and its specific logic within the general framework of modernization and globalization processes, indicating the confluences points as hypothesis that could respond to my research question. Then in the methodological chapter I indicate my methodological premises (case study strategy) explaining why I have chosen them and I present the general profile of my case study, the “Holy Trinity” Pentecostal Church in Bistrița. In the third chapter, on the basis of my ethnographical findings I substantiate my research hypothesis.

Chapter 1: Approaching Pentecostalism: religious logic and social processes

1.1 The reflexive moment in approaching Pentecostalism

There is now an enormous amount of sociological and anthropological literature on the astonishing global spreading of Pentecostalism, a cultural phenomenon which was initiated at the beginning of the 20th century in the United States and has since expanded in every corner of the world, crossing cultural barriers and impacting on local cultures (Robbins 2003, 2004, 2007; Martin 1990, 2001, 2005ab, 2006; Casanova 2001, 2005; Corten 2001; Anderson 2004). Sociologists and anthropologists were mainly occupied with examining the complex relationships between Pentecostalism and various processes of modernization and globalization affecting especially the developing countries. They also were intensely engaged in comprehending the manner in which Pentecostalism as a global religious option impacted the local, especially, non-Christian cultures all over the world. Some of the results have emphasized that in various socio-cultural contexts Pentecostalism functions as a modernizing force producing fractures within societies, while others have evaluated it as an assimilated force, feeding local socio-cultural continuities (Robbins 2003, 2004, 2007; Martin 1990, 2001, 2005ab; Casanova 2001; Englund and Leach 2000; Corten 2001) These outcomes were profoundly influenced by the particular provenience of the analytical frame applied, be it sociological or anthropological (Robbins 2004, Martin 2006). Within the sociological and anthropological fields, different paradigms permanently dispute their accurate insights on the polymorphic causes and effects of this elusive religious phenomenon.

Moreover, the concentrated investigation of Pentecostalism in various socio-cultural contexts produced a “boomerang effect”. Both sociologists and anthropologists began carefully re-

examining their analytical categories and concepts every time they apply them for comprehending socio-cultural dynamics produced by Pentecostalism (Martin 2006; Englund and Leach 2000; Robbins 2004, 2007). This particular moment of reflexivity has helped social scientists to revise such basic notions as “modernity”, “secularization”, “traditional culture”, “syncretism”, “Christian culture”, “cultural (dis)continuity”, “global or transnational culture” and so on. In a way, Pentecostalism stimulates social scientists to rethink the most deep presuppositions or assumptions of their particular discipline and to cross more confidently disciplinary boundaries also (Casanova 2001, 2005; Robbins 2003, 2004, 2007; Martin 2006; Englund and Leach 2000).

Summarizing the entire present-day debate in social sciences around Pentecostalism is a task far beyond my scope here. This rather poor description of the situation means to indicate one major point which is very important to my own investigation of Pentecostalism in Transylvania. I consider that this reflexive moment in conceptualize Pentecostalism impact all over the globe has produced very interesting and challenging theoretical and methodological reconsiderations, offering the opportunity to approach empirical realities from different perspectives which are, at the same time, not mutually dismissive and exclusionary. Even if sociologists and anthropologists have had sometimes different perspectives on the usage of concepts (e.g. “multiple modernity” in Englund and Leach 2000) I suggest that one has to reassess carefully the theoretical and methodological option of deploying very usefully both sociological and anthropological arguments for understanding some particular and complex empirical cases. I argue that the situation of Pentecostalism in Transylvania, briefly described in the introductory chapter, is such a case. I am not pleading for a case of premature synthesis but for a creative if sometimes inelegant usage of various analytical categories and concepts capable of revealing significant manifestations of an elusive religious phenomenon such as

Pentecostalism. The theoretical framework of my investigation should allow mutual interpenetration of sociological and anthropological theories.

In the following section of the chapter I will try to elaborate my particular theoretical framework and the analytical categories and concepts that provide the contours of my interpretative approach to ethnographic data. My research questions have to be placed in a flexible theoretical framework which is capable of comprehending the micro-foundations of religious action at an individual level and their relations with the structural dynamics of socio-cultural processes also. My analysis could in this manner reveal both the socio-cultural niches favorable for the propagation of Pentecostalism in Transylvania and those processes sustaining the socio-cultural space of Pentecostalism in this particular region.

At this point in my study, I am interested in convincingly framing the Pentecostal religious action and its relations to the social and cultural processes. The background assumption in constructing my theoretical framework is the avoidance of reductionist approaches to the Pentecostal expansion that have the tendency to neglect the intrinsic religious logic of Pentecostalism as a powerful portable force of this expansion. They basically reduce the Pentecostal global trajectory to non-religious (social, economic, political and psychological) factors (Droogers 2001; Robbins 2004; Martin 2006). The major aim of my socio-anthropological interpretation is precisely the comprehension of the complex articulations between Pentecostal intrinsic religious logic and those influential factors

1.2 Pentecostal religion as a cultural system. Geertz's perspective and its limitations

Using the perspective first elaborated by Clifford Geertz, I approach “religion as a cultural system”. I consider Pentecostalism as a religious cultural system, that is, a system of symbols³— objects, gestures, words, events, etc.— which have meanings attached to them and being outside individuals, simultaneously work inwardly to shape attitudes and guide actions (Geertz 1973, Ortner 1984). This approach on religion, and especially on Pentecostalism, has some very important theoretical and methodological advantages for my investigation but also has some fundamental disadvantages⁴ which have to be supplemented by more accurate perspectives.

First of all, it has the advantage of avoiding any kind of essentialist definition (Engelke 2006) of Pentecostalism as a religious phenomenon involving particular theological assumptions and evaluations. It rather describes (as many other anthropologists did, Robbins 2003, 2007; Cucchiari 1988, Droogers 2001) how Pentecostalism as a particular system of symbols, functioning with a logic of its own, produces a meaningful fusion between a “world view” and an “ethos”, between religious representations and practices. Following the main articulations of Geertz’s definition, one has to maintain that, before anything else, Pentecostalism *qua* religious system formulates “conceptions of a general order of existence” and acts towards establishing through “moods and motivations” the interpretive framework in

³ For Geertz religion is “[1] a system of symbols which acts to [2] establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by [3] formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and [4] clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that [5] the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz 1973:90).

⁴ There are critiques that consider Geertz’s definition of religion as being inconsistent. One of the most prominent critiques was that of Talal Asad (1983) who argues that Geertzian definition is an essentialist and unhistorical one and basically reproduces the logic of Christian belief. In these years there were produced very convincing assessments of the work of Geertz as a theorist of religion (Engelke 2006) which emphasize its enduring analytical power. I think that, even if Geertz as a theorist of culture can be very controversial, his approach on religion has to be understood much more carefully without being dismissed with the entire Geertzian culturalist approach.

which the ontological status of religious realities (e.g. Holy Spirit) is what Geertz called the “really real” (Geertz 1973). All these enable the ethnographer to understand the manner in which Pentecostals experience religious realities that are common to all branches of Christianity, in some ways and not in others, and also how they select from the Christian symbolic repertoire some symbols and not others as central and most significant for Christian life. Geertz also insists that religious action as a symbolic action takes place within interpretive frames of which persuasiveness has to be maintained continuously. These frames are socially created and psychologically made plausible and effective. (Geertz 1973)

This approach on religion has the main advantage of emphasizing the distinct works of religious logic in its relation to social and psychological factors. It provides a good orientation toward understanding how Pentecostalism *qua* symbolic system so efficiently competes with other secular or religious cultural systems but also how it maintains an apparent religious homogeneity, which has been identified by researchers in various regions of the globe, in so various social and cultural contexts. Many researches have neglected to give a “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of the intrinsic and complex consistence of Pentecostalism *qua* religious system incorporating certain beliefs, rituals and practices. More importantly, they underestimated in their explanation, reducing the religious logic to something else, the accounts of religious experience provided by the believers themselves. The “thick description” of the Pentecostal religious system makes possible for the ethnographer to grasp the particular and proper language in which believers formulate their personal purposes and moral aspirations. The message has to be received in its own terms (Geertz 1973; Martin 2006; Robbins 2007).

Geertz considers that the anthropological study of religion is a two-stage operation. At first one has to analyze the systems of meanings embodied in symbols which constituted the religion properly and, then, in the second place, to relate these systems to socio-structural and psychological processes (Geertz 1973:125). Then he considers that we have a theory that could integrate both two operations. With these considerations one meets some of the most significant limitations of Geertz's perspective for the study of Pentecostalism.

Using only this approach one is not able to accurately further investigate what the concrete relationships between the symbolic system as such and social and psychological process are and how they are articulated together and mutually reinforced. What are the concrete social and psychological processes favorable to creating and maintaining this particular symbolic system? What social institutions sustain, fail to sustain, or even inhibit this particular symbolic system? The Geertzian perspective says little things about the particular mechanisms of religious change especially within the complex context of different processes of modernization and globalization.

Pentecostalism is a religious cultural system that is capable to articulate himself continuously in different local conditions and also to sustain himself in those local conditions. Moreover it is capable of following different routes and trajectories of modernization and globalization as most of the commentators pointed out (Martin 1990, 2001, 2005ab; Robbins 2004). For complementing the "missing dimension" of the Geertzian perspective I use two compelling models of religious change, precisely applied to Pentecostal expansion, which were elaborated by David Martin (1990, 2001, 2005ab) and José Casanova (2001, 2005, 2006). These models are important for my framework because both assume the decisive significance of Pentecostal

religious logic. They help us to identify the concrete points of confluence between Pentecostalism and broader social processes.

Martin's model argues that Pentecostalism is a "carrier" of the modernization process illuminating how certain features of Pentecostal religious logic have certain elective affinities with modernizing processes (Martin 1990, 2001, 2005ab). Casanova's model also explains how new forms of religious communities, at the individual, religious group and societal level emerge in conditions of globalization being, for that matter, strong competitors for old religious institutions (Casanova 2001, 2005, 2006). These models demonstrate that the continuous persuasiveness of a particular religious message is not depending only on its internal logic but also on the manner in which this logic is articulated with (in) socio-cultural and psychological conditions.

