

RELIGION, MUSIC, COMMUNITY

THE INTERFERENCES OF THE PENTECOSTAL
CHARISMATIC RENEWAL
AND THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC
RENEWAL

Abstract: In the article the author focuses on the Pentecostal-Charismatic Renewal movements that attract rapidly increasing number of followers all over the world and in recent years in Hungary as well. She intends to show how this fundamentally Protestant-inspired trend appears within Catholic frameworks and look at the demands and cultural processes behind the syncretising phenomenon. The blurring of boundaries and the transposable patterns are clearly reflected in the common use of the worship-song repertoire.

Keywords: Pentecostal-charismatic movements, Catholic charismatic renewal, Christian congregational music, Christianity in late-modernity, pentecostalizacion of Catholicism

It seems quite clear from the trends of the past few decades in religious studies that Berger's secularisation thesis cannot be applied to analysis of all contemporary religious processes as it takes practically no account of the religious revivals occurring parallel with the process of secularisation.¹ Countless examples of this can be observed especially from the 1960s, and religious studies in Hungary too has done extensive research for the analysis and presentation of the new religious movements. However, considerably less attention has been devoted to exploring renewal movements within Christianity.² In this article I look at the charismatic renewal movement that is showing exponential growth throughout the world, a trend that is gradually emerging in Hungary too. My aim is to show how this basically Protestant-based trend is appearing within Roman Catholicism, and to explore the demands and cultural processes behind this process of syncretisation.

1 This article was written and the research carried out with the support of the OTKA NK 81502 Research Grant. – To give just a few examples: KAMARÁS 1998; MÁTÉ-TÓTH – NAGY 2011; POVEDÁK – SZILÁRDI 2014.

2 MÁTÉ-TÓTH 1996; MEZEY 2013.

Historical background

Although we have witnessed its rapid spread in the last few decades, the charismatic renewal is not a product of the 20th century. The beginnings of the movement reach back to the United States in the 19th century when a whole series of awakening movements swept through the country (Great Awakening). It was on this basis that the Pentecostal renewal appeared in the early years of the 20th century. The members of these movements left the old mainstream churches and formed new communities. Their preaching consisted of readings from the Bible, overheated sermons and healing of the sick.³ The activity of the Methodist minister Charles Fox Parham, who was considerably influenced by the 19th century “Holiness movement”, gave new impetus to the movement. Like the pioneers of Pentecostalism, Parham sought an answer to the question of why there was such a big difference between the church practice of modern times and its operation in the time of the apostles, and more specifically, why the strong working of the Holy Spirit could no longer be felt.⁴ In his opinion secularised and rigidly formalised Christianity was in need of new fruitful inspiration from the Holy Spirit. He believed that glossolalia, the ability to speak in tongues, was a sign of the new coming of the Holy Spirit (the new Pentecost). Agnes Oznam, a girl from his school in Topeka (Kansas), was the first; she began to “speak in tongues” on 1st January 1901, then on 3rd January Parham also gained the “Spirit baptism”. Parham described this experience in the following words: “I held my hands above her and prayed... I had scarcely repeated three dozen sentences when a glory fell upon her, a halo seemed to surround her head and face, and she began speaking in the Chinese language, and was unable to speak English for three days.”⁵ Shortly after they set out on missionary trips across the continent, but the movement came to the brink of collapse. It gained new impetus when Parham received the gift of healing with the laying on of hands. Masses of people came to the services and he healed thousands of sick. Then the process of American expansion began. William J. Seymour, a black Baptist minister was allowed to attend (strictly only outside the building!) the Bible school operated by Parham – a Ku-Klux-Klan sympathiser – in Houston. Later, in Los Angeles Seymour set up a small community for black, poor and largely uneducated servants. His popularity then increased after he received the gift of speaking in tongues on 9 April 1906; as a result he and his growing

3 VARGA 2000. 7.

4 In Catholic circles another event is also stressed. Perhaps in order to show the Catholic bases besides the entirely Protestant roots, they stress the coincidence of two events. One was the appeal of Leo XIII in an apostolic letter calling on believers to pray to the Holy Spirit (*Provida Matris Caritate*), then issued his encyclical on the Holy Spirit (*Divinum Illud Munus*) and on 1 January 1901 prayed the hymn “*Veni creator spiritus*”. The other was that on the same day the Parham awakening began. VARGA 2000. 5.

