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Pedagogická fakulta

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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Principles of social influence in religious recruitment.

The case of a Christian organization affiliated with Charismatic Renewal

Principy sociálního vlivu v náboru do náboženské organizace.

Případ křesťanské organizace charismatického typu

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Praha, 2021

Odevzdáním této bakalářské práce na téma " Principles of social influence in religious recruitment. The case of a Christian organization affiliated with Charismatic Renewal" (Principy sociálního vlivu v náboru do náboženské organizace. Případ křesťanské organizace charismatického typu) potvrzuji, že jsem ji vypracovala pod vedením vedoucího práce samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále potvrzuji, že tato práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 19. dubna 2021

PODĚKOVÁNÍ

ABSTRAKT

Bakalářská práce se zabývá mladou křesťanskou organizací působící v České republice a v jedné z postsovětských zemí. Cílem práce je poskytnout originální data o vybrané organizaci. V centru pozornosti jsou náboženské poměry dané organizace, praktikované rituály a způsoby navazování komunikace s potenciálními konvertity.

Podstatou teoretické části je poskytnutí přehledu o hlavních souvisejících oblastech, jakožto: hnutí obnovy, fenomén náboženské konverze a principy sociálního vlivu v kontextu náborových strategií náboženských organizací. Praktická část práce prezentuje výsledky kvalitativního výzkumu provedeného s použitím metody zúčastněného pozorování. Pozorování bylo provedeno autorkou práce společně s asistentem.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

psychologie náboženství, náboženská organizace, náborové techniky, charismatická obnova, sociální vliv, principy vlivu

ABSTRACT

The bachelor's thesis addresses a young Christian organization operating in the Czech Republic and one of the post-Soviet countries. The purpose of the present study is to provide original data about theistic beliefs of the chosen religious group and about its strategies of building relationships with people who are not yet aligned with the faith that the group preaches. It focuses on the observed rituals, interpretative concepts stated by the pastors, and interactions between the parishioners and a potential convert.

The theoretical part covers the main related areas such as Renewal movements, phenomenon of religious conversion, and influence principles considered in the context of recruitment in religious organizations. The practical part presents qualitative research based on a field observation carried out by the author of the thesis in cooperation with an assistant-observer.

KEYWORDS: psychology of religion, religious organization, recruitment techniques, spiritual renewal, christian charismatic renewal, social influence, principles of influence

Table of contents

1. Introduction

The second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century have been marked by a significant diversification of spirituality forms, taking place in the context of globalization processes, migration, and cultural exchange. Religious movements that emerged during this period become the subject of a number of studies in the field of social sciences. Along with the emergence of the New Religious Movements (hereinafter referred to as NRMs), changes took place within the established religious institutions, including Christian churches. These changes took place in connection with the flourishing of the Pentecostal movement and the phenomenon of Spiritual Renewal, which was associated with the emergence of interest in the post-conversion religious experience among Christians, called "baptism with the Holy Spirit." The major influence of the Charismatic Renewal extended beyond the established religious institutions giving rise to authentic independent churches.

This topic is of particular relevance at present in connection with the large-scale growth in the number of believers and new independent, authentic groups within the Pentecostal (alternately called Charismatic) movement, which is known to be one of the most rapidly growing religious movements worldwide (Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2013; Zurlo et al., 2018).

One of the critical aspects of religious life is a complex process called *conversion*, which denotes a complex religious transformation of a person's beliefs and personality. This is not so much a change in Big Five personality traits or temperaments, but rather a change in midlevel functions such as goals, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors, and in the more self-defining personality functions such as identity and life meaning (Paloutzian et al., 1999). Conversion is often accompanied by initiation into the religious life of a practicing believer surrounded by a religious group, the members and leaders of which act as guides for the novice. The initial contact with an unknown group is of particular importance — that is when a potential convert begins to discover the information about the group, reconnoiters its internal order, and gets acquainted with its teachings. The religious group or rather its members often initiate communication with newcomers, outsiders, or people who are sincere about spirituality, as they are purposefully or unintentionally engaged in attracting new parishioners, except for the cases of closed groups that require any kind of specific qualification to become a

member. Techniques of recruiting and building relationships with would-be converts, according to some scholars, may be compared to communication techniques that are often used in the secular context, such as sales or healthy lifestyle propaganda (Zimbardo, Leippe, 1991). Robert Cialdini, the author of the book "Influence: The psychology of persuasion", illustrates the operational principles of social influence with examples of tactics employed by religious groups to attract new followers and keep them from leaving (Cialdini, 2009, pp. 46-48, 178-179). Cialdini's principles of influence were later taken up by researchers of religious groups.

In the present bachelor's thesis, I focus on the study of one of the young Christian-based organizations, which operates in the Czech Republic and several countries of the former Soviet Union. The purpose of my study is to contribute to the understanding of the recruitment problem and reveal the influence tactics that are used by the Church members to set contact with potential converts who were not raised in the faith professed by the group.

This thesis is divided into theoretical and practical parts. The theory part provides a brief introduction to the issue of emergence and development of the Pentecostal movement and New Religious Movements. It also touches upon the process of religious conversion and the historical perspective of religious conversion studies, which goes hand in hand with the problem of recruiting. I would like to focus on the socio-psychological variables that scientists have identified with a view to explain why certain people are attracted to certain movements and under what conditions they become actual members of the group and adherents of its ideology. The popular conversion models, such as the Lofland-Stark model (Snow, Phillips, 1980) and Rambo's heuristic stage model (Rambo, 1993; Rambo, Bauman, 2011), assume that the majority of converts go through a similar experience. It is assumed that newcomers find common ground between their current personal agenda and what a particular religious organization offers, with all its range of theistic beliefs, spiritual practices, and a cohesive community. In addition to the mentioned models that are commonly used for analyses of the conversion process and recruitment tactics, the theoretical part will present another approach that allows considering the initial interaction of potential convert with religious group from a different angle, namely through the principles of influence stated by Cialdini (2009).

In the practical part, I would like to present a qualitative interdisciplinary study focused on the initial stage of interaction between a potential convert i.e. a religious seeker, and the church that was visibly affected by the Spiritual Renewal. In addition, this part of the thesis deals with the tools which help the religious organization in establishing contact with potential and current newcomers. In cooperation with an assistant, I spent several months observing the as yet unexamined religious group, attending regular events, and collecting data, on the basis of which I tried to draw up an approximate portrait of the organization. The practical part sought to analyze the field notes from the perspective of the general principles of influence identified by Cialdini in the context of religious recruitment. I have tried to contribute to the understanding of what communication strategies are faced by people searching for the spiritual experience in the contemporary Christian-based church.

It should be noted that this topic is personally important to me since I have been interested in the development of Christian thought and its modern incarnations for quite some time, as well as in urgent problems that recent believers and theologians encounter. As I embarked on this work, I had an incentive to discover some new ways of interpreting Scripture and ways of building relationships with the church newcomers in the multilingual and multicultural environment of the Czech Republic. The growing number of contemporary studies dealing with this issue is highly encouraging, and I believe that each new work on this topic contributes to comprehending new trends in the field of a dialog between new theological ideas and traditional established faiths that we are witnessing.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Spiritual Renewal and New Religious Movements

First of all, I would like to consider relevant terms which are regularly mentioned in the discourse of NRMs, inasmuch as a one-sided definition can hardly cover the following issue.

Scholars make a distinction among the terms "cults", "church", "sect" and "denomination".

Church tends to be considered as a hierarchically structured bureaucratic religious organization that supports the norms of its surrounding society (Bader & Demaris, 1996). In case of internal disagreements and discontent growth in a *church*, the part of believers dissociates from its established framework (through a schism), forming a new religious group called *sect*. *Cult* was neutrally defined by Zablocki (1997b, as cited in Tydings, 1999) as "an ideological organization held together by charismatic relationships and demanding total commitment." Barret (1998) notes that scholars adopted the term "new religious movements" in order to avoid an implied negativity following terms such as "cult" and "sect".

Z. Vojtíšek notes that the use of the "sect" concept towards NRM could be an indicator of the disrespectful, rejecting attitude of society. This refers to the special position taken by NRMs among neighboring religions. NRMs are not considered as well-established and do not have the respect of the masses. They are distinguished by the presence of a new religious idea, but it is less about the novelty of the thought itself and more about the language that is used for its expression (Vojtíšek, 2007, pp. 17-19).

The appearance of the first NRMs can be traced back to the 19th century, but the key period of the NRMs' expansion was the 60s of the 20th century. This period was marked by revolutionary sentiments pervading the social, economic, political, and spiritual spheres. The revision of the concepts of individualism, consciousness, and freedom, rejecting old spiritual

and material value systems, resulted in a craving for self-knowledge and aspiration for experiential diversity. These phenomena created a productive breeding base for many NRMs to emerge, firstly — in the USA and then worldwide. In Europe, NRMs represent a mixture of local spiritual traditions and ideas imported from the United States (Vojtíšek, 2007, p.15).

Studying the NRM problem in terms of globalization perspective, Clarke (2005) notes that the more economically advanced social system becomes, the more spirituality forms manifest therein. Theological theses of these new groups vary from esoteric revisions of Christianity, Hinduism, or Buddhism to believing in UFO saviors' advent.

In the same period, new movements began to appear within central religious institutions, including Christian churches. These movements were often inspired by the ideas of laypeople and were aimed at solving problems afflicting Christians, such as missionary activities, ecumenical dialogue, education of their believers, etc. (Vojtíšek, pp.21-22). Pentecostalism holds a recognized position among these movements as one of the most rapidly growing religious movements in the world.

The appearance and development of Pentecostalism chronologically coincides with the period of the formation and spread of NRMs (the end of the 19th century - the beginning of the 20th century with the heyday in the 1960s). The name of the movement came from the feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles.

[1]When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. [2]Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. [3]They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. [4]All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues [a] as the Spirit enabled them.» (New International Version (NIV), 2011, The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost, Acts 2)

Beneath the theological system of beliefs lies emotional, mystical, and supernatural experiences: miracles, signs, faith healing, casting out demons (exorcism), wonders, and "the gifts of the Spirit" (charismata), especially "speaking in tongues" — as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit descent (glossolalia). Glossolalia was mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, but in the 20th century, this phenomenon was brought into prominence in relation to the Azusa Street Mission and the Assemblies of God fellowship which holds a prominent place in the history of the Pentecostal movement. One of the members of this formation, Charles Parham, formulated the teaching that speaking in tongues was the "initial evidence" of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Synan, 1987, pp. 14-16).