1.3 Pentecostalism and modernity

In this section I approach the model of religious change proposed by the British sociologist David Martin. Martin's sociological contribution is extensively concerned with the elaboration of a general theory of secularization which attempts to nuance and reformulate and many times to go beyond classical formulations of the "secularization thesis" (Martin 1978, 2005ab). The "secularization thesis" was mainly deployed for explaining the religious changes in modernity and was elaborated around the major assumptions of the founding fathers of the sociology of religion, Weber, Durkheim and Marx. They assumed that the ineluctable processes of modernization, rationalization, bureaucratization, industrialization, individualization would produce the decline in the societal power of the religious institutions and the decline of religious beliefs and practices among individuals⁵ (Martin 1978, 2005ab).

⁵ This bold affirmation of the "secularization thesis" was then refined by some sociologists who considered that one has to distinguish between different sub-theses of the main thesis such as privatization and social

The decline of religion both publicly and privately, the privatization of religion and social differentiation are all possible and sometimes contradictory formulations of the relation between religion and modernity. David Martin (1978, 2005ab) and later on José Casanova (1994) contesting the privatization thesis, have produced essential reconsiderations of the secularization theory both maintaining that the social differentiation sub-thesis is the viable core of a future theory of secularization and the only one that can be empirically sustained following different developments in Western Europe and North America. Social differentiation is the process through which each sphere of society (state, economy, education, science, law and so) have become free from religious constraints elaborating their own logic while religion itself has become an autonomous social sphere among others developing also its own logic (Casanova 1994, Martin 1978, 2005b).

Following mainly the particular trajectories of social differentiation processes through different “historical filters” in Europe and North America, David Martin has demonstrated in his magisterial work *A General Theory of Secularization* (1978) that there are different patterns of secularization in these regions. If one defines modernity, as Martin does, as the arrival of social differentiation (of any particular type⁶) in a particular society one has to concede that the encounter between modernity and religion is not a straightforward one, producing rather different outcomes in Catholic, Protestant (Lutheran and Calvinist) and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Moreover, there are different modalities of entering modernity

differentiation theses (Casanova 1994, Martin 2005). The former sub-thesis maintains that modernity eroding the main religious institutions’ societal influence didn’t produce the decline of religious beliefs and practices among individuals. In conditions of modernity, religion has become a private matter without any relevance for the public sphere. The latter one assumed that secularization understood as a social differentiation implies the separation of each social sphere from ecclesiastical control: the state, science and the market, but also law and education etc. Each social sphere gains its own proper autonomy and specific expertise (Martin 2005, Casanova 1994).

⁶ There are different regimes of social differentiation in France or USA but certainly both countries are highly modernized.

to what concerns the position of religion in this process. The notorious trajectory is that elaborated by Max Weber by linking Protestant (Calvinist) ethic and the advent of capitalism. In a sense this became the master narrative of modernity⁷. (Martin 1978, 2001, 2005ab)

Martin argues that this is not the only possible trajectory (2001, 2005ab). He considers that the degree of social differentiation and religious pluralism or the degree in which voluntarism and/or individualism have found expression in religion, in particular regions and certain times, are essential dimensions for determining possible trajectories of secularization and, concomitantly, trajectories of modernization⁸. This observation is significant in the context of my analysis of the Transylvanian religious field because it suggests a particular trajectory of secularization in this region and also the proper significance of the evangelical presence there. In an essay about Romanian religious situation and the emergence of religious voluntarism (1998), David Martin argues that two are the most important characteristics of the Transylvanian religious field (after '89): one is its ethno-religious pluralism and the other is the claim of Orthodox Church to be the national church. You have a situation of pluralism which could be fertile for future processes of differentiation but also this situation is ambiguous because of the close relation between religion and ethnos at different levels. As it seems, Pentecostalism has the power to break this connections following the general processes that bring a higher degree of social differentiation in the region (Martin 1998).

In the context of rebuilding the secularization theory, Martin also produces his major contributions to the study of global Pentecostalism. Even if Martin's approach is not directly

⁷ That explains why a lot of sociologists searched for "functional equivalents of Protestant Ethic" when they tried to investigate modernization processes in other regions than Western Europe.

⁸ It is important to emphasize that this complex relationships between all these sociological variables (differentiation, pluralism, individualism) and broad secularization and modernization processes are not deterministic ones. They are only indicating plausible locations of religion, as an inhibiting or stimulating force, in modernization processes (Martin 1978).

and closely preoccupied with the anthropological investigation of the intrinsic logic and internal consistency of Pentecostalism *qua* system of symbols it is still very important for my investigation precisely because, perceiving Pentecostalism as a cultural form, it articulates the way in which this cultural dimension is congruent with particular social processes and historical contexts. Martin considers that Pentecostalism produces a veritable “cultural revolution”⁹ in various social and religious contexts especially in developing countries. Pentecostalism cannot be seen simply as a reaction to the social and economic problems of a particular society in a certain time. Martin assumes that one has to identify the elective affinities between religious change and societal processes (Martin 1990, 2001, 2005a). The major problem is whether Pentecostalism and its proper religious logic is a harbinger of modernity as a global project throughout the developing world, or a part of its “fundamentalist rejection” (Martin 2005b:142)

The main contention of David Martin is that Pentecostalism can be elaborated as a concurrent master narrative of modernity, that is, Pentecostalism can be a veritable modernizing force in the developing world, stimulating the active engagement in modernization processes (Martin 1990, 2001, 2005ab). Its particular religious logic is capable of stimulating the advance of social differentiation processes. It is also susceptible of being connected with other processes that also stimulate modernization and globalization in developing countries (e.g. transnational migration and communication technologies). Martin’s perspective on Pentecostalism understood as an alternative narrative of modernity is essential for understanding what kind of

⁹ “Pentecostalism is very specifically a cultural revolution, and one undertaken from below, with no political theory to guide it and no political ideology to promote. What motivates the rival religious entrepreneurs who guide the revolution is pursuit of a particular kind of personal transformation, and their language is couched in personal stories and imagery rather than in abstract propositions. Because Pentecostalism is personal and cultural it does not need to deal in the violence intrinsic to political action, which is way it is virtually unnoticed by the western media, and comes as a surprise to the western academy.” (Martin 2001:167). Pentecostalism is a “cultural revolution” precisely because it impacts on and stimulates socio-cultural processes outside the religious sphere such as gender relations, economic ethic and political behavior. This broader and deep influence on other social spheres is part of Martin’s argument that Pentecostalism can be a significant social force within developing societies having altogether far-reaching consequences.

social and cultural processes are accompanying the spreading of Pentecostalism and also what kind of structural circumstances, having mainly in mind the particular trajectories of social differentiation processes, make a region more receptive than others to Pentecostalism (Martin 2001, 2005a).

“The ‘ideal type’ of evangelicalism, considers Martin, has to be constructed in terms of the restriction of religion to a voluntary sector unable and unwilling to propose norms governing the autonomous sphere of law, business, politics and foreign politics” (Martin 2005b:134). For that matter agrees Martin, evangelicalism has certain elective affinities with social differentiation. This perspective allows, then, the elaboration of a complex perspective on the relationships between evangelical movements, more specifically Pentecostalism, and different other processes that stimulate modernization. Pentecostalism is capable of exploiting the intimations of modernity having a positive relationship with those processes that stimulate modernization.

Following the “ideal type”, Martin argues that the religious themes of individuality, voluntarism, pluralism, lay participation and an inward faith elaborated by the Pentecostal religious logic are appropriate “accelerators of incipient social differentiation”(Martin 2005b:143). Pentecostalism together with all evangelical movements introduces the voluntary principle in religious matters insisting on the necessity of conversion (being “born-again”) and of acquiring a personal faith. The idea of conversion also implies a process of individualization of faith because of its inwardness and its dependence on choice. It heightens the sense of individuality and autonomy as the self is released from the constraints of traditional social relationships and the continuities of local communities. At the same time, following Martin’s arguments one can imply that the particular religious authority regime

articulated in Pentecostal communities, is capable of controlling and integrating religious individualism which would produce religious fragmentation.

Providing new links between the individual and his religious community, the voluntary principle “detaches religion from polity, from state power and from anchorage in the territorial community” (Martin 2001:27). One can speak about the emergence of new forms congregational life based on other principles than those of the historical churches. This new form also produces a new perspective on the appropriate linkages between religion and state, nation and local community which are favorable to social differentiation understood as the loosening of ties between church and state, between ecclesiastical and social elites, between ecclesiastical moral norms and secular law.

1.4 Pentecostalism, globalization and de-territorialization

José Casanova proposes a rather different perspective on global religious changes and also different arguments for illuminating the favorable opportunities which globalization offers to the propagation of Pentecostal religious action. Casanova considers that one of the major processes of globalization which impacts all cultural systems is the process of de-territorialization. By de-territorialization he means “the disembeddedness of cultural phenomena from their "natural" territories” (Casanova 2001, 2005, 2006). By “territories” he means “imagined spaces” or “mental mappings”. The nation is as much an imagined territory as an imagined community. European modernity produced a particular form of territorialization within the boundaries of nation-states (Casanova 2001, 2005, 2006).

How is the process of de-territorialization significant for religious change? First of all, one has to understand how Western and Eastern Christendom were territorialized into nation-states. In this way, the church as a religious community is defined essentially in relation with the state

and nation. Casanova sustains that one can understand better different patterns of secularization in Europe if the patterns of fusion and dissolution of religious, political and societal communities - churches, states and nations – are carefully examined in different European countries (2001, 2005, 2006). Secularization processes are related to this process of territorialization. Secondly, as Weber considers, churches are forms of historical fusion of a “community cult” and “religious salvation community” (Casanova 2006; Weber 1991). First is coextensive with a territorial political community playing a function of societal integration and the second has the function of offering the salvation to the individual *qua* individual (Casanova 2006; Weber 1991) In most of the European cases, once national churches gave up their traditional historical function, as a cult community, to secular nation-states they also lost their function as religions of individual salvation. Moreover, the processes of globalization which produce a de-territorialization, impact also on the relationships between church, nation and state (Casanova 2001, 2005, 2006).