5 SYNAN 2001. 1.

number of followers moved to a new place at 312 Azusa Street. Services here were attended by black and white together, they were open to everyone.⁶ Many people were impressed to see that the community trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit was able to break down all the traditional racial barriers, while others were horrified by the new kind of emotionally-charged religious experience (singing, shouting, speaking in tongues). From this now emblematic place that operated for only three and a half years the “modern Pentecost” spread to a wider, international religious stage.⁷ Thirty-eight missionaries set out from the Azusa Street community to Egypt, Norway and South Africa.⁸ Because the Protestant churches rejected the new kind of religious practice, the followers of the awakening movement split away from them, but the Pentecostal groups did not form an organised Christian church, instead they were active in “spiritual union”. Cox summed up their characteristics at this time. “They abolished hierarchies but kept ecstasy. They rejected both scientism *and* traditionalism. They returned to the raw inner core of human spirituality and thus provided just the new kind of ‘religious space’ many people needed.”⁹ The movement was launched in Europe by Thomas Ball Barratt, an English Methodist minister working in Norway, who received the Spirit baptism in 1906. He was followed in 1907 by Alexander Boddy who preached sermons preparing for the Spirit baptism in the All Saints Anglican parish of Sunderland. The movement rapidly spread throughout England and from there also reached Germany.¹⁰

The initial Pentecostal liturgy struck many observers as chaotic. There were several reasons for this. One was the liberation from the bonds of tradition that led the various groups to experiment with a number of new ritual forms; another was that most of their leaders and ministers had not been trained for years in seminaries in the traditional way and therefore often did not use the “appropriate” ritual forms or did not use them in the usual way. However, as MacNutt notes, it was precisely this feature that made them so lively, vibrant and attractive.¹¹ “It was obvious that nine out of ten people were there because of the new excitement. A new kind of show, with no entry charge ... if necessary they stood on the benches, or if this was impossible, then on each other’s feet,” wrote the Los Angeles Herald of the time.¹²

Although by the 1940s the Pentecostal Renewal had relatively stabilised its situation and its connections with the Christian churches, indeed the Pentecostal World Fellowship grouping the movement was established in 1947 and Leonard Steiner organised its first meeting (Pentecostal World Congress) in Zurich,

6 MACNUTT 2005. 185-198.

7 STEFON 2012. 308-313.

8 MACNUTT 2005. 185-198.

9 COX 1995. 105.

10 LIPTHAY 2002.

11 MACNUTT 2005. 189.

12 ROBECK Jr. 2006. 1.

the movement itself had lost much of its intensity (“spiritual dryness”) and there were fewer miraculous healings than in the earlier decades.

The second wave of Pentecostal awakening, the forerunner of the charismatic renewal began in the Protestant churches in the 1950s and led to the birth in 1967 of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International¹³ was formed in 1952 in the United States; its aim was for the members to spread the “Full Gospel” in their everyday lives and also to financially support other missions. This fellowship already bore the later main characteristics of the second wave: they did not create a new church or set up a separate community, the members were to become participants in the awakening movement while remaining in their own denominations. The beginning of the charismatic awakening is generally dated to Easter 1960 when Dennis Bennett, the rector of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church spoke before the congregation of the “religious experience of Pentecost”. This aroused considerable interest in the press, not only drawing attention to the emerging charismatic renewal, but also led other persons in the clergy of other Christian denominations to set out in the direction of the movement. Ministers who remained within their own denominations held meetings for spiritual seekers or healed with prayer. The term “charismatic” was given by the American Lutheran minister, Harald Bredesen, in 1962 when he described the new process not as neo-Pentecostal, but as the “charismatic renewal of the mainline churches”.