During the 20th century, theological and organizational differences appeared between these groups, thereby giving rise to distinguishing the Charismatics and Independent Charismatics (neo-Charismatics, neo-Pentecostals) along with the Classical Pentecostals (Johnson, 2014). These groups were influenced by the so-called "Waves of Spiritual Renewal" (Renewal groups). "Waves of Renewal" is a term used to describe the variety of manifestations of spirituality within Pentecostalism. It is believed that only three "waves" have been registered to this date, and the last one was just associated with the heyday of neo-Charismatic groups (Johnson, 2014). Taking into account numerous theoretical and ritual adoptions among these religious groups, Charismatics presumably pay more attention to the doctrine of spiritual gifts than the early Pentecostals. The members of these groups consider that all the apostolic gifts are still in force today but do not agree that glossolalia is a first sign of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit; not all Independent Charismatics speak in tongues, but healing and power evangelism are more popular in their circles. The neo-Charismatic groups of the "Third Wave" do not identify themselves as representatives of pentecostal or charismatic denominations. According to estimates for 2010, the number of neo-Charismatics reached 258,499,000, and there is a steady upward trend in the long term (Johnson, 2014).

As the main types of Pentecostal religious activities, Robbins (2009, pp. 56-57) points out:

regular attendance of Sunday services, home worship, Bible study sessions, volunteer activity, both in church and outside the church.

The Classical Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal movement is an interconnected phenomenon, and there is a prominent "family resemblance" between the various kinds of groups that claim to be either Pentecostal or Charismatic. This resemblance revolves around the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and the experiential nature of the pentecostal tradition. Synan succinctly noted that renovationist movements differ from their classical co-religionists more in style than in substance (Synan, 1987, pp. 9-11). From a demographic perspective, all forms of Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements are counted as part of the overall global renewal phenomenon. Today there are almost 600 million Renewalists of different branches all over the world (Johnson, 2014), in recognition of groups with a Pentecostal and Charismatic identification.

Charismatic movements refer to "new movements within the church." Although they are part of respected/entrenched institutions, the ideas emerging within these churches tend to transcend the boundaries of these institutions, thereby sowing the seeds for the new independent churches to appear (Vojtíšek, 2007:22).

In the Czech Republic, among the NRMs that emerged from the ideas of Charismatic Renewal, one can cite the Christian Societies (Křesťanská společenství), rallied around the charismatic leader named Dan Drápal. The period of the movement's activity fell on the 1990s, although at the beginning of the 21st century, it received public recognition, was normalized and registered under the new name "Church of Christian Movements" (Církev Křesťanská společenství) (Vojtíšek, 2007, p. 22).

Based on the available evidence and consensus among scholars, Pentecostalism cannot be attributed to NRMs since this movement shares common well-established theological basis with Protestants. However, having familiarized with the classical and recent studies on NRMs and Pentecostal movements, as well as taking into consideration specific features of

a studied organization, I concluded that the above-mentioned particulars would prove appropriate in the research of an unknown religious group. Some identified terms and interpretations in the content of sermons appeared to be atypical for Protestant discourse. Some of the conceptual constructs introduced by pastors and interpretative models emerging from them could hardly be classified as well-established and widely recognized (the author would go through them in the following chapters; see subchapter 3.3.4. Special concepts). In addition, pronounced millennial/apocalyptic expectations occurring in the inside-church discussions appear to be more typical for NRM groups. Besides, at the beginning of the research, the author of this thesis was not convinced whether the target organization was an ordinary Protestant church or whether it took the position of a biblical-based representative of the NRMs.

2.2 Religious conversion and recruitment

2.2.1 Defining the term "Conversion"

The problem of conversion appears to be called one of the key topics in studies of the relationship between man and religion. Religious conversion refers to a set of changes concerning the different levels of experience, affecting not only social behavior and the system of values but also the deep structure of the psyche due to the adoption of faith within a religious denomination (Rambo, 1993; Zinnbauer, Pargament,1998). This phenomenon is supposed to be considered in terms of an integrated approach as a process of the spiritual change arising within a dynamic field that includes people, institutions, events, ideas, and experiences (Rambo, 1993).

B. J. Zinnbauer and K. I. Pargament (1998) also draw attention to the conversion changes, observed in the areas of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-identity[1], occurring within the framework of spiritual conversion, which is defined as a type of religious

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[1] Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998) borrow the term 'self' from ego psychology:
The self includes . . . a system of ideas, attitudes, values, and commitments. The self is a person's total subjective environment; it is the distinctive center of experience and significance. The self constitutes a person's

conversion in which the "Sacred incorporates into the Self" [2] (cited from Zinnbauer, Pargament, 1998, p.170).

Throughout the history of religious conversion studies, many approaches have been presented, both to its very definition and to the reasons that cause conversion. In the beginning, numerous attempts were made in order to deal with the phenomenon of conversion within the theological and psychological paradigms. Behavioristically oriented studies asserted the predetermining components in the convert's environment; psychoanalytic approach, in its turn, examined the internal emotional and ego-elements; humanistic and transpersonal approaches have promoted ideas of self-realization and diversity of spirituality (Rambo, Bauman, 2011).

The second wave of conversion studies was motivated by the events of the Korean War. Based on the experience of the former war prisoners, a theoretical model of "brainwashing" was derived. In other words, this model associates with "coercive persuasion", which involves the implementation of conversion bypassing the will of the *victim*, vulnerable to ideologically charged information flow. This vulnerability is caused by two components:

- *the physiological component* associated with impaired brain function as a result of natural or artificially imposed emotional stress, such as states of anger or fear. There was also described an altered state of consciousness, similar to hypnotic, affected by various forms of sensory and psychosocial deprivation.

- *the personal component*, which is considered from the psychoanalytic perspective associates with an internal destructive process that leads to the weakening of the ego and rejection of personal autonomy. The way of influencing the interiorized beliefs was studied through the concepts of coercion and social and information pressure, forced admission of

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inner world as distinguished from the outer world consisting of other people and thing (Jersild, cited in Hamachek, 1985, pp. 136).
[2] Closeness with God includes the perception that God dwells within (cited from Zinnbauer, Pargament, 1998, p.170).

guilt, renunciation of the past, and re-education in accordance with the principles of the movement.

The induced dysfunction of one of these components leads to a decrease in the critical abilities of a person and increases suggestibility towards the new or previously unacceptable ideas. It is known that the very concept of "brainwashing" often adopts populist tone and seems to be overused outside academia. Besides, it is hard to ignore the the contradictory nature of the concept and inconsistency concerning the motivational potential of the convert (conversion can occur voluntarily without the use of violent measures and stress factors) (Zablocki, 1997a; Robbins, Anthony, 1980).

The third wave of research is marked with the Lofland-Stark conversion model and the appeal to sociological thinking in terms of conversion study. The model assumes that "full" conversion occurs both at the level of behavioral and verbal commitments; it presents a sequence of situational factors related to each other, together forming the necessary conditions for the implementation of full religious conversion.

1) The experience of persistent and acutely felt tension in connection with frustrated needs, ambitions;

2) the religious preference of the prospects for solving the problem;

3) self-determination as a *religious seeker*: the position of the seeker assumes an active role of a person (potential convert) in the process of their religious transformation. Such personal orientation implies a readiness to accept new ideas on the way of spiritual development and the search for meaning. The *seeker's* open-mindedness and predisposition to conversion are seemingly far from passive absorption of external influences and imply a certain tendency to self-reflection. So that was the role that my assistant and I adopted to enter the field of our research interest.

The described above steps are meant to be *predisposing*, as far as they precede contact with the religious movement. The following *situational* factors determine which movement a person will join. These factors may influence both choices of the reference group and the effectiveness of accepting new ideology, which creates a fruitful field for implementation of recruitment tactics.

4) meeting with a movement or cult at a *turning point* in convert's life;

5) formation of *affective bonds* with one or more believers;

6) *neutralize* or break the *extracult attachments*;

7) *intensive interaction* with other converts in order to become an active and worthy follower.

It is worth noting that the factors of the second group would probably fall under the control of the actors who mediate the contact between the potential convert and the group: so it provides many opportunities for recruiting through interaction. The impact of these factors has a cumulative effect, so the more conditions are met together, the more facilitated the conversion process will be (Snow, Phillips, 1980).

The timeline of conversion investigations resumed with the emergence of the next eclectic and holistic wave proclaimed by Rambo (Rambo, 1993; Rambo, Bauman, 2011). It was supposed to integrate achievements of all previous periods. The *heuristic stage model* presumes that conversion consists of seven stages:

Context. The environmental factor is considered from the macro-context and micro-context points of view.[3] Covering all the spheres of human life, the context creates a matrix on the basis of which religious and spiritual transformation will take place.

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[3] Macro-context implies broader social, political, and economic realities the individuals are bound to. Micro-context, in turn, refers to the family, ethnic group, religious society, and neighbors.

Crisis. The period of crisis can also signal the need for transformation, the time of tremendous internal changes, in which Religion acts as an effective generator of meaning, promising the return of control over the person's life.

Quest. Appeals to the need to "fill the void" engendered by an aspiration to maximize meaning and purpose in life (Rambo, Bauman, 2011). The attractiveness of a particular religious movement will depend on how effectively its practices and worldview concepts meet the individual newcomer's demands.

Encounter. The first contact between a religious group and a potential convert. Both sides explore each other engaging various interaction tactics and try to understand the other side's interests. The potential convert gets the information about the movement and its leaders, often in the form of a lecture or sermon.

Interaction. At this stage, the novice learns the details of the religious movement's life. Experienced members promote their interest by organizing formal and informal meetings and events or providing a newcomer with specialized literature. The newcomer tests the new ideas and routines, hence closer rapprochement and deepening affection take place.

Commitment. A public statement of commitment to the movement includes an element of dramatic evidence of conversion (baptism, glossolalia) and loyalty to the novement. Testimony often includes biographical reconstruction[4].

Consequences. A convert is convinced of the value of conversion; the "rebirth" experience can help to gain control of one's life. As an example, a number of studies showed that conversion has a therapeutic effect within drug addiction treatment (Chu et al., 2012; Ng, HY., Shek, D.T.L, 2001).