In these conditions, a religion which is more adapted to globalization such as Pentecostalism is able to produce, at a local level, new forms of congregational life which are better responding to functioning as religions of individual salvation. Pentecostalism, argues Casanova, is global (or de-territorialized) and local at the same time, serving to illustrate the favorable opportunities which globalization offers to a highly decentralized religion, with no historical links to tradition and any territorial roots or identity (Casanova). This capacity to be localized is essentially related to particular characteristics of the Pentecostal religious logic and is very insightfully analyzed by José Casanova:

[Pentecostalism] is an uprooted local culture engaged in spiritual warfare with its own roots. This is the paradox of the local character of Pentecostalism. It cannot be understood in the traditional sense of Catholic "inculturation," that is, as the relationship between the catholic, i.e., universal and the local, i.e., particular. It is actually its very opposite. Pentecostalism is not a translocal phenomenon which assumes the different particular forms of a local territorial culture (...) In this they [Pentecostals] are different from both, from the traditional Catholic pattern of generous accommodation and condescending toleration of local folklore and popular magical beliefs and practices, so long as these assume their subordinate status within the Catholic hierarchic cosmos,

and from the typical sober, matter-of-fact, rational, and disenchanting monotheistic attitude of ascetic Protestantism against magical or supernatural forces or beings, by denying their very existence. The Pentecostal attitude is neither compromise nor denial but frontal hand-to-hand combat, what they call "spiritual warfare." (Casanova 2001:437-438)

In this struggle with local culture Pentecostalism proves how locally rooted it is. Besides its capacity of networking through different missionary projects or global evangelizations, Pentecostalism has this ability, to become localized and a strong competitor for local religious institutions, inscribed in its religious logic and form of congregational life.

1.5 Points of confluence

Having provided a general perspective on Pentecostalism as a symbolic system, with its own logic, and also a perspective on the way its religious logic is articulated with various social processes of modernization and globalization I can now propose the hypothesis orienting empirical investigation of the Pentecostalism in Transylvania. This hypothesis identifies the points of confluences between Pentecostal religious logic and social processes of modernization and globalization. It proposes to follow the way in which creating a new religious authority regime and a new form of congregational life, producing individualization of faith, Pentecostalism is also creating its channels of propagation along certain routes of modernization and globalization processes taking place in Transylvania.

As I emphasized, one cannot understand the symbolic articulation of these Pentecostal religious aspects, at a personal and communitarian level, without a close investigation of the Pentecostal symbolic system as understood by Clifford Geertz. Furthermore, Martin and Casanova's models of religious change can illuminate the routes along which these symbolic articulations are concretely related to particular processes of modernization and globalization. The expansion of Pentecostalism in Transylvania should be analyzed both at the symbolic and the social level. Individuals who follow the thrust of conversion are "caught in" religious and social processes at the same time. They are, in this way, able to express their moral aspirations

while carried away by various modernization and globalization processes. The concrete trajectories of individuals become significant at the complex intersection of the religious and social as shaped by global modernity.

Chapter 2: Methodological issues. The Profile of Case Study: “Holy Trinity” Pentecostal Church in Bistrița

In this chapter I discuss the methodological premises adopted through the following investigation of the Pentecostalism in Transylvania. I have chosen for my research the case study strategy (Stake 1995), and this particular choice has special implications both for the operationalization of the research's theoretical framework and the data collection. I have elaborated my theoretical framework being aware of the advantages of the intensive analysis of a case study.

The study of a single case enables me to investigate my particular research question in great detail. Such in-depth examinations ultimately allow me to acquire a degree of knowledge about the case that is normally impossible through the examination of a large number of cases (Stake 1995). As the theoretical framework reveals, I assumed that the investigation of Pentecostalism supposes a comprehensive examination of the symbolic articulations of the Pentecostal religious action, and concomitantly, of the structural socio-cultural processes accompanying it. In order to understand the emergence of Pentecostal religiosity in a certain socio-cultural context one has to permanently oscillate between macro- and micro-levels, between individual and collective action. The implications of Pentecostalism at the societal level of the Transylvanian religious field are significant at the level of a particular religious group (congregation) or individuals. Investigating a single case makes me capable of analyzing the religious action involving all these different dimensions of collective and individual life and particular socio-cultural confluences. In the study of the activities of a single religious community I could explore a variety of dimensions of the communitarian life

(Stake 1995), assessing the mutual interactions between religious life and local socio-cultural context and putting all in a historical perspective.

Finally, when one studies religious movements like Pentecostalism, involving, as one will see, a noticeable homogeneity of religious practices, a de-territorialized sense of congregational life, and a very lively sense, involving high mobility, of individual commitment, the case study strategy provides boundaries to the phenomenon under investigation. The case is chosen because it represents a unit of analysis that permits to investigate the phenomenon avoiding the temptations of overgeneralization (Stake 1995). Pentecostalism as a global religious movement is, many times, prematurely analyzed using too general and abstract global processes. I am basically concerned with understanding how “the local” in my case study becomes receptive and vulnerable to modernization and globalization processes sometimes without even being aware that such processes are ongoing.

I was also aware that great care must be exercised in the choice of the single case. Sometimes social scientists believe that any case may be used to explore a particular phenomenon. My particular choice involved certain critical decisions in advance. My case study is a medium-size Pentecostal community from a town in Northern Transylvania. The boundaries of the case are the empirical boundaries (from territoriality to denominational affiliation) of the religious community. I will discuss why this case is a reliable data source and its particular profile later after presenting my field-work methodologies.

Having provided the reasons for using a case study strategy I can focus now on the particular fieldwork methodologies. There is a strong relationship between case study strategy and particular research methodologies. Most often, the case study is done using qualitative

methods. In my investigation I was using mainly ethnographic methodologies trying to understand the concrete life of the evangelical community through participant observation and also using informal interviews and in-depth personal interviews. The in-depth interviews enabled me to understand the modalities in which the religious meaning is constructed at the individual level in relation with the congregational life. I interviewed various members of the congregation: women and men, young and elderly, wealthy business men and poor people. I also interviewed pastors, ministers and ordinary believers. I wanted to understand how religious experience is related to social status, gender and position in the congregation. Participant observation involved a range of methods, from informal discussions with believers, direct observation of religious rituals within their proper settings and of the believers' everyday conduct to collective discussions and analyses of documents produced within the congregation.

As I have already indicated, the main data sources are the ethnographic data resulted from approaching a particular Pentecostal community: "Holy Trinity" ("Sfanta Treime" in Romanian language) Pentecostal Church in Bistrița, an old German town in Northern-Transylvania. If one looks at the distribution of Pentecostalism in Transylvania (2000 Romanian Official Census) one notices that in Bistrița region the number of Pentecostals is higher than in any other region. But interesting enough is the fact that the percent of evangelicals, including Baptists and Seven Day-Adventists, is almost equal to those in other regions of Northern Transylvania. That means that the number of Pentecostals is very high in Bistrița County while Baptists and Seven Day Adventists are not so numerous.

This Pentecostal Church was founded right after the revolution that took place in Romania in 1989. It became the second Pentecostal Church in Bistrița. Pentecostals founded their first

community in Bistrița as early as 1947. Now, there are seven Pentecostal churches (including a Charismatic denomination) in Bistrița having almost 4000 members, representing 5% from the entire town population (2002 Romanian Official Census, Congregation's statistics). In Bistrița, besides Pentecostals, one can find many other denominations: Baptist, Lutheran, Reformed, Greek Roman-Catholic and, of course, Eastern Orthodoxy which is embraced by the majority of the town's population. Even though, these days, the members of the traditional Protestant churches are not so numerous, in Bistrița's cultural heritage, especially in the architecture, one can perceive the powerful influences of the Protestant culture.

The "Holy Trinity" Pentecostal Church has around 1000 congregants (Congregation's statistics), that is, persons who were baptized in the church. Family members who were not baptized are not counted as official church members, even though they are actively involved in the activities of the congregation being susceptible of for that matter becoming future members of an evangelical denomination. The fluctuation of membership is high because of a labor migration process in Europe that affects Bistrița region too.

Today, 17 years after the collapse of the communist regime, the "Holy Trinity" Pentecostal Church congregation is an important centre of missionary activities in Bistrița-Nasaud County and in Romania. The number of Pentecostals in this region is around 19.000 (2002 Romanian Official Census). Other unofficial sources estimate that the number is higher. All the powerful Pentecostal communities of the region are concentrated in towns and several large villages. There are 17 localities in which the numbers of Pentecostals goes beyond 10% of the population. This fact is very important for understanding religious networking.

This evangelical community, the “Holy Trinity” Pentecostal Church, provides believers with a very multifarious religious life. Along main religious services taking place in the main building and involving the whole congregation, three or sometimes four times per week, there are many other religious gatherings in private houses (“prayer group”, “biblical study group” and so on) scattered around the town, each involving a limited number of believers. Famous pastors of the Romanian evangelical community are preaching to this community during the year. A very important activity for the Pentecostal community is the weekly Bible school. This is an important moment in the process of religious transmission. Beside strictly religious activities, there are many activities (social, cultural and civic) involving particular categories of the congregation (youth, women, students etc.). The church is also involved in many civic projects which are focusing on helping marginal categories of the population (orphans, convicts, gypsies, unemployed population etc.).

This diverse congregational life is a very important reason for choosing this evangelical community as a case study and is consequently a rich source of data concerning the Pentecostal religious life in Transylvania. There is another reason that also turns this evangelical community into a very good case study. In my opinion, in the Transylvanian context, this is the case of a well established Pentecostal community but at the same time it is a growing and successful one. Year by year, this community gains new members and the infrastructure of the church is improving. It also develops complex missionary activities within the Romanian civil society. One can follow, then, all these processes of transformation within the broader Romanian context. Finally, there is another important factor in choosing this particular case: the social status of the members. One can find wealthy members who are successful entrepreneurs but also lower middle-class and low- class members who are subjected to socio-economic tribulations of post-communism Romanian transition. One of the

most significant socio-economic processes that affect Bistrița County is labor migration to Europe. This process influences the social mobility of the region and produces social and psychological disturbances. For that matter, this congregation is a good case for studying how religiosity is related to an increased social mobility.