The Charismatic Renewal

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal began in January 1967 in Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania). A few teachers and students of the Duquesne University faculty of theology went for spiritual exercises (Duquesne Weekend) where they experienced the spiritual awakening of “Baptism in the Holy Spirit”. They soon shared their experience with students of Notre Dame University and Michigan State University. As Csordas notes, the new “Pentecostal Catholics” promised individuals a unique spiritual experience, the direct experience of divine power through numerous “spiritual gifts” and “charisms”, the result of which will be a drastic renewal of church life based on the re-baptism and “personal contact” with Jesus.¹⁴ In contrast with the earlier Pentecostal awakening, the Charismatic Renewal attracted mainly educated, middle-class Catholics from the suburbs. The new movement spread like wildfire through the United States, then appeared in all Catholic regions of the world, including Hungary.

In its third wave of renewal beginning in the 1990s Protestant and Catholic Charismatic Renewal escalated rapidly and is spreading to all parts of the world.

13 Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International.

14 CSORDAS 1997. 4.

Various estimates put the number of persons belonging to the Pentecostal Charismatic movement as high as 550 million, making it the second largest and steadily growing group within Christianity after Roman Catholicism (a total of approximately 2.1 billion). Some of its followers have converted to the Pentecostal congregations, but at least as many others have converted from Catholicism. At present the movement has a particularly strong influence in the Third World, in South and Central America, Africa, and Asia. In 2013 *Time* magazine described the phenomenon as a Latino revolution, stressing that the Pentecostal Charismatic movement is spreading more rapidly than Catholicism among the population traditionally regarded as Catholic. While Catholicism has to make an effort to retain its followers, the Pentecostal Charismatic congregations are experiencing explosive growth (a Latino Protestant boom).¹⁵ This is reflected in the fact that while in 1996 81% of the population of Latin America was Catholic and only 4% Protestant, in 2010 the corresponding figures were 70% and 13%, and in Brazil, the country with the world's largest Catholic population, the proportion of Catholics fell from 83% in 1970 to 65% in 2010 while the proportion of those belonging to the Pentecostal Charismatic movement grew from 6% in 1991 to 13% in 2010 and 45% of its members have converted from the Catholic faith.¹⁶ Many people in Catholic circles think that the wave of conversions can only be stopped with radical changes and propagation of the Catholic Charismatic movement. "As the church continues to lose members in the region with the world's largest Catholic population, the charismatic movement stands out as a source of hope, not only for fending off the formidable competition of Pentecostal Protestantism but for raising morale among the faithful as a whole."¹⁷ Based on data of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services for 2012, the number of Charismatics reached 120 million, and in Latin America they make up 16% of the entire Catholic population. The beginnings of a change of attitude within the Catholic church can also be seen in the words of Pope Francis who has gone from being one of the opponents of the movement to a supporter. "Back at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, I had no time for charismatics... Once, speaking about them, I said: 'These people confuse a liturgical celebration with samba lessons' Now I regret it. Now I think that this movement does much good for the church, overall. I don't think that the charismatic renewal movement merely prevents people from passing over to Pentecostal denominations ... No! It is also a service to the church herself! It renews us."¹⁸ The first Charismatic groups in Hungary were formed in 1975-76. In 1982 the TÚZ (Fire) movement was launched with the aim of evangelisation, introducing and discovering the Holy Spirit with the help

¹⁵ Within the Latino population migrating to the United States, among first generation immigrants 69% are Catholics and 13% Protestants, but among third generation immigrants these proportions are 40% and 21%. DIAS 2013. 22.

¹⁶ <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1303443.htm> More detailed data can be found at <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>. Last access: 30 January 2014. The appearance and spread of the Pentecostal movement in Hungary is shown in detail in the monograph by RAJKI – SZIGETI. (2012)

¹⁷ <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1303443.htm> Last access: 30 January 2014.

¹⁸ <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1303443.htm> Last access: 30 January 2014.

of various courses (Philip course, John Course, Andrew session etc.). The National Council of Hungarian Catholic Charismatic Renewal was formed in 1989 through the combined efforts of the communities and with the support of ICCRS. The National Charismatic Gathering has been held each year since 1992.