Most of the social influences identified in the conversion studies could be classified into one of three broad categories: social networks, affective and intensive interaction, and role learning (Snow, Machalek, 1984). According to statistics, new believers are more likely to

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[4] A rhetorical indicator of conversion, one's biography is reconsidered in accordance with the religious group's discourse and its attendant grammar and vocabulary of motives (Snow, Machalek, 1984, p. 173).

be attracted to non-profit religious organizations through social networks that include relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Maintaining a positive affective and intensive interaction with a pre-convert, a recruiter contributes to the emergence of trust. In addition, constant availability of a movement's advocate instantly allows preconvert to eliminate their doubts and align with its ideology (Snow et al., 1980; Zinnbauer, Pargament, 1998).

Role learning leads to behavioral and cognitive changes so that accepting a role of a convert allows one to interpret both religious and non-religious situations in accordance with new accepted rules and new patterns of causality.

The conversion study would be incomplete without taking into account the intrapsychic prerequisites for joining a RM. Recent research of ex-members' mental health (Buxant, Saroglou, 2008) revealed a range of vulnerability indicators among the participants who then joined RM, such as: insecure attachment to their parents in childhood, few social relationships, negative life events, and a higher need for order. Overall, the results of the Buxant and Saroglou study (2008) are consistent with data from other conversion studies pointing out a high need for order among religious people in general, active RM members, and people reflecting on religious issues. Other studies complete the profile of a vulnerable person and report their insecurity in attachment as a child, unhappy adolescence, early loss or absence of a father, etc. The aggravating factor of negative life events correlates with the following religious conversion (Buxant, Saroglou, 2008).

2.2.2 The concept of psychological influrnce vs. manipulation

It is easy to note that some theoretical perspectives consider conversion as a consequence of certain adverse events (Snow, Phillips, 1980, Buxant, Saroglou, 2008) or of unfair actions by a recruiter (Lifton, 1989; Singer et al., 1995). Rambo's Stage-model (Rambo, 1993), appear to be ideal for studying a committed convert or a former convert who had left the religious movement. About the same could be said about the Lofland-Stark Conversion Model. As for intrapsychic dispositions of a convert, an in-depth interview is also more suitable for

study, allowing to avoid false stigmatization of the convert. This work is based on the observation of the internal activities of the religious organization by a non-convert, so I would endeavor to note the motivation that brought the present adherents to the Church, based on their own testimonial evidence, which certainly shall not pretend to be a substitution of an in-depth interview with each individual believer. All the above conversion theories suggest that potential converts' susceptibility to the same stimuli differ, whether it be the content of the sermon or interaction with adherents of the religious group.

The prospect of "brainwashing" theories is most consistent with the understanding of missionary actions as manipulations. The APA Dictionary defines manipulation as "behavior designated to exploit, control, or otherwise influence others to one's advantage," however, being a word of ordinary language, it has a negative connotation associated with malicious intent or harmful consequences for the "victim" of manipulation (Robbins, Anthony, 1980). This approach to describing the interaction of pre-convert with members of a religious group often tends to assess religious conversion as harmful and implicitly refers to the issue of destructive cults and sects. This study refers to an organization that has not yet been studied and its destructive potential has not yet been assessed; hence I have opted for a "safer" and more neutral vocabulary with which to describe and analyze the interactions between members of the chosen organization and a potential convert.

2.3 The principles of influence

Professor Robert Cialdini, in the book "Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion", notes that persuasion becomes possible due to a certain way of processing information, regardless of the circumstances under which it is carried out. In order to save time and energy resources in the decision-making process, an automatic response mechanism based on stereotypes is activated. In other words, the recipient reacts to a specific detail of the message that carries the main information while ignoring certain bits of information accompanying the data array. According to Cialdini, such elements can act as "weapons of influence" that trigger automatic and predictable consent.

Referring to P. Zimbardo and M. Leippe (1991), M. Kjaerland, L. Alison, and S. Lundrigan (2003) note that methods of attracting new converts and influencing indoctrinated group members are not exotic forms of mind control, but only more intensively applied secular tactics of social influence, which is used everywhere, including advertising and marketing.

Cialdini does not differentiate the concepts of manipulation and influence; these are inter-changeable in his book "Influence: the psychology of persuasion". Kjaerland, Alison and Lundrigan (2003) within their comparative study made an attempt to operationalize Cialdini's theoretical model to investigate methods of persuading and attracting new members to the NRM. They identified a set of tactics used by Bible-based and non-Christian organizations in the Internet space. These techniques fell under two categories: Information-based and Image-based recruitment techniques. These tactics correlate with the psychological principles of influence described by Cialdini. At the same time, some of these techniques present the ideological message of the movement (for example, through the distribution of the writings from the 'leader' or offering subscriptions to newsletters or the other techniques that work to create an idealized image of the movement (involving attractive people, the promise of insight, etc.). The techniques they selected are described below.

2.3.1 Reciprocation (Cialdini, 2009, pp. 13-42)

The principle of reciprocity accompanies all social life. Having received something from another, a person seeks to do something in return. To show reciprocity means to get rid of the burden of obligations before the person who first did a favor. Rejection of reciprocity can enhance feelings of guilt and social contempt, which is considered a sign of ingratitude or begging. It is characteristic that in order to get rid of a feeling of duty, *influenced* party tend to give more than they received from their benefactor, and not necessarily in monetary terms.

Example of Reciprocity principle in action (Cialdini, 2009, pp. 23-24):

The persuading party (member of the "Hare Krishna" movement): gives a flower to a passer-by on the street and refuses to take it back under any pretext, after which he asks for a donation to the organization's fund;

The convinced party (passer-by) is expected to make a donation to return a favor and prevent himself from feeling unnecessary guilt for accepting the gift free of charge.

This strategy allowed the organization to increase its economic potential, but at the same time, it allowed maintaining its image, remaining within the behavioral framework corresponding to their religion.

Instruments of Reciprocity (Kjaerland, Alison, Lundrigan, 2003)

- the offer of free daily email messages, gifts

- the offer of free personality tests or body type tests

- the offer of subscription to any kind of newspaper held by the NRM

- the offer of free information packs about the religious movement and its purpose

- the purchase offer

2.3.2 Liking (Cialdini, 2009, pp. 126-156)

People tend to show greater loyalty to the one they feel sympathy for. Forming an impression about a person can be a subject of cognitive distortions, such as the Halo effect, in which one pronounced feature overlaps other features, even very bright or negative. There is an irrational tendency to attribute properties such as mind, talent, kindness, and honesty to a person with a pleasant appearance. The situation in which an acquaintance with a person or group of people occurs also plays a very important role. If the circumstances of the meeting were favorable and caused a positive emotional response (whether it be a festive event or a

tasty treat), these would contribute to the forming of a positive image of a person or group of people.

Instruments of Liking (Kjaerland, Alison, Lundrigan, 2003)

- famous admired and attractive people

- ethnically diverse people

- use of different languages within a group to communicate and exchange information about the movement

-friendliness and smiling people

(сноска 14. Smiling people Photographs of smiling people 15. Friendliness Refers to the feeling of kindness one obtains while scrolling through web-page)

2.3.3 Authority (Cialdini, 2009, pp. 157-177)

Submission to authority, according to Cialdini, is an acquired social trait rooted in a person since childhood. This trait is functionally justified, as it helps them to find basic guidelines in social situations. The first authorities for the child are those who have more power and knowledge of the world, who reward obedience and punishes disobedience; a person follows their example and instructions, which leads to successful socialization. Cialdini illustrates this principle by describing the experiment of S. Milgram (Cialdini, pp. 158-163). Status traits that demonstrate the competent superiority of one over the other allow the latter to recognize authority, so the one who has more authority receives more trust.

Instruments of Authority (Kjaerland, Alison, Lundrigan, 2003)

- the availability of a leader/authority

- the authority writings

- knowledge-based authority (where the authority claims some sort of special or superior knowledge)

- scientific status (where the NRM refers to their members as students and meetings as lectures)

2.3.4 Scarcity (Cialdini, 2009, pp. 178-203)

Appeal to a feeling of scarcity. It is based on a tendency to estimate the quality of an object or information depending on its (non)availability. According to Cialdini, this effect is caused by a reluctance to accept the idea of a missed opportunity; therefore, realizing a potential oversight or loss, a person agrees to a concession more willingly. At the same time, a commodity that is perceived as scarce gains higher subjective value to the influenced party.

The principle may concern a limited time for decision-making or a limited number of proposed alternatives.

Instruments of Scarcity (Kjaerland, Alison, Lundrigan, 2003)

- the offering of happiness by the religious movement

- the offering of higher awareness and consciousness by the religious movement

- the offering of either a change of self [5] or a change of the external world through

  the principles, beliefs, and practices of the religious movement

- the offering of ways to improve relationships with other people

- the availability of taught courses related to the doctrine of the religious movement

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[5] Since neither Cialdini (2009) nor Kjaerland et al. (2003) offer a definition of self, I would like to suggest using the definition cited by Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998): "The self includes . . . a system of ideas, attitudes, values, and commitments." (Jersild, cited in Hamachek, 1985, pp. 136)

As it was already mentioned, the principle of stereotypical response appears while facing new information. Without the intention and resources for a comprehensive analysis, a person classifies an object, a person, or a situation based on certain pieces of information, triggers. The term "trigger" was indirectly defined by Cialdini as a single feature of the available data (including specific words or symbols) that lead to mechanical compliance. Based on his expertise, human patterns of response to these triggers are not innate but acquired on the basis of psychological principles and stereotypes. Therefore, the *principles of influence* are built on the basis of such triggers and are expected to direct the action of the person affected. So one could say that the influence principles are considered R.Cialdini as a range of situational scenarios. The persuading party ingratiates and achieves the concession of the other party at the opposite pole of the communicative act due to a certain set of behaviors. What is concerned is knowing how to create conditions conducive to encouraging a person to agree with the persuading party.

The subject matter of the thesis entails paying attention to certain triggers that can facilitate the process of religious conversion. An encounter with the array of certain triggers (e.g., the offering of happiness by the religious movement, the offering of higher awareness and consciousness by the religious movement etc./see 2.3 The influence principles) sets off an interpretive process, during which the provided interactive possibilities i.e. affordances are evaluated (see 2.3 The influence principles). The outcomes of such interpretative operation beget the landscape of possible scenarios for further interaction with a religious group (one of which may be the conversion and joining to the religious group).

One of the tasks of the research is to describe the religious organization's ideological orientation and practices in their diversity. Although the author of the work is not a member of this organization, she will try to maintain impartiality and approach the description of the organization and practices without moral judgment. Taking into account the lack of consensus on the legitimacy of the "brainwashing" concept in the context of religious conversion (Zablocki, 1997a) and the negatively loaded connotative halo of its descriptive apparatus, I

decided not to operate on the concepts of *manipulation*, *recruitment*, and *brainwashing* in this paper.