Chapter 3: The Socio-cultural Space of Pentecostalism: “Holy Trinity” Pentecostal Church in Bistrița

Developing the theoretical framework to what concerns Pentecostalism I identified three major religious themes that are in one way or another involved in those two models of religious change proposed: individualization of faith, new religious authority regime and new forms of congregational life. As David Martin and José Casanova argue, these themes open Pentecostalism to various social and cultural confluences with processes of modernization and globalization. They also enable me to concretely recognize major socio-cultural niches favorable to the propagation of Pentecostal religious action in Transylvania. I also assume that one cannot understand the prominence of these themes without understanding how Pentecostal religious logic is continuously shaped within a complex symbolic system and intricately related to particular social and psychological processes. Using the ethnographic data collected in my case study in this chapter I substantiate these theoretical articulations showing how the particular character of the Pentecostal religious system tends both to enhance specific social and psychological process and to be enhanced by them.

Clifford Geertz considers that a religion as symbolic system produces the fusion between a “world view” and an “ethos”¹⁰. A particular religious logic is permanently rendered effective by this mutual reinforcement of ethos and world view. Following these assumptions, my first concern in this chapter is to substantiate ethnographically how this fusion process works in the case of the Pentecostal congregation in Bistrița, identifying its dominant characteristics and effects.

¹⁰ Religious symbols “function to synthesize a people's ethos - the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood - and their world view - the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order” (Geertz 1973:89).

3.1 Constructing Pentecostal ethos: redefining daily life

Before entering the ethnographic interpretation I must add that one more background direction organizes the interpretation. Assuming those religious themes as markers of my interpretation I would focus on the manner in which each of them influences the *scope* and *force* of Pentecostal religiosity. These notions were introduced by Clifford Geertz and they refer, the former one to the range of social contexts within which religious logic is considered to be having more or less direct relevance and the latter one to the thoroughness with which a religious logic is internalized in the personality of the individuals who adopt it, its centrality and marginality in their life (Geertz 1968). In the case of Pentecostals there is an explicit prerequisite of being a good Christian by organizing one's the entire style of life according to the rules of the Bible.

For example, The Committee of the "Holy Trinity" Pentecostal Church in Bistrița elaborated a document that should be known by every congregant entitled: Practical rules of the Christian life-style of the "Holy Trinity" Pentecostal Church. Interesting enough is that in this document the church's leadership combines fundamentals of Christian morality and concrete rules of behaving. They stated that The "Holy Trinity" Pentecostal Church encourages expressing Christian freedom as much in the religious services, as in the personal lifestyles of its members, on the condition of respecting the Bible. Still, in practicing these freedoms it excludes and totally condemns particular practices, which are also object of discipline from the church¹¹.

¹¹ Of course this idea of explicitly stating the concrete conduct of a congregant reflects only the surface of this complex process in which a religious perspective and a life-style are mutually reinforcing each other. Any religious community elaborates this kind of documents. Moreover, the precise form and content of the document could be a significant objective of analysis. At this moment, I want to suggest how carefully one has to follow the way in which a religious logic pervades in the life of the believer beyond the explicit affirmation of a moral conduct according to the rules of the congregation

In what follows I argue that the Pentecostal religious logic acts towards enhancing the scope and force of religiosity and the strategic locus of this enhancement is the daily life¹² of the believer. The Pentecostal ethos is constructed through a radical and complex redefinition of the daily life of the believer: familial and social relationships inside or outside the congregation, reorganization of time within the broader framework of the congregational life and individualization of the religious activities. I also further argue that the fact that the every day life of the believer becomes the strategic locus of this particular kind of religious mobilization has to do with two different impulses that dominate the Pentecostal religious logic. Concerning the proper definition and universality of these impulses I follow here the argument of the historian of American religion Grant Wacker (1995), who calls these two impulses which define the Pentecostal character, the *primitivist* and the *pragmatic* impulses. As Wacker mentioned, their exact label is not the crucial issue but the manner in which they dialectically define the Pentecostal religious logic. He maintains that one could find these two impulses twined together along the history of Pentecostalism from its beginning in America until now when this religious movement became global:

(...) the primitivist impulse represented a powerfully destructive urge to smash all human made tradition in order to return to a first-century world where the Holy Spirit alone reigned. In that reign supernatural signs and wonders formed the stuff of daily life, dreams and visions exercised normative authority, and the Bible stood freed of higher criticism. The pragmatic impulse, in contrast, reflected an eagerness to do whatever was necessary in order to accomplish the movement's purposes. (...) Moreover once Pentecostals learned that pragmatic attitude not only worked but also pay large dividends in subjective well-being, they found themselves drawn inch by inch into the assumptions of the therapeutic society where the quest for personal fulfillment reigned supreme. (Wacker 1995:142).

The primitivist impulse denotes the Pentecostals' thirst for being guided by God's Holy Spirit in every aspect of their lives, however great or small while the pragmatic one proves the Pentecostals' willingness, "mundane sagacity" (Wacker, 1995) to work within the social and cultural expectations of the age using limited resources at their disposal for obtaining effective and tangible results. This pragmatic impulse is not only related to the capacity of

¹² This argument was also developed in different cultural contexts using other theoretical resources by other students of Pentecostalism.

Pentecostalism to work with the technological means of the time for the purpose of spreading the Word of God, but also to a particular fervor of obtaining spiritual goods (e.g. healing, gifts of the Holy Spirit) through religious assiduity, praying or fasting. They believe that God has made certain promises in the Bible. If one acts following the Scripture, then God will respond in the prescribed scriptural manner (Wacker 1995, 2003).

During my fieldwork in the Holy Trinity Church congregation I could see at work these two impulses shaping the religious life of the congregants. One possible instance of indicating this, from many others expressed in various manners and different levels of self-awareness, is to quote what told me a young minister of the congregation who develop a national program of youth evangelization involving both national and global Pentecostal resources:

I don't want to have a dried Christianity. On the contrary, I want everything that God wants, but this based on the Scripture. And this is why in the Pentecostal churches the Bible is primordial. (...) I believe that a veritable Christian is energized and kept very dynamical by the Holy Spirit and ready to respond to the challenges of the contemporary world. (...) There is no dried Christian, a Christian without power. From the moment of your conversion, The Holy Spirit is living in you. The Holy Spirit means power, God inside you. And God will keep on moving, energized. So the Holy Spirit is energizing you. If you have the Holy Ghost inside you, you are a dynamic Christian, at a constant war with the evil, and you go and keep moving toward the Kingdom of God, through the preaching of the Gospel, through experiencing, through serving.

The works of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God are intricately related to the life of the congregation and to the personal biographies indicating the opportune moments of action in the “world”. These impulses are defining the Pentecostal religious life and they also constitute the power of the Pentecostal religious logic to reach the individual in his daily social settings and activities and redefine their form and content using religious categories.

3.2 Pentecostal individualization of faith

In the following analysis I use this term “individualization of faith”¹³ as describing the situation in which the individual discovers religion as a “personal experience while its collective, institutional, sacramental, and intellectual expressions is derivative” (Martin 2005:157, Taylor 2002).

As in any evangelical denomination, conversion is the central theme of the religious life of the Pentecostal congregation. There are many anthropological studies that focus on this process of conversion analyzing the personal and cultural transformations involved in this event and also the symbolic mediation through language of this religious event ((Martin 1990, 2001; Robbins 2003, 2004, 2007; Cucchiari 1988; Harding 1987, Warner 2003). In my analysis I would emphasize the manner in which this experience of conversion produces the “individualization of faith” precisely because the conversion is an experience of the appropriation of a personal faith acquired through voluntary choice. I argue that this “individualization of faith” has psychological but also sociological consequences for the life of the congregation and also permit a better adaptation to modernization and globalization processes. I follow “individualization of faith” at two levels: individualization of religious experience and activities, and individualization through radical breaking with one’s social past and becoming an active part of the congregational life. First of all you become an autonomous person and you find your proper place in the congregational life. Those two

¹³ The phenomenon of “individualization of faith” is considered by the sociologists of religion (Hervieu-Leger, Martin) to describe adequately the situation of religion in late modernity. It refers to the increased importance of the individual’s search for authenticity and personal experience within the field of religion. As Hervieu-Leger points out, this phenomenon is different from the old religious individualism of mystics because it incorporates “a this-worldly conception of salvation conceived as a form of individual self-perfection” and a valorization of a spiritual experience in accordance to everyone’s “dispositions and interests” and “rejection of the received ‘truth’ from others” (Hervieu-Leger 2001:165). As Hervieu-Leger considers, this term is describing better the religious situation of the West. I maintain in the background the suggestion that this experience could in many situations have the elements mentioned by Hervieu-Leger referring sometimes to an intended psychological well-being.

levels illuminate the process in which the Pentecostal ethos pervades the daily life of the believer.

“Being born-again”, the term for the experience of conversion in an evangelical congregation, is the essential condition of becoming a member of the congregation and more than that of becoming a veritable Christian. For all evangelicals and for Pentecostals also the baptism should be something experienced as an adult¹⁴. The baptism in water is something that takes place after the candidate can prove the experience of “being born again”. For example, this year, in the “Holy Trinity” Pentecostal Church, there are 40 candidates for baptism who have to go through a very long procedure which will determine their new status. I remember that a young man told me that he was so eager to be baptized after his presumable conversion that he was so displeased with the pastor of the congregation telling him that he had “to prove” his new condition.