The cause of the spread and popularity of the charismatic movements cannot be analysed in the same way as the spread of new religious movements or millenarian "sects". The appearance and popularity of the Pentecostal – Charismatic renewal that can be observed throughout the world is one of the major aspects of cultural globalisation driven by a number of factors. One important factor is that the movement has been very open ever since the launch of the Pentecostal Renewal in Azusa Street; this openness can still be seen in the fluid cultural circumstances of today. This kind of openness not only implies the acceptance of the other culture, social stratum, financial situation, etc., but also brings a high level of receptiveness to innovations. "You want to pray aloud in your pew? Do it at the top of your voice, even when the pastor is praying. Want to fall to your knees? Run to the altar. Sing in Spanish and switch to English at Verse 3? Go for it. "The evangelical church says this: Listen, you want to come to our church? If you are Mexican, we will show you a church where you can sing mariachi music," explains Rodriguez. "If you are Puerto Rican, we will have salsa. If you are Dominican, we will have merengue. If you are Colombian, we will have cumbia."¹⁹

These make it highly suited for the application in different cultural contexts and social conditions of the fluid character stressed, among others, by Simon Coleman.²⁰ In the Third World and among groups linked to the lower social strata one of the reasons for the popularity is the so-called prosperity gospel or health and wealth theology²¹, according to which the correct faith and appropriate exercise of the faith can also lead to material prosperity. A number of observers point out that the exceptional popularity among the Afro-American population can be attributed to the black roots behind the emergence of the phenomenon.²² Nevertheless, its adaptability to the given culture, the high level of involvement of the individual and community traditions can be clearly observed in other parts of the world as well. This is one of the explanations for why the Pentecostal Charismatic movements are so popular in Hungary too among the Roma population and why the far more formal Catholic religion is not capable of such fluidity.

Other important factors are the less formalised religiosity that is much better suited to the demands of contemporary society, and for the same reason also the lack of a church hierarchy and the significance of a vertical, direct contact between leaders and believers.

¹⁹ DIAS 2013. 21.

²⁰ COLEMAN 2000.

²¹ István Kamarás refers to prosperity gospel as "abundance theology". KAMARÁS 2003. 353.

²² ROBBINS 2004.

“Gender-oriented” analyses by Martin and others have shown a considerably higher proportion of adult women (around 75%) among the members of the Pentecostal and Catholic charismatic movements.²³ Of course, right from the start Pentecostalism was more popular among women than among men, due in part to the fact that ministerial positions are also open to women.

On the subject of globalisation it should be emphasised that as a consequence of the infocommunication revolution the possibilities offered by the internet influence expansion in two directions. On the one hand the freely accessible content provides the communities with a pattern for structuring rites, the elements used, style, songs, etc., and on the other through the high degree of similarity in the liturgy of the Pentecostal and Catholic charismatic movements that also strengthens the syncretism between the two. This mingling is largely a one-way process, in that the influence of the Pentecostal liturgy on the Catholic Charismatics can be observed, clearly detectable among others in the use of Pentecostal songs in both.

However, the most significant incentive is to be sought in the nature of the rites. The most important characteristics of the charismatic services are spontaneity, active personal participation, emotional richness and ecstatic experiences. As *Time* magazine notes in this connection – stereotypically but aptly simplifying the phenomenon – during these events “people are much more liable to stand up and dance than they are to fall asleep”.²⁴ As many observers emphasise all these features often blur the borders between religious service and entertainment.²⁵ In the present case the main question is the repositioning of Martyn Percy’s thought “How does faith feel?” that is, an examination of the feelings that can arise during such a liturgy and how they can affect the nature of the dissemination.²⁶ It is not possible due to limitations of space to examine all the aspects here; I shall attempt to grasp the essence through what is perhaps the most emphasised channel for the manifestation of the religious experience, namely religious music.

Religious music itself is naturally greatly influenced by the complex nature of the rite within which it is heard. And in the case of the Catholic Charismatic movement this shows close similarities to parts of the Pentecostal rite. Both emphasise the role of the Holy Spirit (in the case of the Pentecostals the Holy Ghost), the most obvious manifestation of which is faith healing and speaking in tongues, the direct experience of the miracle. In addition the Holy Spirit is also present in the form of urgings and inspiration in the course of the process of creating the music and in the musical service. In the Catholic Charismatic celebrations

23 ROBBINS 2004. 132.

24 DIAS 2013. 22.

25 ROBBINS 126.

26 PERCY 2013. 217-222.

the musicians do not agree beforehand on what they will play, but leave it to the Holy Spirit to guide them, often without a score.