2.4. Summary of the theoretical part

The theoretical part includes the relevant data regarding the studies of Renewal movements and NRMs, as well as a brief overview on the problematics of religious conversion. Data regarding the origins and development of the Pentecostal movements contribute to the understanding of the general context of the emergence and ideological orientation of religious groups, among which is the organization presented in the current research.

The quantity of studies devoted to various aspects of Renewal Movements and NRMs proves the great interest in this subject; one of such studies is focused on exploring tools for attracting new followers to NRMs (Kjaerland, Alison, Lundrigan, 2003). This research was also presented in the theoretical part.

The range of recruitment tactics described by Kjaerland, Alison and Lundrigan (2003) deals with one of the various fields where the matter of social influence may occur, and it is supposed to be relevant not only for NRMs but also for other religious movements, including Renewal movements, upon closer examination; their study considers some biblical-based religious movements at that. Thus I decided to use these influence tactics as an interpretive lens in the research. This issue will be further addressed in more detail in the practical part.

Exploring various manifestations of religious experience, one cannot ignore the conversion issue since this transformational phenomenon encompasses several spheres of an individual's life at once: social behavior, values, and belief system (Rambo, 1993). At present, a large database of sociological and psychological researches has been accumulated. The au-

thors of those studies aspired to establish under what circumstances some people join certain religious organizations, while others do not.

Regarding the reviewed models, some of them place great emphasis on situational factors prior to the convert's close contact with a religious movement, as could be seen in the Lofland-Stark model and Rambo's stage model. Both models refer to a certain "crisis" point preceding conversion: 1) the experience of persistent and acutely felt tension in connection with frustrated needs and ambitions (as a predisposing factor of the Lofland-Stark model), 2) meeting with a movement or cult at a turning point in convert's life (as a situational factor of the Lofland-Stark model), 3) "Crisis" stage of Rambo's conversion model, that implies disorientation and impels looking for a new life purpose (Rambo, 1993; Rambo, Bauman, 2011). Some studies of the intrapsychic prerequisites for joining RM would appear to favor the "crisis factor". The results of the Buxant and Saroglou study (2008) are consistent with data from other conversion studies pointing out a high need for order among religious people in general, active NRM members, and people reflecting on religious issues. Recent research of ex-members' mental health (Buxant, Saroglou, 2008) revealed a range of vulnerability indicators among the participants, who then joined a religious movement, such as: insecure attachment to their parents in childhood, few social relationships, negative life events, and a higher need for order.

More radical approaches considering conversion (Singer, 1995; Abgrall, 2000; Conway & Siegelman, 2011; Enroth, 1977) ascribe a large or even key role to members and leaders of religious movements, describing the methods of interaction with a potential convert as a kind of a result of inforced indoctrination and manipulative recruiting. Within the framework of such an explanatory approach, conversion is associated with a source of destructive psychological changes. The status of the associated terms such as "mind manipulation", "thought reform", "coercive persuasion", and "brainwashing" in scientific discourse is widely discussed among the scholars still without a consensus oppinion. (Amitrani, Di Marzio, 2001; Robbins, Anthony, 1980; Zablocki, 1997a).

In this regard, the problem of using the term "manipulation" in the context of religious conversion was emphasized. This subject was reviewed in detail in order to clarify the concepts and terms that will be used for description and analysis of the interaction between members of the chosen organization and a potential convert, to avoid irrelevant vocabulary (brainwashing, coercive persuasion, manipulation), and to provide the most objective assessment of research data.

Discarding the concept of manipulation and coercive persuasion, the author has opted for a more neutral concept of influence/concession offered by Cialdini.

The set of influence principles stated by Cialdini could be successfully used to study the initial stages of interaction with religious organizations, as demonstrated in the research by Kjaerland et al., although it does not claim to be a narrowly focused model explaining all the factors of religious conversion.

Based on Cialdini's paper, the above-mentioned authors have taken a step forward with the operationalization of his influence principles in order to explore methods to attract new followers to religious organizations via the Internet.

One way or another, all the mentioned theories describe the conditions for the conversion to occur. Taking into account the all-round influence of this complex phenomenon on an individual, one could not ignore the active role of the potential convert affected by such mechanisms of influence.

3. Research

3.1 The purpose and general characteristics of the research

This thesis presents findings from a qualitative research study. Observation materials, field notes as well as summaries of sermons, and descriptions of religious organization's activities form the basis of the research.

The theoretical part aims to review the challenges of religious conversion and to describe theoretical approaches regarding the principles of influence that draw new followers to religious movements. The referred theoretical models will be applied to describe the context of social interaction between members of a religious group and a potential convert mediated by the associated triggers defined within Cialdini's theory. In this part, I also address the techniques which have a recruiting potential, in other words, the techniques which contribute to attracting newcomers to religious movements (recruitment technique variables by Kjaerland et al.)

The objective of the practical part is to describe the young religious organization from the point of view of a potential convert (neutral observer who is not an organization member), to consider its authentic features, rituals, and ideological concepts focused on the process of spiritual transformation. In general, I am going to outline the features of interaction and the other characteristics of the information field of the religious organization a potential convert interacts with.

The observation data will be analyzed and mapped to the recruitment instruments revealed by Kjaerland et al. (2003).

Research objectives:

1) to describe the recently appeared religious organization, based on the observed practices, spiritual concepts, and ways of interaction within the religious group; to provide a tentative ideological portrait of the studied organization and attempt to determine the type of religious movement the organization belongs to;

2) to determine the types of influence tools faced by a potential convert at the initial stage of communication with a religious group, drawing upon the influence principles marked by Kjaerland, Alison, and Lundrigan, which find their roots in the theoretical R. Cialdini's model of influence principles. The specific ways of social interaction within a religious group shall be described from the outgroup point of view (non-member of the Church parish), as the author of this thesis will speak on behalf of a potential convert.

3.2 Method

The organization was chosen according to the specific criteria. Firstly, the lack of research of this organization due to its recent appearance resulted in a fruitful scope of untypical ritual practices and interpretations of the Holy Scriptures for further analyses. Secondly, the organization's transparency in the sense of sharing the information about the in-church activities on its web page (the schedule of services, the church's location, phone contacts, and links on its social media) suggested its openness to engaging in a dialog with interested potential converts and the group's sympathizers. The major advantage discovered after the second visit to the organization was that the leaders of the organization held open thematic discussions in the church, providing a chance not only to clarify the dogmatic provisions the organization followed but also to trace the interaction between insiders and newcomers unfamiliar with rituals. In addition, there were some educational lectures, and the pastors themselves encouraged listeners and participants to make notes, which I certainly took advantage of. In order to shorten the time for note-taking in the field, I used abbreviations to denote the common words, such as God — G (Russian: Г— Господь), Jesus Christ — JC (Russian: ИХ — Иисус Христос), Apostle — AP (Russian: А — Апостолы), Holy Spirit — HS (Russian: СД — Святой Дух) etc.[6]

The study of individuals in their natural environment is the major line of research, in other words – the study of a social group "from within". Thus, the method of included observation was used when the source of information (the object of observation) acted as an active representative of its everyday cultural practices, whilst the researcher presented certain cultural

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[6] The field notes were made mainly in Russian, as it was much more often used in sermons, discussions and communication at the church.

stereotypes, scientific concepts, and discursive strategies. Planning a field study inevitably raises the question of maintaining the natural behavior of the group members to the greatest possible extent. It means the necessity to reduce distraction on a researcher as on a new group element. There were cases in studying religious movements when researchers took on participant-observer role, seeking to study a new religious group in its natural conditions. One such notable study was conducted by sociologists R. W. Balch and D. Taylor (1977) as part of the study of the UFO cult. The researchers spent several weeks as newly converted adepts traveling with the community. There was also a study conducted by Wilkins (2008), who explored Collective Emotions and Symbolic Boundaries among Evangelical Christians. A significant factor in choosing this approach is the presence or absence of information about the studied group to analyze all the risks and chances to agree on an open study. Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013) identify two main risk sources concerning the researcher's safety during observation:

a) Venue-related risks, which the researchers face in places of potential surveillance hazards. In the case of religious organizations, the questions of financial fees and financial harassment, as well as the use of mind-altering substances, often arise;

b) Participant-related risks arise when even the researcher's presence or the process of data collection causes a negative reaction from several observed people. Sometimes it is because participants believe that the researcher has a negative attitude towards the group or belongs to a competing organization. The fear of disclosure of personal data and the fear of being presented in an unsightly way can discourage group members from participating in the study. In any case, people who object to the researcher's presence and actions can be risky for the researcher (starting from exclusion from the research environment group and to physical injuries).

As the chosen organization had recently appeared, it has not been investigated before, and there is no available detailed information about it, except information on its web pages and on several social media groups, some of which were only available for the organization's members. The observation approach chosen for the research corresponds to the role of a complete-participant (Gold, 1958); nobody in the studied group knew about the conducted

observation in order to reduce participant-related risks and maintain the priority of natural group dynamics, not disturbed by the researcher's presence. The strategy of self-presentation, however, differed from the full-incognito situation because I entered the observation under my real name and did not seek to demonstrate my own conversion.

The ethical dilemma that arises at the level of a researcher's self-presentation becomes apparent since a certain degree of information concealment is a part of the data collection protocol itself. At the same time, recognizing the epistemic asymmetry of such methodological move, I suggest appealing the question of uncompromising refusal expediency of such measures. Researchers often point to the value of data that could be lost by entering observation with a revealed researcher's identity. The strategist and ethnographer L. Timlin-Broussard notes that "invisibility" (attitude change and building of a character) allows the researcher to become closer to the observed subjects and makes them feel safer to speak more naturally about their everyday practices. "The truth is, there is a productive reason for this act beyond that of a researcher avoiding conflict. Researchers are assumed to walk into an environment with fresh eyes and walk away with an educated guess of what happens there in everyday life. This is an important distinction within the act of research, one that is increasingly vital to solid design execution" (Timlin-Broussard, 2018).

An open self-presentation as a researcher allegedly attenuates the problem of pretense but does not guarantee the elimination of mistakes and dilemmas from the observation procedure. A participant-as-observer[7], for example, is inclined to spend a lot of time and energy to preserve the natural dynamics in the group instead of immersing himself in observation, simultaneously solving the problems of subordination between him and the observed group (Gold, 1958, p.220).