There are many different modalities through which the experience of conversion is certificated. You have to discuss your intentions of being baptized with the pastor of the congregation. Then, you have to write down a testimony of your conversion indicating the exact conditions in which this experience has happened. Few of your closest friends or relative have to endorse by their personal witnesses that your behavior has changed after your “born-again” experience. Before the baptism ritual you have to attend a catechetical preparation during which you read the Bible and learn the fundamentals of the Pentecostal church. The need to permanently certify through visible signs your inward experience as a

¹⁴ The debate between evangelical movements and Orthodox Church around the infants’ baptism can profoundly reveal the religion’s place in society and the degree of social differentiation. Evangelicals content that baptism should be the result of a mature individual decision supporting the integration of the entire life around religious values beyond familial, ethnic or other societal bonds. In Orthodox Church, they argue, the infant’s baptism represents only a powerful dimension of social or cultural integration (many times with ethnical and nationalistic accents) leaving the question of individual commitment outside. Orthodoxy is not a personal faith but the “ancestors’ law” (*legea stramoseasca* in Romanian) that should be assimilated by everyone who is truly Romanian. This notion of “ancestor’s law” appears very often in the ideological discourse of Orthodox clergy

repenter dominates the life of a Pentecostal believer in the congregation. To be a “repenter”¹⁵ means that you have to constantly prove it through visible acts (abstinence from drinking and smoking, active participation in congregational life, good relationships with your fellow congregants) to the eyes of your fellow congregants as well as to the outside world¹⁶.

Becoming “born again” firstly supposed a new attitude toward religion. It is important to mention that during my fieldwork in the Pentecostal congregation in Bistrița I could notice that all the converts had a religious background (baptized as infants in traditional churches or as members in evangelical families). They were raised in a Christian familial environment and during their growing up they sometimes participated along with their parents at the religious life of their churches. Most of the “outside” converts who come from other churches confess that their relation with the church in which they were baptized has slowly weakened especially when they became adults. At best they celebrated in church the most important festival such as Easter or Christmas. They declared they did this because of their family and tradition.

In the Holy Trinity congregation the baptism ceremony takes place twice a year. In 2007, there are a number of 15 candidates baptized in traditional local churches from the entire number of 41. The rest of the candidates are members of Pentecostal families being around the age of 18. As I could find out from the church’s presbyter the percent of outsiders

¹⁵ “Repenter” is the name of a Pentecostal (or evangelical) widespread in popular culture.

¹⁶ That eager young man also told me about his behaviour in front of his old friends who made fun of him because they could not believe that his change was real: “I’ve shown them that I was trying to change myself, I mean I’ve tried not to make mock of girls and boys, as I used to do before, not to listen to bad music, not to get drunk with them, so they would be able to see that I have some kind of a different law”.

fluctuates over the years. There are years when nobody comes from outside but at the same time there are years when more than half of the candidates are outsiders¹⁷.

The distinction between the way in which the outsiders and the insiders perceive the event of the conversion is important. As I could notice in my interviews and in reading the written testimonies the insiders have more explicit religious motivations for becoming “born again”. The story follows this pattern: they were “blessed to be born in a Pentecostal family” as they said, but before this profound experience of becoming “born again” they did not understand the real profundity of Pentecostal faith. They were tempted by the “world” (especially as adolescents) and started to smoke or drink keeping a bad company. Then a powerful existential experience (an accident, a problem in school and so on) opened their eyes and they started to go to church again. Some of my interviewees told me how they heard their parents fervently praying for them and for their “return” to the good life. “Sometimes when I was coming from a night spent at some disco club, I could hear my family praying for me”. Many insiders told me that the family helps them a lot in returning to a faithful life. Of course, there also is the possibility that a formal attitude towards the Pentecostal creed, which is more acutely felt (especially by girls) precisely in a context of preaching the necessity of the personal experience of the Holy Spirit, to be the strong motivation for an extreme assiduity oriented toward experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ It is very significant, as I could find out, that a scrupulous certification of the experience of being “born again” is not only a requirement for an outsider but also for a member of a Pentecostal family (most of the time children) who wants to be baptized. I could read 20 of the written testimonies of becoming “born-again” and I noticed the different types of language used by the outsiders and by the members of Pentecostal families (insiders). In a sense the former ones are much more expressive while the latter ones are more formal being imbued with a “specialized” religious language whose roots can be traced to familial religious education. But even in this situation their past is perceived as being characterized by a formal attendance to religious life of the Pentecostal congregation.

For the outsider the testimony of conversion is related mostly to the previous bad conditions of their life (alcoholism, broken families, familial violence, unemployment, broken marriage and failure to find a stable job accompanied by the feeling that you don't have a goal in life and so on). Their familial situation has a bad influence. Significantly enough even for outsiders, the notion that religion could be a solution for these problems related to their particular social and psychological disturbance was there. My interviewees (outsiders) confess that they tried to find the solution for their problems in Church. But they could not find anything there. Everything was "formal", the relation with the priest and also the style of praying. What is very important for my investigation is the fact that this idea that you have to become "born-again" and to deepen your faith came to the mind of the outsiders through an experience that is somehow and variously connected to the existence of the Pentecostal alternative in their social horizon. Somehow all of the converts were exposed to the Pentecostal presence.

What are those instances of the "Pentecostal presence"? The exemplary moral life of some neighbors or co-workers who are members of evangelical denominations (Baptists or Pentecostals), or an accidental attendance to a Pentecostal service which suddenly showed you that religious life could be experienced in a more personal way, the power of a persuasive preacher (which all the time address in his preaching the concrete problems of the individual), the passionate testimony of someone who experienced conversion, a miracle of God (especially "miraculous healing") which changed the life of somebody from your entourage, a sudden conversion of someone very close to you. A young man, now converted, told me that his girlfriend started to go surreptitiously to Pentecostal gatherings because one of her sisters-in-law convinced her to do that. First he mocked her but then because of some big troubles at work resolved by an unexpected "miracle" he started to go to Pentecostal gatherings together

with his girlfriend (now his wife). After this, they ceased to have intimate relations because they were not yet married¹⁸.

The common denominator of the “Pentecostal presence” is that it saliently proves, in a general context of social and psychological disturbance, that God’s works are effective in someone’s life, bringing peace to the family, prosperity (in a sense that the financial situation of Pentecostal families is much more rational), a concrete sense of fellowship (“look how all “repenters” help each other”) and so on. Besides all these there is this notion that Pentecostal’s religion is not reduced to going to Church. They really follow the injunctions of the Bible in their every day life.

This exposure to the “Pentecostal presence” in your familiar social environment triggers in you the interest to know more about them. Most of my interviewees, outsiders, consider that their life improves after a more intense participation to Pentecostal gatherings. Moreover, they told me that they have powerful experiences there (a Pentecostal prophet spoke to them, an intense praying life very different from their previous one, an emotional quality of the Pentecostal worship style which opens a direct relation with God, a new understanding of the Bible, a sense of fellowship). In this way the outsiders come in contact with the Pentecostal symbolic universe. On this background a convert had the experience of becoming “born-again” which eventually convinced him to become a member of the Pentecostal congregation and to accept the baptism in water.

¹⁸ One can observe that in the propagation of Pentecostalism women have very important roles. As in any Pentecostal congregation of the world (Martin 2001), “Holy Trinity” Church statistics say that women form the majority of its members. In a sense, one can tell that women are better at conducting to Pentecostal experience. The young man expresses this idea using his personal experience: “Women have that side of them, they are more sensitive, and they cry easier, they pray more, when they have a misfortune they externalize differently than men. Man [repenter], you see, he says, even if your wife is not a repenter, she will be. But a woman is not like this, a woman, when she sees that her husband is not a repenter, and she sees him drinking or doing something wrong, she keeps praying and praying...[for her man’s repentance]”

Most of my interviewees and also the written testimonies claim that conversion is not about becoming a member of a particular religion but mostly about acquiring a personal faith, “a relation to God”, as many of them says. In this manner they are liberated by the yoke of religious formalism and barren ritualism: going to church without having a sense that you have to change your life and without the feeling that church attendance can really change your life. In their testimonies all the candidates confess that: “I don’t want a religion but a relation with God”, “I wish for an open conversation with God”, “I wish a free prayer beyond the boundaries of ritual” and so on. For most of the converts, outsiders or members of Pentecostal families, religion (as it was felt until then) is perceived as being something formal while conversion offers them the possibility to appropriate a personal faith. Once you enter in contact with Pentecostalism (before and then after the baptism) through attending religious services or “prayer groups”, through a new understanding of the Bible, this experience of the individualization of faith becomes more accentuated and it is profoundly integrated in the Pentecostal symbolic system.

What is very significant in the case of Pentecostalism, *vis-à-vis* other evangelical denominations such as the Baptist one, is the fact that those two fundamental experiences of becoming “born again” and baptized in water are only the first, indeed fundamental, experiences in the life of a Pentecostal; following after this is the striving to obtain the baptism in the Holy Spirit which represents a powerful experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit in one’s life. This experience is certified by visible phenomena, the most notorious of them being “speaking in tongues” and it is opened to everybody. In contemporary Pentecostalism (Martin 2001), and by using my ethnographic data, in the Holy Trinity Pentecostal Church also, this experience of “speaking in tongues” is not seen anymore as the

decisive sign of the spiritual baptism¹⁹. Besides baptism in the Holy Spirit there is also the possibility for everybody to obtain the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as healing powers, prophecy, and discernment of the spirits or visionary capacities. All these religious experiences are promised in the Bible for every “born-again Christian”. I am not interested here in theological disputes around this idea. More precisely I want to show how this doctrinal element influences the religious ethos of the believer, how this “world view” shapes the “moods and motivations” (Geertz 1973) of the believers.

Not every member of the Holy Trinity Pentecostal congregation underwent these experiences but there is this notion that every member of the congregation can experience this spiritual baptism and can receive spiritual gifts by being perseverant and a good Christian. As it can be noticed, these experiences are certainly related to the idea of strengthening the fellowship with God and with the notion of empowerment. This experience of empowerment through the works of the Holy Spirit²⁰ is constantly highlighted in studies on Pentecostalism (Martin 1990, 2001). In this idea of empowerment one could also find a very convincing illustration of Wacker’s argument about primitivist and pragmatic impulses.

I tried to suggest that for everybody who enters the Pentecostal symbolic universe the process of individualization of faith is permanently marked by a powerful religious experience of gifts and blessings of the Holy Spirit. All this personal, strongly emotional, experiences being freed of any institutional boundaries, being equally widespread among congregants, produce in the life of the believer a sense of enhancement of the individualization of the religious

¹⁹ This issue is still a controversial issue among Pentecostal Romanian theologians and also between Pentecostal and Baptist theologians.