"We enter the door, open our hearts, call on the Holy Spirit, try to attune ourselves to it. I announce that I want to praise, that I am here, the will is important, that I want to pray ... in the sacred part they are at the altar; this is when they can receive different sacraments and gifts, when they have no way of expressing what the Sacred is, this is when the language prayer comes, they begin to praise the Lord in another language. They are unable to say anything more beautiful or greater to God, and the Holy Spirit begins to pray in them, at such times they say secret things, mysteries that they themselves do not understand."²⁷ They share the characteristic of spontaneity, an overheated emotional state, in many cases lively body language gesticulation and the possibility of direct feedback (immediate witness to recovery made in front of the community of believers). "...while there are strict rules for the liturgy that must be followed during mass, while in the praise everything is free, there is no pre-agreed order of singing, anyone can kneel, pray with arms outstretched, the songs can be sung at great length, there is no fixed duration. There is time for meditation, to turn inwards, the Holy Spirit can touch them. In this way they can partake of a greater experience than, for example, at a mass."²⁸ The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, has thus practically taken over the whole system of praise and worship, what could be called the "whole package" – the songs, the gesticulation, and the central role of praise in the religious rite. An interesting feature in the spread of the songs is that the Catholic Charismatics in practice use the music of the Pentecostals, borrowing the songs in full and translating them regardless of the theological differences between the two denominations. A good example of this is the song book titled *Rólad szól dicséretem...* (My Praise is of You...) published by the National Youth Mission linked to the Hungarian Pentecostal Church (2011), but the book is also on sale at the National Catholic Charismatic gathering, indeed the Catholic praise groups use this collection for the most part. The consequence of this migration of songs and one that reinforces the migration, is that the borders between the two become blurred.

Many on the Catholic side became aware of this kind of fluidity, its dangers and the conversions, and are making considerable efforts for the catholicisation of the borrowed practices. A central role is being played in this by the priests who belong to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement who, because of their theological training deliberately do not use the expression Holy Ghost in place of Holy Spirit, or, for example, they pray for individuals with the Holy Trinity, rather than calling down the Holy Ghost. But at the same time they continue to sing of the Holy Ghost in the songs! Another source of natural difference is that the cult of the Virgin Mary is absent from the Pentecostal Charismatic Renewal, while this cult may – but does not necessarily – appear in the Catholic Charismatic liturgy, but it is much less prominent than in the traditional Catholic liturgy.

²⁷ FARKAS 2012. 4-5.

²⁸ FARKAS 2012. 4-5.

(An indication of this is that during the full-day charismatic gathering held in 2012 there was only one song addressed to the Virgin Mary.)

In view of all this it is strange that a Catholic Charismatic gathering more closely resembles in its external features the liturgy of the *Hit-gyülekezet* (Faith Church). Of course, this character has not been judged uniformly, either in Hungary or abroad, and writings by Catholic figures, especially members of the clergy, soon began to appear expressing the opinion that services more closely resemble Christian popular music concerts. Miller stresses that “One of the more unfortunate consequences of the changes to take place since the Vatican II days has been a blurring of those distinctions ... Through the proliferation of dancing in the aisles, “gospel” music, “evangelistic” sermons, “Christian Rock” and performance liturgies, some of the more obvious and visible boundaries between the Catholic Church and the realm of *extra ecclesiam* have become obscured. Nowhere is this more evident or unsettling than in what has been termed the ‘Charismatic Movement’”.²⁹