The role of hidden observer is often mentioned in sociological and anthropological studies, less often in social psychology (Wilkins, 2008; Rosenhan, 1973). The key issue here is to sign an informed consent for data use. I tried to smooth out the ethical weak points ethical deficiencies by hiding the name of the organization[8] (with the permission of my academic

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[7] Researcher awares informants, that they are in a field relationship (Gold,1958, p.220)
[8] For this reason, the organization's name in the following part of the thesis will be replaced by "Ch-18".

advisor) to guarantee full anonymity of data; besides, I did not use any recording devices during my observation. It should be noted that some of the CH-18 church sermons were filmed by pastors in order to upload them to the Internet, i.e. those videos were intended for public viewing.

I would like to acknowledge my respect for all the Church members and for their religious views, and also I would like to undertake to protect their identities. From the data provided in the study, it is not possible to find out any information about informants identities; neither I nor my assistant have written down any names, addresses or personal characteristics of the subjects. The name of the place where data were collected was not disclosed[9] (Mack et al., 2005). I, as a researcher, nor my assistant, entered the observation from the position of a complete-observer (Gold, 1958), keeping the position of an interested guest-explorer, while we openly expressed our true convictions and did not declare ourselves members of the protestant Church. This observational approach provided the opportunity to participate in the organization's activities and at the same time preserve the distance and objectivity. All the measures described below were aimed to mitigate the dissimulation in matter of observation.

I drew my data from the face-to-face conversation with observed participants, as well as from collective events and discussions. In a personal conversation with the Church members, I immediately made it clear that I had no previous experience with protestant church. I tried to be as open in communication as possible. The ethical problem was partly solved due to and to the provision of complete anonymity for the organization members and due to the refusal to work in the brainwashing paradigm.

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[9] The location where the meetings were held can hardly be treated as a private apartment, where the entrance exclusively is on the passes, where an occasional visitor could literally come from the street. This is an occasion to debate whether everything happening behind the doors of the present organization has a status of secret and could not be analyzed.

The participant observation assumes the risk that being in a long-term interaction with the observed group, an investigator loses the dispassion of perception. I tried to determine the optimal number of visits, taking into account the period of mutual adaptation. Furthermore, this caution seems to be relevant for long-term research in a territorially isolated environment, where the possibility of contact with the outside world is limited. In my case, it was about voluntary group meetings and events at a frequency of one to two times a week. In total, I held eight meetings with the group. After five visits within one month, I took a break for 1,5 months and ceased observation. Then I resumed attending worships and services once a week.

3.2.1 Researcher's identity

In order to collect data, the researcher assumed a complete participant role (Gold, 1958), which corresponds to the hidden observation, in which subjects are not aware they are being observed. Disclosure of the researcher's identity could induce the risk of an expert role imposition — the role of impartial judge and skeptic, that would be undesirable in terms of field observation.

3.2.2 Assistant

During my fourth and fifth visits to the church, none of the several people I had established contact with came. Besides, it was not always possible to start a conversation with absolutely anyone freely. Then I decided to engage an assistant observer. The intention to reach greater numbers of parishioners and to increase the number of observation days was a significant reason to engage the assistant. Eventually, this step has been proved adequate and even positive, as the assistant managed to make closer contact with the older parishioners, while I had more opportunities to communicate with parishioners under 30.

The assistant's sincere interest in contemporary issues in Christianity was one of the major reasons put forward for engaging him in field observation, and by the same token, his theoretical knowledge in matters of religious studies enabled him to proceed cautiously with respect to data collection.

Before the assistant commenced observation, I had informed him about the general belief orientations of the church and also about the types and approximate duration of the events he was supposed to attend.

The assistant was a 23-year-old young man, presenting himself as a religious person (not Christian), currently focused on occult practices.

The assistant visited the Church 4 times in total within the research. The first two times, he went there with me as my acquaintance. Then, he made the third and fourth visits on his own. Starting from the first visit to the organization, the assistant did not hide his religious views and positioned himself as an interested seeker who studied religious practices. He easily engaged in debates with the Church members conserning theological topics and made notes in his field diary during discussions and sermons. There were times when the assistant and I had to go to the neighboring room to make fresh notes. Immediately after visiting the church, I asked the assistant to record a brief report on the events, which later he sent to me in the form of spoken-word recordings.

After each of the assistant's visits to the church, I conducted a semi-structured interview with him on the same day or the next. The format of a semi-structured interview is very flexible, as it does not impose significant restrictions, allowing the respondent to express thoughts freely and fully. Such an interview does not have a clearly defined structure, so you can conduct the interview in a slightly different way if the researcher finds a new topic with the respondent that may be valuable and interesting for research. I assumed that many questions for the respondent would emerge in the interview process: appearance, verbal behavior, and interactions, physical behavior and gestures, privacy, human traffic (people who enter, leave, and spend time at the church), and people who stand out (people, who receive a lot of attention from others) (Guest et al., 2013), communication with Church pastors, interaction with church members, prayer study, conflict or controversial situations.

3.2.3 Instruments of analysis

In the current study, the strategy of interaction with the group dictated the choice of the method of data collection and data analysis. Restrictions to use specialized equipment and

questionnaires certainly affected the volume and content of the data obtained. Taking notes during the lectures and discussions was a great advantage. Thematic analysis and systematization of the observed data will be carried out. The data from my notes and interviews with my assistant will be devided in semantic blocks in accordance with the major topics of ritual and non-ritual communication between group members. I am going to conduct a consistent analysis by classifying the information and highlighting common themes.

For the initial analysis of ethnographic data, I used the thematic analysis method described by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). This is a qualitative data analysis method widely exploited by psychologists, which includes 6 phases:

Phase 1: familiarizing with the data

This phase involves a close look at the data (in my case, these were my field notes, including sermon notes, notes from my assistant, and the text of the interview with the assistant). I transcribed both interviews with the assistant in Word and transferred the notes from both field diaries (mine and the assistant's) to the same place. I read all the texts of the observations several times and took notes. This phase precedes the immediate coding and the initial recognition of indicative patterns. In this way, already in the first phase, I have identified the main subject areas, such as the first visit to the church, description of the church interior, and acquaintance-making, which then evolved into "The first contact with potential converts."

Phase 2: generating initial codes

Coding is an important part of the analysis, which involves organizing data into meaningful group(s) to form a base of repetitive patterns. Coding is defined as the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon. Moreover, the topics formed by the codes represent broader units of analysis.

Coding was performed in Word, using a text highlighter. The codes highlighted included, for example, references and comments on other religions, tips are given to potential converts, music, and amateur activities, etc.).

Phase 3: searching for themes

At this stage, themes crystallize from certain codes ("Spiritual values and rituals", "Special concepts"), and interpretative data analysis takes place. The process of data analysis steps to a higher level of abstraction, which assumes that sorting of various codes is followed by integration of those codes into potential themes. For example, the codes "comments on other religions", "contacts with non-believers", and "apologetics" have been combined into the topic "Attitudes toward non-believers and believers of other faiths ".

Phase 4: reviewing themes

At this stage, the researcher excludes dysfunctional topics, divides too broad topics into more narrowly specialized ones. In my case, the sub-theme "Glossolalia" was initially a stand-alone theme, but after the revision, I shifted it to sub-themes.

Phase 5: defining and naming themes

There is a detailed analysis of the topics and their significance within the survey. When refining the data, it comes to defining sub-themes (themes-within-a-theme). In my case, the sub-themes "Holiness/charisma", "Cutting off" the heart", "Spiritual genetics" were defined within the theme "Special concepts".

Phase 6: producing the report

The final stage includes the design and presentation of topics in work. In my case, the themes are presented in the form of separate paragraphs in chapter 3.3 Observation.

The assistant signed the informed consent that allowed me to process audio recordings of interviews, reports, field notes, and the permission to use the information he provided in the research. I transcribed the interview into a text format, with which later I worked. The original texts of the notes were written in Russian (since Russian is the main language of the organization) and then translated into English. Fragments of the interview with the assistant were also translated from the Russian language.

The influence factors identified in the article became the interpretative lens for further analysis (influence principles by Kjaerland, Alison, and Lundrigan), referring to the perspective of Cialdini's theory of influence.

I will try to define the instruments of influence on the basis of Cialdini's theory about four principles of persuasion: Authority, Reciprocity, Liking, social proof, Scarcity. As a guideline and additional analysis tool, Kjaerland's et al. recruitment techniques will be employed in the framework of the offline face-to-face interactions instead of relying on digital content.

The study of methods for attracting newcomers to the organization is based on the classification of influence methods provided by Kjaerland et al.

3.3 Observation

3.3.1 About the organization and its belief orientations

The studied organization positions itself as a Church, while it is not registered in the register of churches and religious organizations. It is led by two pastors, a man and a woman. Adherents meet every week, both inside and outside the church; they would discuss the latest news and everyday issues, study sacred texts or the community-related updates published in social media. The organization is friendly to parishioners coming from other Christian denominations such as baptists and former Catholics. The parishioners mentioned that even pagans and atheists could visit the church, since they were open to anyone. In particular, when I enquired if I could invite a person who was interested in occultism to the evening service, I was told that he was welcome to join the ceremony.

The studied organization seems to be a part of the international association of churches that aims to "return the glorification of God to the church." The churches of the association adhere to a strategy of "vedenie" which can be loosely translated as "pastoral management". For the church members, it is desirable to undergo the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is performed either in the church or at the Encounter. Encounter is a type of two-day service or a "face-to-face meeting with God" held every few years. This kind of meeting implies communication, worship, exchange of experience, and exploration of such topics as body and spiritual healing, baptism and filling with the Holy Spirit, exorcism, getting freedom through forgiveness, life goals setting. Unfortunately, I have not visited the Encounter myself; the outlined above topics and a meeting itself has been occasionally mentioned by pastors in their appeals or in casual conversation (for more details, see chapter 3.3.4 Special concepts).

CH-18 treats each person as a potential leader. The initiative of public speaking and creativity are encouraged (the parishioners have even formed their own musical group).

CH-18 adheres to the "complete gospel", extending back to the 18-19th verses of the 15th chapter of the Letter of Paul to the Romans, which has been repeatedly addressed in group discussion.

" …[18]I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, [19]by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ… " (New International Version (NIV), 2011, Romans 15:18)

Supporters of the fully preached gospel believe that they have returned to the doctrinal fullness of the Gospel sermon that manifests the presence of the Holy Spirit's power through signs and miracles (verse 18).

3.3.2 The first contact with a potential converts

The headquarters of CH-18 is located in the basement of a residential building; on the facade, there is a poster with the name of the church, that makes is visible to the passersby. Parishioners usually communicate with each other, gathering before and after the service near the small bar in the hallway. The act of worship is held in the assembly hall.