²⁰ (...) Not to mention the gifts, this is something that I like here, and I am currently persevering so that God should give me a gift [Why?] I would like to help others. The gifts are for your strengthening also. It’s a way of gaining strength that is how I think about it. If I were to have the gift of prophecy, and you come to me, and I have a revelation for you, that you had had an accident and your foot is not healed, for example, you would say, that’s exactly my situation, and you became happy and gain strength, you fortify yourself. There is another reason for asking for a gift because your fellowship with God is strengthened

experience. Of course, there is a very complex system in which different instances of religious authority can discipline all this experience within the limits of the Scripture.

This idea precisely that everyone has an open path toward experiencing the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit is a powerful tool of the individualization of religious experience. That mainly means that the believer's initiative to search for spiritual experiences is practically widened beyond the boundaries of the ritual life provided by the church congregation. The entire life of the believer is now guided by his personal initiative and religious assiduity and the empowerments of the Holy Spirit respond to his personal perseverance. The Pentecostal primitivist impulse opens the path for religious experiences unbounded by tradition or institution. Some of the most intense moments in the religious life of the Pentecostal community are perceived to be those in which members of the congregation experience the fellowship during the main religious services in which is involved the entire congregation or the fellowship of a "prayer group". But this doesn't invalidate the experience of individualization because of the various opportunities to experience fellowship.

The prayer groups are scattered all around the town in private houses belonging to certain congregants. They are often founded around a prophet or a visionary, that is, a congregant who receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The individual can choose any group he wants based on his preferences. Many times he chooses groups that are formed by members of another congregation. Besides these prayer groups there are other groups oriented toward biblical study. In this case the individual can also choose his affiliation according to his preferences. These gatherings take place in the weekdays when the congregational church doesn't provide a religious service. Or, the individual has the option of staying home with his family praying, singing and reading the Bible together. Practically, throughout the entire week a congregant

has the possibility of finding a place of worship according to his preference. In a sense one can talk about the individualization of the religious activities. They are not limited to the interior space of the church.

As David Martin (2005b) mentioned, one of the questions that could appear when one talks about the “individualization of faith” in the case of Pentecostalism is why it does not produce a kind of radical religious individualism oriented toward a kind of immanent spiritual well-being. This possible question proves that this theme of “individualization of faith” is a very complex one. Is there this idea of “this-worldly” spiritual well-being undermining the idea of the other-worldly salvation proclaimed by Pentecostals, maybe not in discourse but certainly in the believers’ practices? They all said to me very clearly: the aim of their life is salvation. They simply want to go to heaven as promised in the Bible. But at the same time they don’t have second thoughts about using “the empowerments” for very mundane reasons (related to work, business, family) being socially or psychologically effective. But even considering this situation, the fact that this process of individualization of faith doesn’t produce fragmentation and continues to fuel a very lively communitarian spirit remains significant.

Using my ethnography I could provide with several answers. Some of them have to do with the particular regimes of religious authority existent in Pentecostal churches and with the Pentecostal form of congregational life. I will discuss them later. At this moment I would like to add something essential to my previous description. This will also introduce the other level of the individualization of faith related to obtaining autonomy and becoming part of the congregational “body”.

What do Pentecostals mean by the term of personal faith? Using my ethnography I argue that one cannot understand this notion unless examining its intricate relation with the idea of repentance. Faith is personal because it opens the channels for a supposedly direct and individual experience of the presence of God in your life but, at the same time it opens the channels for discovering yourself as a “sinful” being, that is, a strong conviction that your behavior is not the right behavior, in accordance with the Bible and Word of God. This discovery of yourself as being “sinful” is taking place only because God intervenes directly in your life. Pentecostals say that God or the Holy Spirit “scrutinizes you”. This is what one of the congregants told me. This is an idea that I very often found in the Pentecostal discourse:

When the Holy Spirit is scrutinizing you, how can I say this..., He is not necessarily probing into you, He just leaves you in a condition in which you can make introspections, you can see yourself for what you really are, and you can remember and say: yes, today I lied, I talked to someone in this manner, I looked at a girl..., I wasn't supposed to do these things, I did them anyway. Just like and X-ray, He shows you all these, and, then as man of God for whom the sin is an accident, not something habitual, you feel sorry, the repentance begins, you start crying; because if God were not bestowing this search on you, you would not be able to see yourself, you would think you are doing OK, you are not like the others. But when God scrutinizes you, you reach the condition in which you see yourself as a garbage, as a person of no value, you are not capable of doing anything and that you truly need Christ; because this is what salvation means, to see that you cannot save yourself, because if you could, you would not need Christ.

I think this idea of repentance is very important for understanding why Pentecostal individualization doesn't produced religious individualism. As I previously mentioned, the idea of conversion is strongly related to the idea of repentance. Now, this sense that the Holy Spirit doesn't produce only “blessings” but it reveals that you are a “sinful” human being is very important in Pentecostalism. But their conception of sin is very specific²¹. Pentecostals say that “sin is something accidental not habitual”. They explain that this means that following conversion not everything is only about discovering God and experiencing the faith in a new manner but also it is about renouncing to the habit of living in sin. When you become a repent, the sin becomes something accidental not habitual. Pentecostals told me that the Orthodox Church has this idea of sin implying that it is our nature and you have to go

²¹ I do not refer here to the theological conception but to the manner in which congregants understand this.

to church for confession and then you can sin again. They consider this idea to be very self-indulgent and arresting the process of conversion. Again, for Pentecostals, the idea of sin is related to the idea of changing your behavior. And this should be something visible to everybody. If you accidentally sin then you have to ask God to forgive you. And they consider that this is enough. You don't need the mediation of Church or of a priest. So you cannot be a "born again" without understanding that you walked out on sin. You don't want to sin anymore.

This idea of conversion as a radical rupture from a sinful past was highlighted by many anthropologists (Robbins 2003, 2004; Martin 1990) I am interested here in one of its aspects: the power of this experience to produce rupture in social and cultural continuity. As one of my interviewees told me: "Sin is like a web". You cannot get rid of them one by one but you have to take the decision to walk away from your entire sinful life". And this firstly means killing your old habits and breaking old relationships that kept you in chains. In this sense, conversion is also a radical social transition producing a feeling of autonomy. But this social transition is interpreted using the Pentecostal religious idiom.

Through conversion the individual finds his independence from old social relationships and old company and also finds a proper place in the activities of the congregation. The experience of conversion and the help of his fellow congregants provide the new repentant with the possibility of radically breaking with the old social relationships which were keeping him trapped in a sinful life. All my interviewees consider that this is a very significant moment in the process of repentance and also a very important process after the baptism. This offers a sense of autonomy. From now on, the convert is capable of articulating his own biography in accordance with his religious choice.

Many social scientists emphasize this idea of “rupture” or “radical discontinuity” as an important feature of Pentecostal religious action. As the American anthropologist Joel Robbins remarks:

(...) the literature suggests four ways the P/c [Pentecostalism] approach to transformation is distinctive: P/c [Pentecostalism] elaborately ritualizes discontinuity; it maintains discontinuity through an ascetic code embedded in a thoroughgoing dualism of great hermeneutic force; it preserves that which it breaks from; and its dualism provides a flexible language of satanic influence that is very sensitive to local social concerns (Robbins 2004:124)

Baptism in the water is the most salient ritual of rupture in Pentecostalism. As one could see, the experience of the spiritual baptism or spiritual gifts permanently deepens this experience of rupture and discontinuity with the past. My ethnographic data confirm the idea that Pentecostalism creates a powerful dualism between a “world” reigned by sin and the “church” as a community of repenters. The personal past and old social relationships are interpreted within this dual framework. They are demonized. And the old social and psychological disturbances are seen as works of demons (e.g. alcoholism). In this sense Robbins says that Pentecostalism “preserves that which it breaks from” (124). The idiom of “satanic influence” (Robbins, 124) is applied to concrete social and psychological disturbances related to the convert’s previous social milieu. It doesn’t denote abstract structures of social injustice or universal psychological problems (e.g. depression or anxiety). Even if these dimensions are there, they are not interpreted as abstract and general categories. As Casanova (2001) observes, after conversion the believer is engaged in a veritable “spiritual warfare”. The advantage is that his Spirit (Holy Spirit) is the most powerful spirit of all (demons). Through all my interviews this pattern of “spiritual warfare” is elaborated. The sermons are also filled with this sense of a battle against satanic influences.

Besides obtaining this sense of autonomy by assuming “spiritual warfare” there is another important effect of the conversion. This is well expressed by one of my interviewees, the young minister:

When God is converting someone, He does not leave that person as he would be a useless part of the body, separated from the body. When God calls somebody to salvation, He calls him to ministration also. It is really very logical, if you are part of the body you must function in some way. To be called to a service. If you do not feel the call for the service, it means you are not a part of that body; to do something for the church, for the universal church, for the spreading of the kingdom of God, You must feel that you should do something for the salvation of the person, for building the body you must serve to some purpose. God is giving you an impulse from inside.

This idea, that you can find a proper place to serve the congregation and the universal church, again offers a powerful sense of individualization. Most of my interviewees consider the need of serving the other as being one of the most important religious tasks²². This symbolic image of becoming part of a body is a key image in all the descriptions of what being a Pentecostal means.

3.3 Pentecostal religious authority regime

As Clifford Geertz considers, the symbolic activities of religion as a cultural system “are devoted to producing, intensifying, and, so far as possible, rendering inviolable by discordant revelations of secular experience” this notion of something “really real” capable of integrating a comprehensive idea of order with a particular ethos. Geertz further argues, more concretely, “the imbuing of a certain specific complex of symbols – of the metaphysic they formulate and the style of life they recommend – with a persuasive authority, which from an analytic point of view, is the essence of religious action”. It is very important to ask, what are the sources of authority rendering effective a Pentecostal symbolic system?