Naturally, a scholarly explanation can be found behind all these phenomena, one that is not merely limited to Morel’s demand for the search for a “new religious language”,³⁰ according to which each age must find the appropriate “language” – and we may add, channel – through which the message of the church can be understood by believers. But, although recognising that the existence of these two forms the basis of its popularity, the demands in the background moving the contemporary religious market can also be discovered, and although these work in a completely different way in the American environment compared to the European, the basic motivations and attitudes are also similar.³¹ One of the most important of these is that it is increasingly important under the conditions of late modernity for the religious experience to be in line with the demand of the masses, corresponding to the mechanism of the consumer and experience society. One manifestation of this is the infiltration of current fashion trends into the liturgy, among others through Christian popular music. It is not only that the religious experience found in different religious groups using a similar profane music fashion is similar because of the music used, but also that this kind of music style is better suited to the given religious experiences. In other words, the charismatic experience and its ritual frame that correspond to postmodern religious demands and therefore can be “sold” successfully on the religious market, result in the appearance of a similar music style, that in the present case functions not only as an aesthetic category but also as a channel of religious communication. In this way fashion has appeared, based on aesthetic demands, in the religious environment but it owes its popularity and long life to the fact that these aesthetic demands have been successfully implanted into the religious demands.

29 MILLER 2002.

30 MOREL 1995.

31 DAVIE 2010. 11-13.

It must also be mentioned that, as a characteristic of the postmodern age, the deconstruction of clearly defined, strict borders, and preference for the partnership attitude in place a hierarchy have also appeared in religious culture and have left their imprint on the Pentecostal movement as well. The blurring of borders that had already been pointed out by many observers,³² in the present case the syncretism already mentioned also means the migration between denominations of various religious elements and practices. The spread of songs from Pentecostalism to Catholic Charismatics was a visible sign of this. One of the characteristics of the many songs borrowed from the Pentecostal movement is that the positive Christian message is packaged in the popular music trends of mass culture so that it is free of the theology of suffering, makes no mention of the Cross and conveys only the message of Resurrection. This went together with a religious practice building on the already mentioned high degree of spontaneity and individual intuition.

It is not only the achievements of technology that can become part of religious practice in the age of late modernity but also, for example the phenomenon of branding known from economics. Just as brand building is playing a growing role in the success of products and services with the advance of globalisation, we can also speak of brand building in the field of religion.³³ The Hillsong Church, perhaps the most popular Pentecostal Charismatic worship group, is a good example of this religious branding.³⁴ The Hillsong Church became the face of Australian Christianity and at the same time the best known Australian brand reaching young people, including the market for non-religious products! The Hillsong parent congregation in Sydney attracts 20,000 people a week, and has appeared in London, New York, Amsterdam, Kiev, Paris, Stockholm and Cape Town. Their praise and worship song performed by Hillsong United have accumulated over ten million views on YouTube. In Hungary they are used both by the Catholic Charismatic groups and, among others by the Faith Church that holds the translation rights for the songs. It was largely because of its fashionable, professional and distinctive praise music that Hillsong Church was able to become so enormously successful. It could be their typically youthful sound and appearance that makes them so attractive for the X and Y generations. Over a space of 20 years they issued 40 CDs, their songs are written and performed by professional musicians, and they carry out marketing activity. They created religious branding, and the brand itself with the export of praise and worship song. Naturally not all Pentecostal Charismatic or Catholic Charismatic worship occasions copy the Hillsong phenomenon, but its musical influence is indisputable.

32 On the subject of the phenomena of popular culture, Romanowski concluded that the borders are becoming increasingly blurred, ROMANOWSKI 2000; while Povedák analysed the phenomenon in conjunction with the mingling of Christianity and neopaganism. POVEDÁK I. 2014.

33 For more details, see GAUTHIER and MARTIKAINEN 2013.

34 WAGNER 2013.

Summing up

It is obviously impossible within the frames of the present article to explore fully the motivations behind the spread of the Pentecostal and the Catholic Charismatic movements and the similarity between the two. Because of the limitations of space certain aspects have had to be left out, although they are needed to form a full picture. The overheated emotional character of the praise music is one of the most characteristic features of the Pentecostal and Catholic Charismatic liturgy and religious experience, but a theomusicological investigation of the songs and the vernacular theological views of individuals would also be of interest for the complex result. A future comparison of the lived experience during the rites could give a detailed picture of the nature of the continuous flow and changes in vernacular religiosity and the background incentives.

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Fig. 1. National Charismatic Gathering in Szeged, 15 September 2012. (Photo: Kinga Povedák)



Fig. 2. The outflowing of the healing power of the Holy Spirit. National Charismatic Gathering, 2012, Szeged (Photo: Kinga Povedák)