My observation began in the spring of 2018 after I found information about the church on the Internet. The first meeting with CH-18 took place on the day of the worship; the time and place of all regular meetings are indicated on the Internet page of the church. The planned events such as lectures or conferences with invited guests are usually announced on the Internet page of the church or via messenger. The newcomer should provide one of the members with their phone number so they can join the chat.

For many followers, the first meeting with CH-18 takes place at the Encounter, although this event is initially positioned as a Meeting with God and is not focused on a specific denomination. Those with whom I communicated in the church visited this place already being parishioners of CH-18.

The daily exchange of information takes place in common chat messengers; the organization does not use email to attract new followers. Mutual PR among member churches of the commonwealth is carried out on the Internet through websites of organizations and co-networks. CH-18 does not offer the purchase of books or information brochures on a regular basis and

generally favors media content such as video recordings of pastors' performances or podcasts on its own Internet platform. No attempts to establish a barter relationship with potential converts on the part of organization members were noticed either.

It can be noted that new visitors of the church are approached primarily by young women (about 25-30 years old), given that half of the parish are males. Parishioners do not adhere to any specific dress code; most of them just dress casually. Pastors often wore merch with the church's logo.

At our first visit to the church, my assistant and I were met by the young women in the hallway, who then asked us about the language we preferred in communicating. The first questions addressed to a newcomer are quite standard: age and sphere of interests, previous experience with God service, confession, term of residence in the country (the considerable number of adherents are emigrants). The communication, in general, is informal. Interactions usually involved smiling and occasional ignoration of personal space. During the conversation, the church members could initiate physical contact with a newcomer with cheering gestures, patting on the shoulder, hugs, and holding hands. In my own experience, hand touching was the way to start a conversation, while a woman member started complimenting my bracelet; the acquaintance was hasty, as she had to pay urgent attention to another new girl, who got sick during the prayer, as she sat down in a bent position in the corner of the hall); as I was explained later, she *"couldn't stand the Holy Spirit"* (from my field notes)[10].

3.3.3 Spiritual values and rituals

3.3.3.1 Worship

The ceremonial event is held two times a week in the evenings. The duration of the worship is about an hour and a half. The maximum number of engaged parishioners was 20 people. Presence at the ceremony was not mandatory; the participants who came into contact with me one day could miss one or two following meetings. The worship is accompanied by

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[10] For convenience, further excerpts from my field notes, as well as excerpts from my assistant's notes, reports, and interviews will be shown in italics.

modern popular or rock music, dance in spirit, and ecstatic speech as the parishioners believed that the Holy Spirit was talking through them.

The hall, where such events are held, was well-technically equipped with lightning and an acoustic system. There is a stage with musical equipment — drums, electric guitar, and synthesizer. Prayers are usually distributed around the hall: some of them sit or lay on the floor; other ones can just dance standing at one place or approach the edge of the stage and dance or just sit there. One day, the parishioners brought large colored linens and used them in their dance. In the hall, there was a stage and three large screens showing abstract moving images during worship that included dancing (sometimes paired at will), singing, and musical performance. Some parishioners say that they experience the feeling of relief after praying.

Worship begins with a musical composition praising Jesus. People can pass a microphone to each other to pray in turn. The content of the prayer tends to be unstructured and resembles a stream of consciousness[11] monologue filled with estimated expressive vocabulary. Intonations of the preachers tend to be aggressive. The prayer consists of repeated appeals to God/Jesus to give them a blessing in the Holy Spirit, knowledge, and ability to create and *"sow the grain of truth on earth"* (from my field notes).

After worship, the Holy Communion is offered: instead of wine, diluted rosehip syrup (members of CH-18 do not drink alcohol) is served together with pieces of crackers substitute altar breads/Eucharist.

3.3.3.2 Glossolalia

Glossolalia (speaking in tongues) is a form of unintelligible vocalization, which has a non-semantic meaning, interpreted as a divinely inspired spiritual gift. The direct result of glossolalia is receiving a personal spiritual revelation, bypassing consciousness (Hine, 1969). As it was in church, it is not necessary to undergo baptism by the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues,

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[11] "Stream of consciousness" was used in a sense of verbal registration of heterogeneous psyche manifestations (experiences, associations, memories, etc.), which appear neither consistent nor logically connected with each other.

but the ritual supposedly enhances the chance to master this practice. It is possible to decipher the meaning of these revelations with the help of an interpreter who has the *charisma* (gift) of interpreting.

According to the pastor, the ones who want to come to in a rational way cannot take baptism with the Holy Spirit: *"...you will not understand it, you just block yourself as soon as your 'brain' comes to the fore."* Glossolalia is often accompanied by a dance in Spirit, laughing and crying.

Speaking in tongues, as an objectively observed practice, according to Hine (1969), illustrates the "bridge-burning" act, which openly demonstrates their identification with the group. This is overlaid by a change in behavioral and assessment patterns that is typical for the "commitment" stage of the heuristic conversion model (Rambo, Bauman, 2011).

A few words should be said about the physiological processes accompanying this phenomenon. In their study, Lynn, Paris, Frye, and Schell (2010) pointed out two common stress reduction biomarkers (decrease in salivary cortisol level across the diurnal cycle on Monday relative to Pentecostal worship "stress" of Sunday and increase in α-amylase from Sunday to Monday) associated with the believer's engagement in Pentecostal worship, including glossolalia (Lynn et al., 2010). Changes in brain activity during real-time glossolalia practice were evaluated by Newberg, Wintering, Morgan, Waldman (2006). Decreased activity in the prefrontal cortices during the glossolalia state affected the sense of control over the flow of vocalizations: *"...these subjects truly believe that the spirit of God is moving through them and controlling them to speak. Our brain imaging research shows us that these subjects are not in control of the usual language centers during this activity, which is consistent with their description of a lack of intentional control while speaking in tongues."*[12] Presumably, the feeling of "being captured" by some force comes by the fact that frontal lobes delegate tasks to another part of the brain (Newberg, Wintering, Morgan, Waldman, 2006).

3.3.3.3 Exorcism

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[12] Penn Medcine News provides a review of the research by Newberg, Wintering, Morgan, Waldman (2006). Available at: pennmedicine.org/news/news-releases/2006/october/language-center-of-the-brain-i

In view of the fact that my assistant presented himself to the church's members as a person who was interested in occult practices, he was advised to go through the ritual of exorcism to clean out residues of occult practices he once engaged in. The ritual was conducted in the hallway before the worship, with witnesses who, however, have been walking past showing no interest. The pastor's son volunteered to conduct the ritual instead of his father; he used tap water because the oil was not at hand, so he put his hand on the top of the assistant's head while reading the prayer. At the end of the ritual, the pastor's son gave instructions that *"the Devil will test us, and we must be ready for it, we will be overcome with doubts. When you draw something bad, you become possessed with it, it is like a drug, as like God."*

The offer to conduct a séance followed after the assistant had mentioned in an ordinary conversation that he had recently been experiencing weakness and headaches, so at first, he received a comic, benevolent remark: *"P. joked about this fact and said that card reading was the source of the problem* (author's note: referring to the tarot cards, the use of which is common in occult practices), *like 'what did you expect,' and then he suggested to read a prayer saying there was nothing to lose on my part"* (excerpt from the assistant's interview).

All in all, the assistant's feelings about the ritual were quite controversal: *"It was strange. I really had the feeling that he was penetrating my brain with his hand. And I really wanted to laugh, not in the sense that I was somehow disdainful of what he was saying; it was very much like some rituals which I used to conduct myself. That's the thing for me to think about. It's just that the general atmosphere must have affected, and all in all, it's good that he was reading it with his eyes closed. I can't say anything about evil spirits, but when he put his hand away, I just exhaled. It's like a prayer worked, or vice versa?"*(excerpt from the assistant's report)

A certain disregard for the formal side of the ritual should be mentioned in this turn, as the tap water was used instead of oil. The ritual was performed as if it was an afterthought, right in the middle of a conversation, standing in the corridor; similar ritual simplification was observed in the case with the Lord's supper (saltine and rosehip syrup substituted bread and wine, parishioners do not read a separate prayer before sipping the syrup and taking the saltine). However, the open-mindedness and benevolence of the person who conducted the

ritual should be noted, considering the fact that the assistant was not a regular parishioner and did not identify himself as a Christian.

3.3.4 Special concepts

3.3.4.1 Holiness/charisma/gifts (from my field and lecture notes)

From the perspective of CH-18, the concept of gifts is closely related to discovering their new talents. One parishioner, who was a participant of the music band, told me that she had not have a great natural inclination to be creative until she accepted God. However, after a year spent serving the Lord, she acquired the talent for singing which was her "holiness", and since that time she has become a member of the curch's musical band. She also hinted that I might also have hidden talents waiting to be discovered.

3.3.4.2 "Cutting off" the heart (from my field and lecture notes)

The concept is based on the Gospel of John *"[1]I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. [2] He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. [3] You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. [4] Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."* (New International Version (NIV), 2011, John 15:1-8) "Branches in me that bears no fruit" are interpreted by pastors as personal misconceptions and doubts about God's limitless greatness.

Pastor:"…we have to be morally ready to purify and strengthen ourselves spiritually before the new season of harvest begins. If you do not give up your old and dead thoughts, you will not be able to accept the new revelation."

"Cutting off" someone's heart provides a deeper understanding of God's path and an opportunity to find the answer to the questions of current interest.

3.3.4.3 Spiritual genetics

The pastor's rhetoric includes the biological vocabulary explaining the principles of spiritual functioning. At first, he gives the definition of the term "genome" (he calls this genome with the name "Sons of God"). This "genome", according to the pastor's explanation, presents the highest level of believer's identification, that appears at the moment of the *new birth* (baptism) and gives a promise of resurrection. The *genotype* means, respectively, a portion of the common "genome" that a particular person receives as a result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The "phenotype" is a set of all the components of genotype (traits) in a person which are observable to date. The pastor of CH-18 claims that the spiritual genome "Sons of God" embodies the highest stage of identification that man receives at the moment of his *new birth*. Thus each believer is *"bound to Jesus"* by the spiritual DNA and becomes identical to him.

Pastor: "The fullness of God is contained in the bodily Jesus, and you will find fullness in Christ… Through self-sacrifice, Jesus raised the act of creation to another level: Jesus poured his genome onto the earth, i.e. in Adam (he was created from the dust of the ground), and transmitted his DNA through his blood. Just like Adam, we got his DNA through the blood".