²² A congregant told me: “From the moment you have repented, and God made a transformation of you, you don’t help someone else because you think that is how repentance is done but because you really feel like doing that, you want to that. This is not connected to a disciplinary system: you either do it or go to hell... No, this is what you really feel inside, you feel you should do this...”

Social scientists consider that religious authority can be understood as possibly emerging from scripture, charisma and tradition (Gifford 2005). As Paul Gifford considers, these authority instances can assume different positions and accents within the context of a particular religion. I am concerned with understanding which the particular positions of these instances in Pentecostalism are and how they concretely function in the case of the Holy Trinity Pentecostal Church in Bistrița.

During my investigation I could identify several sources of authority in the Pentecostal congregation: the authority of the Bible as the inspired Word, the authority of the office, that is, of the pastor, the charismatic authority of believers who received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a prophet for example, the authority of the Holy Spirit's direct communications. As Pentecostals believe, the Holy Spirit works through all these sources of authority. I should add one of the most contested sources of authority in the Pentecostal congregation: tradition. Any religious community develops a sense of tradition that could influence their decisions. For that matter, even if it is highly contested, Pentecostal tradition is sometimes redoubtable. For all of them, most important is the authority of the Bible.

The Bible is the essential measure of all religious acts in the congregation. The Bible is primordial. But in the concrete life of the congregation these sources of authority sometimes compete with each other and for some believers the biblical arrangements are broken by elevating, for example, the charismatic authority of the prophets over Scriptural authority. Especially when expecting guidance in some concrete life situations, some of the believers ask for and rely on the words of a prophet. Eventually this could become a practice that occults the really important source of authority which is the Bible. Most of the congregants are aware of these dangers considering that this happens only when the faith of somebody is

still immature. They consider that God is working in many ways in their lives. And a prophet is one of these channels of communication. One cannot develop a consistent spiritual life based only on prophetic utterances. A young congregant said to me:

There is a great difference once you get to know Him a little, not through a prophet, ... at least concerning me. It is important to have a personal relation with God. For example, if there were no prophets, I wouldn't be afraid of not knowing how to go, it depends on your personal guidance, if you pray to the Lord, God, look, I want to go somewhere....

One of my interviewees, the young minister, describes the proper functioning of an authority regime in the church but of course every believer assumes various relations to the authority based on their personal self-awareness:

The Bible says that the spirit of a prophet is subjected to that prophet meaning that the spirit of the prophecy can be controlled. Because sometimes God speaks to you but you don't immediately disclose it. I can tell after a period of time what God told me. When a prophet sees that the pastor is going astray, he does not have to make it public while the pastor is preaching from the pulpit. He can bring the subject up, on a different occasion, after the pastor finished preaching, and he can say, look, God gave me a message, and whether you want to receive it or not, I have the duty of passing it to you, as a message from God. And he says it in the presence of the community, and leaves it up to the church to judge it and decide if it was from God or from the prophet. Having the Bible in front of their eyes the people search and say, well it wasn't a wrong prophecy, on the contrary, he says things that we also know (those that they had observed and knew). It means that the pastor has a problem. If this is the case, the church can bring the pastor to book for it, and vote for or against him, and even suspend him.

For the Pentecostal congregation the Bible is the higher source of authority because it is the Word of God. The works of the Holy Spirit are legitimated by the Scripture because the Scripture is the Word originally inspired by the Holy Spirit. This defines the Pentecostal primitivist impulse. Wacker's (2001) comments on the position of the Bible in Pentecostalism are entirely matching my field experience. He argues that for Pentecostals "the Bible contained all the information one needed to know in order to navigate life's tough decisions. We might call this idea the principle of plenary relevance (...) It needed only to be read, believed, and obeyed" (Wacker 2001:70). As I could notice, from my discussion with the congregants and listening to many sermons, the Bible is the powerful instrument that rationalizes the personal life of the congregant. One congregant told me "I read the Bible and I understand all that I have to do in that concrete situation. Everything is in the Bible. You just have to read it and to meditate on what you have read". At the same time there are multiple

ways in which one has to interpret the Bible. Scholars refer to the process of interpretation of the Bible as being literalism, meaning that the Bible self-discloses itself to everyone (Wacker 2001).

The Bible in itself is not an allegorical code. It is self-evident. One of the congregant told me that “any unintelligent people can understand the Bible”. But that doesn’t mean there are not different conditions of receptivity (Coleman 2006ab). Congregants say that the Bible begins disclosing itself when you are experiencing conversion. At that moment one understands that the Bible is something that speaks about you and your personal experience. This perspective is acquired because the Holy Spirit “scrutinized” you and gave you the power to see yourself in the light of the Bible. Of course, there are many passages in the Bible that should be discussed with others in biblical study groups, that should be clarified by the pastor and the preachers but most importantly is to understand the Bible as fitted to your personal biography, as an instrument of improving your moral life in accordance with God’s will. In a sense, Pentecostals do not interpret the Bible, because they don’t have doubts about its literal truth, but they rather elaborate proper strategies of receiving it (Coleman 2006ab) as a transmitter of God’s will and putting it in practice in everyday life.

The means through which someone understands how the Bible should be applied to personal and congregational life are various, involving study, meditation, prayer, direct communication with the Holy Spirit, sermon and so on. Interesting enough is that it is precisely this literal understanding of the Bible that which opens the symbolic universe of the Pentecostalism towards the miraculous life of the early Christianity when the Holy Spirit acted through “sign and wonders” in the life of the first Christian congregations. Pentecostals consider that the Bible undoubtedly describes the cosmic order in which the Holy Spirit acts effectively in the

world. They just have to apply all these to the social and personal context of this age. In this context Pentecostals assume that traditional Churches replace the Bible with human traditions that occult the primordial sense of the Bible. Whether this is true is of no importance here. The important fact is that they have this perception that the entire ritual and churchy life of traditional churches occult the free life of the Holy Spirit and that a veritable Christian should assume the pure model of the early Christianity.

Most of the Pentecostals are not so reflective *vis –a- vis* the idea that perhaps all this strategies of receptivity form themselves a powerful tradition that sometimes occults the “true” interpretation of the Bible. The Pentecostal moral code which Pentecostals consider to be originated directly from the Bible is in fact the result of a long communitarian consensus that sometimes is put into question by some groups or fractions of the congregation. Should women be wearing headscarves in church or shouldn’t they? What kind of music is appropriate for the Church? What kind of methods of evangelization should the church use?

All these presuppose different interpretations of the Scripture. Paul Gifford aptly argues that what makes a text a Scripture is the text’s relationships with the community. The authority of the scripture is not the attribute of the text itself but of an ongoing “human activity” (Gifford 2005). For that matter, beyond this discourse on the infallible authority of the Bible one has to read the complex and flexible works of all the other sources of authority articulated in the Pentecostal community. Sometimes the consensus is broken and the fragmentation of the congregation is inevitable. The pragmatic impulse is stronger than the primitivist one. I think that what comes out of this description of the Pentecostal regime of authority is its extraordinary capacity to sustain the Pentecostal religious ethos both oriented by primitivist

and pragmatic impulses and more importantly to redefine the daily life of the believer not by a disciplinary system imposed from above by a religious elite or hierarchy.

As one could see from the document stating the moral rules that a believer should follow in his every day life, these rules are indeed averse to change or innovation and are holding up traditional values. The Pentecostal regime of religious authority is capable of producing the internalization of these values precisely, producing a very persuasive combination between self-control and release. As David Martin put it: “In Pentecostalism ecstatic release actually fuels conscious discipline; release is the complement of self-control not the alternative” (Martin 2001:15). At the same time this regime of authority is capable of maintaining a balanced relation within the congregation between religious individualism and communitarian values also stimulating the lay religious activity in the church. Every one can preach. Everyone can testify in front of the other for the works of the Holy Spirit in his life and so on. The process of Pentecostal individualization of faith is intricately related to a complex functioning of this authority regime.

3.4 Pentecostal form of congregational life

Having discussed the themes of religious individualization and authority regime one could better understand the new form of congregational life that Pentecostalism was capable of implementing in Transylvania and which properly sustains the Pentecostal symbolic system. Moreover, discussing the Pentecostal form of congregational life one can better understand the complex relationships between Pentecostal religious logic and the modernization and globalization processes. The models of religious change proposed by David Martin and José Casanova offer the theoretical framework for this.

Which are the major characteristics of the congregational model implemented by Pentecostalism in Bistrița? First of all this congregation is basically a voluntary religious association which was capable of emerging in the interstitial space between the ecclesiastical control of the local historical churches and the State mobilizing resources of civil society.

“[T]he emergence of voluntary religion in any society is a major event, however insignificant the beginnings, because it presages the fragmentation of the dominant majority faith and may also signal in the symbolic and cultural realm the advent of political pluralism and of a rich culture of intermediate organization between State and individual.” (Martin 1998: 69)

The individual freely decided to become a member of the congregation because he became “born-again” while the former religious membership was based on the fact that he was born in a particular community. The voluntary principle also stimulates a communitarian involvement as opposed to religious individualism. Also related to this is the lively participation of lay people²³ in the life of the congregation²⁴.

I would cite a very significant response of one of the congregants who came here from another congregation in town. I asked him if this kind of behavior is not the sign of individualism. If you don’t like a place, you can decide, according to your preference, to go. He told me: “I didn’t leave because the church did not serve me, but because it did not let me serve the young people as I thought it proper”²⁵.

²³ One congregant told me: “I like to be here, everybody is singing, nobody is “unemployed”, here anyone can call to praying, anyone can preach; if someone preaches we all understand exactly what it means, no need for you to make an effort to catch up and understand. (...) This is the way I like things. I like very much what I’m doing, I like how we work, I also like coming here, I don’t know... I feel extremely good at the gathering [religious service]. I feel good praying, I feel good calling to praying, I feel good preaching, singing, I really feel I am doing something. I feel joy...”

²⁴ The congregation is led by a Committee which is elected in a democratic manner once at four years. The senior pastor of the congregation is also elected from the others pastors of the congregation.