Apparently, there is an interplay between the individual "Adam" and the collective "humankind", like in Genesis 1:27 (Apostle Arne, 32). The pastor figuratively calls the believers "clones of Jesus" as he reproduced himself pouring his blood while maintaining superiority among his *brothers*. In his sermon the pastor claims that the miracles of walking on water and healing, when *"people with Down syndrome will be transformed in front of your eyes"* will soon become a daily thing. He also points out that anyone who has achieved unity with Christ could work all the same miracles as he did.

Pastor:"Do you know why you still don't walk on water? Because the revelation strikes your brain, the mind hasn't turned off yet; the spirit hasn't got it yet. But I believe that soon it will get from our brains directly to the core, and it will activate all necessary areas of our DNA."

3.3.4.4. Filters

Pastor: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding[13]. I believe that a lot is hidden from us. The problems began when the serpent came up to Eve and said: you will be like gods. From the moment the first people fell into sin, the grandiose work of the Kingdom of darkness began to install special filters in the human mind.

And now we are already being born with these filters. They are passed on to us by inheritance; we are already being born in sin. And what is the plan of the dark forces for my life or yours? It works for total destruction. I believe that one of the missions of our church is to destroy filters in our minds. Filters are the devil's lies about who we are and who God is.

One of the most common filters is that God wants to bless anyone, but not me; I am too unlucky to quit drinking and to succeed in business...

The second filter is a life experience. The Bible calls it earthly, demonic wisdom. But if your wisdom is built on the system of this world, it has nothing to do with God's plans for your life, with its purpose for you. If you build your life on experiences that are not based on walking with God, then guess the whole plan for your life you are fulfilling...

Another filter sound like: "I've never done this, I can't do it, I'll be laughed at - it's called fear of nonconformism..."

The concept of the *filters* apparently traces the roots of the Protestant tradition and refers to Luther's doctrine of the total depravity of human nature (D'Andrea, 2006). It turns out to be in attitudes that give rise to mistrust in the ability to achieve material (for business to succeed), physical and personal (to quit drinking) prosperity, and powerlessness (I have never done this, I will not succeed, I will be laughed at).

It is noteworthy that the pastor identifies the emergence of such attitudes with the intrigue of evil forces, with a hint of conspiracy —*"I believe that a lot is hidden from us"*; therefore,

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[13] Part of Proverbs: "[5]Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." (New International Version (NIV), 2011, Proverbs 3:5)

the pastor offers to combat such attitudes through spiritual practices held at the church — *"I believe that one of the vocations of our church is to destroy filters in our minds."*

3.3.5 Attitudes toward non-believers and believers of other faiths

The general attitudes towards non-believers, shared among CH-18 members, tend to be benevolent-altruistic. In all prayers which I had an opportunity to attend, the parishioners prayed for all the people without discriminating on the basis of faith. The Church members are convinced that the Lord will lead them out of delusion, seeing a proper initiative on their part. They believe that God sometimes makes good with their hands. There is the case of the young parishioner to illustrate it: one day, he suddenly felt an urgent need to contact the person about whom he had received a revelation, and as a result, his call prevented this person from getting into the public transport accident.

Some parishioners, at the same time, confessed about feeling separate from people beyond their community. One of the most active church members, I would call her Mrs.N, in her speech reported about the intention to communicate more with non-believers, she considered this experience as "going fishing", like Peter the Apostle did in the Gospel of John (John 21:3). Mrs.N admitted that she was not engaged enough in missionary activities recently but shared the experience of attracting her colleague to the church — not with the help of "preaching of truths", but rather as a result of building trust in the relationship between them; finally, she decided to introduce her colleague to CH-18, where she stays till that day. Mrs.N also noticed the pride emerged in her while comparing herself with non-believers, and the only way to cope with this pride was to love those people and pray for them. She perceived communication with non-believers or with people of a different faith as an exit to practice as opposed to studying theoretical aspects of Christianity (reading and interpreting the Holy Letters). It was most likely about rethinking and adapting doctrinal concepts into the language of secular vocabulary. Mrs.N was concerned to face prejudice and negative attitudes on the part of non-believers: *"I feel a rod of Christ in me, not my own rod, but His, it is not possible to turn me from Him."* This confidence allows her to gradually escape from glorifying Christ, i.e. to withdraw partly from attending prayers and devoting less time to rituals, as she reported. *"We only took what was right for us from Christianity. God brings us to the*

zero point. He comes and 'cuts' everything you don't need, and you'll know directly that this is God" — she says, then concludes: *"God is the one who deals with illusions."* Illusions, as she has mentioned lateley, meant wrongful conviction of the need to follow liturgical stereotypes and (non)verbal automatisms in service (learned clichés like folding hands in a prayer gesture, kneeling in prayer, etc.), that *"lacks the breath of the Holy Spirit and turns the believer into dried bones[14]"* (Mrs.N).

During the worships, the micro was usually handed to anyone who wished to speak his mind. At times there occurred politically colored replicas, such as *"...to kick off the dishonest sinful rulers who spoil our souls", "He will come, and He will destroy the State Church of that country, as it destroys the Earth."*

Another parishioner (B) mentioned that she had problems with alcohol, and over time, she faced health issues because of this. This was the reason she started visiting the Catholic church but did not stay there for long. She says she may have always been a believer, but in the Catholic Church, she was annoyed by the clergy and disdained their instructions (used obscene vocabulary). *Parishioner B*: *"Sometimes I wanted to hit them... all those serious speeches about what you should and should not do…"* (extract from the public-speaking performance after the worship). She says she is willing and able to *"communicate with God herself"*, and she does not need a mediator to do this.

Another parishioner advised me to unquestionably go to the next Encounter, and that's where I will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. When I said "What if I had already been baptized in childhood?", she said this would be different and stressed that after that experience, she was *"no longer willing to live with that God 'in a framework' because **that's where** He's alive."*

3.3.6 What you give is what you get. What to preach for?

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[14] *"Then he said to me, Prophesy to these bones and say to them, "Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! [5] This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. [6]"* (New International Version (NIV), 2011, Ezekiel 37:4-8)

CH-18 offers various ways for leadership development. The announced sermon or testimony topic tends to appeal to the speaker's personal experience. The whole path of service is devoted to the process of "mind renewal". From my field and lecture notes: *"The rules of the earthly world contradict the heavenly rules: if you want to be rich there, you should give everything away, but to fulfill this purpose it is necessary to renounce doubts about God's presence and accept Him in your heart."* In his sermon, the pastor emphasizes the distinction between *"those who are still waiting to serve and those who are already serving... We want to walk with God and serve right now. I refuse to accept any lies, any illusion."* Walking with God is not considered as an act of personal desire to serve a mission but rather as an act of showing obedience to God, who directs an anointed man to achieve virtue. This obedience must be trained by recognizing God's omnipotence by admitting that *"there is nothing impossible as if you doubt yourself and your abilities, you doubt God"* (citaion from my lecture notes).

"After the evidence sent by God is silenced, you start to feel all your virtues — kindness, loyalty. It does not compare to anything else! It's a thrill! You can't live without it. All those worldly needs and desires that you will have, he will make up with more; all other desires will die."

One of the most distinct agendas of the church is the "*release of churches that do not hear God's voice*", i.e. those who are "*forced to live by written*" and by "*pre-written*" (after Moses). CH-18 pastors believe that *"God never told his children to live like this. The written word is unable to explain what to do next, and these attempts will end in failure, so God himself does not speak to such people".* The apostleship for the members of CH-18 is closely related to the concept of "harvest" and the Second Coming of Jesus. The last Season of Harvest, according to the pastor, shall come upon this generation.

"Conservative pastors will no longer be able to follow the changes that are coming! Pastors had already set a limit for themselves because when God called, few people heard it, but those who heard Him… God has rewritten their DNA. This is not even a new movement of God, but the beginning of a new era… God raises the fathers of the new church with the

pure DNA of heaven. That's why it's so difficult for believers to communicate with each other because their spirit and DNA are different."

The above-mentioned part of the preacher appeals to the sense of belonging to the group of chosen people, who have been blessed with the unique esoteric experience by hearing the voice of God, while the representatives of the other churches have been deprived of such a *gift* (charisma); at the same time, pastors encourage parishioners to constrain their pride towards the other believers, who remained unblessed.

Pastors of CH-18 believe that the apostles have lived and will live forever since they wrote about the Coming of Christ as if it has already happened, and all the revelations they wrote actually come from eternity.

The pastor during the sermon states that since he began praying for Prague after the revelation came to him, the rate of crimes in that city has decreased by 25%. He reminds everyone in the church that their revelation experience is always unique, as they possess a portion of God's DNA, and it is not in vain that they were born at this period in history because this generation was destined to see Jesus.

3.3.7 Departure from the organization. The end of observation

As it was already mentioned, there were no special admissions to participating in Church activities. That is why we had an opportunity to quit visiting the church and at our own will, without reporting about the departure reasons. The parishioners' visits to CH-18 were not strictly monitored, and the only gesture of admission that could be treated as a sign of membership was carried out by inviting a newcomer to the group chat after getting his phone number. I left the group chat on messenger, so did my assistant. As a result, leaving the church, we both retained our original status as we first appeared there, i.e. unconverted interested guests, not re-baptized with the Holy Spirit.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 Cialdini's principles

3.4.1.1 Reciprocation

The offer of free daily email messages, gifts

As it has already been mentioned, the organization does not send daily emails; the members often exchange messages. CH-18 does not offer any books or information brochures for sale and generally has a preference for digital content. Mutual PR via the Internet (on the websites of organizations and social networks) takes place between member churches of the commonwealth. During the entire observation process, the assistant nor I received gifts from the church members. There were no attempts to offer any kind of tests, neither in rituals nor in common communication.

In general, no attempts to establish a barter relationship between the potential convert and the members of the organization were noticed. The only thing worth mentioning is free refreshments, as well as the Lord's supper, served after evening worship — a ritual like a communion, during which crackers and water with rosehip syrup (instead of wine) are served, free of charge too.

The offer of free information about the organization and its purpose. Information about the organization is primarily presented on its website. The church has its own podcast and YouTube channel where recordings of sermons and musical performances can be found. The organization's website contains notes from pastors and active parishioners; there are also some records of some testimonies and interpretations of the Scriptures. All materials are available online free of charge.

The purchase offer. Donations to the organization's foundation are not mandatory, at least for newcomers. The details about fund-raising requirements for regular parishioners can not yet be provided.