²⁵ He continued saying that any church following the Biblical model of the Early Christian church must fulfil at least five important goals. These are the goals of any church (ecclesia) that wants to be part of the universal church. First of all it has to have the vertical relation with God; that is the element of worship. The second element of the church is the serving of others. This dimension comes from the biblical commandment: “Love thy neighbour as thyself”. The church has to serve the people and you as a member of the church have to serve the others. As a third element a church has to have the dimension of evangelization. As Pentecostals believe, based on the Bible, every believer has to go in the world and preach the Gospel to everyone. If a church does not do evangelization, the spreading of the Gospel, it is not a real church. The fourth element of a true church is the dimension of teaching the rules of the Bible (catechization) as a form of permanent learning. The process of

As I was able to realize, this notion of “fellowship” is very important in Pentecostal life. It doesn’t only imply the physical presence of others but also a sense of intimacy, having a causal conversation, getting to know each other’s experiences, praying for each other. The social potentialities of such a religious organization which is capable of self-sustaining through its internal human resources can very clearly be seen here. The congregation is capable of mobilizing its members both religiously and socially.

One of the most remarkable features of the “Holy Trinity” congregation was the perfect continuity between religious activities and social activities within the congregation. Besides being a religious institution, providing a very strong social network for its members, this congregation is also a very dynamic social service center. There are a lot of people from Bistrița, especially marginal categories (orphans, elders, prisoners, poor or persons with physical disabilities) benefiting from the congregation’s social services and financial aids.

Assuming Martin’s perspective on Pentecostalism as a social differentiation force I am able now to argue the close confluences between Pentecostal religious logic, creating particular “moods and motivation”, and social differentiation. It also means that now, one can presuppose that Pentecostalism is capable of absorbing in his logic those people who are somehow caught in the dynamics of social differentiation processes which generally produce uprooted groups and individuals.

As an example one can briefly consider one of the most prominent social processes that characterize Bistrița region: labor migration abroad. Almost half of the population of some villages in this region left home to work abroad in Spain, Italy, France, Germany or Ireland.

learning is a long life process like the evangelization. The fifth element of a church is the fellowship. Being baptized in the Church implies not only a communion with God but also a communion with brothers and sisters.

For many people this process of migration produces social and psychological disturbances especially in their families. Most of the interviewees had such a work experience before or after becoming Pentecostals. Undergoing many problems they all had the natural reflex of seeking in religion a possible remedy. As I have argued, Pentecostalism was able to respond to this increased social mobility by recuperating the religious longing of many people unsatisfied by “the services” of their local historical churches and to create through the “individualization of faith” a faith capable of responding to social mobility and transition. Pentecostalism is able to provide both a sense of fellowship and of individual salvation.

As José Casanova argues, one of the most striking societal phenomena that characterized religious modernity was the territorialization within the limits of the nation-states of the Christian churches both in Western and Eastern Europe. The church became both the community cult of nation within the territorial political community and the religion of individual salvation. Casanova continues arguing that the exceptional character of the European secularization was that once the church ceded its role as a community cult of the nation to the secular-state, it concomitantly lost its capacity of being a religion of individual salvation. This is the situation in Europe now. As we saw, Casanova considers that the processes of globalization, which produce de-territorialization, impact this fragile alliance between church, nation and state. From a religious perspective, de-territorialization tends to intensify issues of individual and collective group identities. As Casanova put it: “Globalization threatens to dissolve the intrinsic link between sacred time, sacred place and scared people, (...) and with it the essential bonds between histories, peoples, and territorial...” (Casanova 2005:26)

The Romanian Orthodox Church has also undergone these processes of territorialization and nationalization and during the communism was forced to become privatized (a process of forced social differentiation and modernization), to function only as a religion of individual salvation. The communist secular-state tried to assume the role of being the community cult of the nation. After 1989 the Orthodox Church rediscovered its role as a carrier of national identity. Many of the Romanians accepted this assumed role. But 17 years after the revolution, it seems that Romania has started following the Western model of secularization.

The evangelical movements and Pentecostalism also, assume a different model of integration of religion/state/society than the Orthodox Church and, at the same time, specific types of linkages between the individual and his religious community created through a very powerful symbolic mediation. It is interesting to observe how the Orthodox Church as an established religious institution is mainly, at a macro-level, an anti-differentiation force. Nonetheless it produces, at the micro-level of individual action, behaviors of “differentiation” of the realms of social life and, consequently, secularization.

Conversely, evangelical movements are originated and properly functioning in a space of high differentiation but, instead, produce at the micro-level of the individual action behaviors of “anti-differentiation”: the entire life of the evangelical believer is apparently pervaded by the religious logic. The main insight which could be properly pondered using this is that the established religious institutions (e.g. Orthodox Church) are much more vulnerable to secularization within modernization and globalization processes than the autonomous evangelical movements.

This idea about the Orthodox Church being a national church was first politically contested by the new democratic Constitution which endorses religious pluralism and then was structurally challenged by different processes of modernization and globalization such as European integration and labor migration abroad. As in Western Europe, the Orthodox Church also tends to lose its capacity to function as a religion of individual salvation in this new socio-political context. As a territorial religious institution, the Orthodox Church undergoes a major crisis. Along with the Romanian Orthodox Church other historical churches in Transylvania (Protestant Churches especially) undergo the same crisis. As I have previously mentioned, in the conditions of the ethnic pluralism of Transylvania, they were the ethnic community cult carriers of ethnic cultural heritage and now they have lost their capacity to function as a religion of individual salvation. This process is slow because they still have the power to represent the cultural heritage of a minority.

In this chapter I tried to argue, interpreting ethnographical data collected in the Holy Trinity Pentecostal Church in Bistrița, that Pentecostalism as a highly decentralized global religion, a voluntary religious association, is capable of adapting itself, in a particular context, to the social and cultural dynamics of modernization and globalization. The Pentecostal religious logic and its form of congregational life are strong competitors for territorialized religious institutions. This territorialized logic reveals itself in the fact that evangelicals are perceived sometimes as being estranged from the spirit of the Romanian nation and culture and, for that matter, their presence is not organically fitting the Romanian socio-cultural development. It is believed that their theology, worship music, and liturgy are imported from other cultures with very little effort at cultural adaptation. Finally, it is considered that the evangelical religious mission violates the “canonical territory” of traditional churches. The future of the

Transylvanian religious field is shaped by the confrontation between the logics of territorialization and those of de-territorialization.

Conclusion

My study has investigated the social and cultural dynamics of Pentecostalism in Transylvania through the exploration of a particular Pentecostal congregation in Bistrița (a Northern Transylvanian town): the “Holy Trinity” Pentecostal Church. The emergence in this region of evangelical denominations, especially of Pentecostalism, has produced important modifications of the Transylvanian religious field opening it towards new and unpredictable developments. In my investigation I have intended to understand what social and cultural niches are favorable for the propagation of the Pentecostal religious action in Transylvania.

For this purpose, I have elaborated a theoretical framework that could account both for the intrinsic Pentecostal religious logic as it is articulated in a complex symbolic system and its elective affinities with broader modernization and globalization processes. Assuming the models of religious change elaborated by David Martin and José Casanova I have set forth and argument that could follow the confluences between Pentecostalism and processes of social differentiation and de-territorialization. Both Martin and Casanova consider, even if they formulate this idea in different terms, that there are three major religious themes carried by Pentecostalism which are compatible with the modernization and globalization processes and capable to push Pentecostalism to developing itself along these lines, especially in a religious field such as Transylvania, religiously dominated by historical churches (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches).

As we saw, in Transylvania, the religious situation is characterized by historically established ethno-religious pluralism and at the same time by the claims of the Orthodox Church to being the national church. The various processes of social differentiation and de-territorialization (socio-economic and cultural European integration, development of a free religious market,

labor migration abroad) have affected at a societal level the relationships between church, state and nation. These processes erode the Romanian Orthodox Church's capacity, as a territorialized (or nationalized) institution in the boundaries of the nation-state, to function both as a community cult of imagined national community and as a religion oriented toward individual salvation. The same process characterizes the situation of the other historical churches in Transylvania, Catholic and Protestant. During their existence in Transylvania, besides being oriented toward individual salvation they were at the same time the carriers of the cultural identity of a particular ethnic group (Hungarian and German).

I have argued in my study that the religious themes that make Pentecostalism a strong competitor for those historical churches are: 1) the individualization of faith 2) the articulation of a new religious authority regime and 3) the emergence of a new form of congregational life. All these religious themes carried by Pentecostalism are strongly connected to modernization and globalization processes enhancing both Pentecostalism's capacities to be a religion oriented toward individual salvation and the capacity of permanently reinventing the communitarian life beyond territorial principles.

On the basis of my ethnographic work on the "Holy Trinity" Pentecostal Church in Bistrița, I have put forward the argument that Pentecostalism was capable of developing the previously mentioned religious themes so successfully mainly because of its capacity to redefine the every day life of the believer. This task was facilitated by the fact that its religious logic is dominated by two powerful impulses: the primitivist and the pragmatic ones. The primitivist impulse supposes an urge to dislocate all human-made traditions in order to revive the early Christianity. The pragmatic impulse proves the Pentecostal willingness to use social and cultural opportunities of the present times for obtaining effective and tangible effects. These

impulses are at work in the “Holy Trinity” Pentecostal Church in Bistrița. My findings substantiate the idea that Pentecostal religious logic with its specific profile is capable of opening new religious and socio-cultural spaces for people who are caught in the disturbances of the various processes of modernization and globalization which affected social life in Transylvania.

My arguments try to avoid any kind of deterministic thinking which would mechanically relate a religion to particular social processes. It emphasizes rather the possibility of complex confluences at different levels between different socio-cultural processes which make possible for the moral aspirations of particular groups or individuals, going along the developments of modernization and globalization, to be still consistently expressed in religious categories which are in many senses conservative. The aim of my study was to indicate and examine the concrete points of articulation of Pentecostal religious logic and various processes of social differentiation and de-territorialization in Transylvania. A further research could be more detailed in showing how these processes of individualization of faith supported by a proper religious authority regime and an adequate form of congregational life are related to particular processes of modernization and globalization, in the field of economy, politics or popular culture.

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