3.4.1.2 Liking

Among the most important causes of liking, Cialdini points out *age similarity.* In the context of religious conversion, this suggests that age similarity between members of a religious

organization and pre-convert can become a favorable factor for the development of sympathy towards the religious group.

Half of the parishioners were under 30 (the same age group as me and my assistant); besides, it was our peers who initiated communication at our first and second visits to the church.

The other causes that lead to greater liking are *familiarity produced by contact* and *cooperation* (Cialdini, pp. 140-141). CH-18 creates conditions for them both to evolve through conducting regular services, joint musical activities, and organizing home groups.

As for the intense expression of love and sympathy toward pre-convert, it was certainly present in the form of compliments, smiling, offering refreshments, and telling jokes, but nothing beyond what could be expected from an ordinary acquaintance with a new collective.

It can be assumed that the main principle which contributes to the generation of positive affect among the parishioners is *loving* rather than *liking* — it implies the *love* emanating from God since parishioners believe that each prayer is an object of the Gog's love that is recalled at every occasion. Thus the unconditionally loving transcendental God-figure is supposed to be the main agent of the love-giving interaction.

Popular and admired celebrities were not personally involved in the Church activities, but the point is that CH-18 brings up its own admired celebrities within the church — they are often powerful speakers or musicians who write musical compositions for the service.

Speaking of the most replicable characters of Christian culture, we should undoubtedly mention the figures of Jesus and apostles. Coming back to the topic of spiritual genetics, I would note that the basic rhetoric of the preachers was built around the ideas of praising Jesus as a bodily embodiment of God and being likened to apostles who have a metaphysical unity with Him. The name of Jesus in one sermon could have been mentioned from 5 to 20 times. However, speaking about the figure of Jesus, it is difficult to distinguish between the dimensions of "liking" and "authority", since for most Christians in the observed group, he seems to be the embodiment of both.

We can also report two cases where the representation of social network effect is revealed. In both cases, the present parishioners of CH-18 came to the church due to personal acquaintance with the Church member (colleague/girlfriend). In the first case, the closer acquaintance with CH-18 started with the outsider's own spontaneous initiative: *"I haven't even called her on purpose, she wanted to come herself…"* In the second case, the Church member invited the outsider to the worship in order to entertain her: *"I like to come here, it's fun — you can dance and sing, so I decided to invite her."* The situational factor, viz. affective bonds, in both cases, allegedly contributed to the emergence of pre-convert's interest towards the Church activities.

3.4.1.3 Authority

Based on all of the preceding observation, I can assume that the pastors' rhetoric allows legitimizing their authority, inter alia, through the usage of scientific or pseudo-scientific terminology in sermons (see 3.3.4.3 Spiritual genetics), although this cannot be called *a knowledge-based authority* or a pretence of claim a *scientific status* in the full sense of the word. It rather deals with the authority that purports to demonstrate some sort of superior knowledge. At the same time, leaders continuously refer to the Christian tradition, finding new signs and meanings in Holy Scriptures, attributing their ideas to the respected figures, and present their revelations as an ancient rediscovered wisdom, such as the eternal life of the apostles or the idea that the present generation of believers was destined to eyewitness the coming of Jesus. Another facet of the leaders' manner of communication is the powerful voice.

For the parishioners, speaking in tongues and dance in spirit present the evidence of God's field manifestation, while the pastor is treated as a guide who sanctifies this mystical experience through baptism by the Holy Spirit.

The pastors' sermons include clues that prepare the listeners to tackle and solve routine problems (both personal and encompassing an entire religious group). Besides, they formulate the agenda that encourages to conduct missionary work: the followers are anointed to bring the knowledge and God's word to people; co-existence with the other churches, which do not hear the voice of God). The content of sermons combines at once theological and psycho-

social components that assume identification with «Sons of God» — in terms of wording, this does not imply authority or power asymmetries in favor of the pastors, since all the *brothers* and *sisters* are equal in the face of Father in all respects.

Direct interaction with the pastor could be treated as **affective and intensive interaction**. The charismatic connection is particularly strongly felt while going through the ritual of exorcism, which includes physical contact with a person who conducts the ritual, as they put hands on a person's shoulders and on the top when reading the prayer. My assistant reported on strong emotional pressure throughout the exorcism procedure: *"I felt like he was personally talking to every evil inside me. I'll never agree to do it again."*

Authority writings of different authorship (revelations in a publicist style from pastors) are freely available on the home page of the organization. You could get advice from the pastor on any issue or by coming to a group meeting or via messenger.

The general agenda of the church promoting the value of the individual experience of meeting God through baptism by the Holy Spirit entails the encouragement of missionary initiatives in preaches. Each visitor of the church has access to an "open microphone" during group events and could speak out about his experiences. Leadership development is provided by the so-called leadership school, organized within the commonwealth, where church members are trained to speak to audiences. Thus every believer could become a charismatic leader and broadcast his interpretation of the Biblical events. Due to heterogeneity of the parish – people of different nationalities, ages, sex, wealth, and religious background a large number of everyday secular narratives get into the shared information field, which inevitably appeals to the life description of Jesus. Thus, potential converts have the opportunity to personalize stories of the Holy Scriptures, comparing themselves not only with the heroes of canonical texts (Rambo, 1993), but also with the real people with similar life experience – such comparison is more visible and close to the modern context, and easily gains the trust and emotional response from the recipient.

By giving everyone an opportunity to publicly express their own interpretations of sacred texts, the studied organization distances from the coercive authoritarian religious model, where the founder/leader of the organization is considered as the only translator of truth.

3.4.1.4 Scarcity

The offering of happiness

"When we accept Jesus, we already accept eternal life. We do not seek eternal life because we already have it."

"We're ready for the harvest to come tomorrow, and I'm not where I should be yet. Jesus will come and take me in the state that I am. I do not want to get into eternity in such a state because we live not now, but eternity."

"No matter how many prophecies we collect, we never know when this Kingdom will come. God does this for us to hold on to him. He's a builder, and we're his stones. When we clearly know the coming, what we will build then, God will no longer be necessary... If I know it's only 1,000 years from now, then I won't do anything."

According to Hine (1969), believers tend to report the changes in their self-perception after the glossolalic experience, pointing out increased capacity for love toward, sensitivity to, or concern for others, increased self-confidence, and a sense of tranquility and joy; also they felt more confident in their beliefs.

Besides the practice of speaking-in-tongues, the offering of higher awareness/higher consciousness/bliss appears in connection with the "Harvest" concept that is presented as a process of receiving the Charismatic gifts.

"Where God leads us, there is much more blessing opened to our generation. Your DNA possesses special properties."

"If we don't see a change, we won't follow God. We want to follow the transformation. We're weaving in each other. We complement each other. What do we live and work for? We are an integrated whole, but we have to exist on a global scale, understanding our global mission... Without me, nothing will work. Without one small screw, the clock mechanism will not work."

"We are the light of the world... I remember once I prophesied in front of people for an hour, as if I were in the portal, in my visions. Everyone was thrilled, and everyone burst into tears. It was something unique. Now I'm talking about mind renewal. We are crossing the threshold of eternity. The path is devoted only to one process — the renewing of the mind."

The offering of "mind renewal" promises to meet the current needs of a person at the *Quest* stage of Rambo's model of conversion, seeking to overcome the crisis situation. The situational factor of conversion (Lofland-Stark model), viz. "meeting with a religious organization at the "turning point" of the pre-convert's life, could either be observed:

"... I once had a cat, I loved it, I raised it. She was like a baby to me, and then she died. What did I see in my heart? While she was living, I didn't even realize how attached my soul was to her....My soul «glued» to this creature. But then I turned to God, thanks to you, I understood that I have to let her go. I let her go with God's help. Here Paul [15] said of the family "those who have a family should live as if they do not.[16]*"* (from my field notes)

The dynamic of the presented case recalls the situational factor of conversion, described within the Lofland-Stark model: the desire to "neutralize" or break "extracult attachments" in favor of spiritual union with higher powers, presenting the coping strategy in order to deal with the sudden loss of a subject of extracult attachment. However, it is not clear whether a person- pet attachment can be regarded in the same way as an attachment to a person of another faith.

The concept of spiritual genetics described earlier could be interpreted in terms of the scarcity influence principle as it addresses the question of self-identifying and "offers a change of self". The "offering of changing the external world through the principles, beliefs, and practices of the movement" is also assumed:

Parishioner D (in a discussion held after a worship): "... Reading Paul's gospel, we see it consists of 90% practical life advice. We sometimes talk about some spiritual stuff, but there

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[15] Paul the Apostle is mentioned.
[16] From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not. (New International Version (NIV), 2011, Corinthians 7:29)

is no practicality in it. We do not know what exactly we are waiting for and when it will come to bring the Kingdom on Earth. I mean, we should practically show that we are ready. An architect must ask God — where and what he should build."

Practices of healing and personality restoration by touching the word-of-fire also promise a certain therapeutic effect. At the same time, the conversation between the pastor and the parish resembles a patient-consultant model: after a person shares their problem with a pastor, the pastor gives them a range of urgent and long-term recommendations regarding their situation.

CH-18' members help to master special spiritual practices such as praying and speaking in tongues, which could contribute to inhibition of doubts or/and negative thoughts (according to data provided by the researches on neurophysiological correlates of glossolalia and worship described in chapter 3.3.3.3 Glossolalia).

The availability of taught courses related to the doctrine of the organization. According to the parishioners' words, the advisory conversation with pastors could help anyone who wished to become capable of speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues, in turn, could contribute to supplanting the doubts and negative thoughts (according to data provided by the researchers on neurophysiological correlates of glossolalia and worship, described in chapter 3.7.3 Glossolalia). In addition, the church members periodically organize home groups, where they analyze the Scriptures.

3.4.2 Summary of the research outcomes

In this chapter I would like to summarize the results of the research.

3.4.2.1 Part I

Based on the data collected in this research, it is hardly possible to set clear/strong/explicit consistency between the studied organization and one of the distinguished religious movements, since only a small part of the events that take place in the church has been explored. It is with reluctance that I bring this subject up beyond the Discussion chapter. At this point, I can only give an approximate description of the church under consideration. CH-18 has the

characteristics of a neo-Charismatic organization and operates on the basis of "full gospel". It is also possible to observe a shift in emphasis on receiving "gifts" (charismata), casting out demons, and miracles present here and now, which is typical for the Third Wave of Spiritual Renewal movements.

It would be an exaggeration to assert that the ideas propagated within CH-18 go beyond the scope of Protestant thought; however, it is essential to note some original concepts, using innovative metaphors by pastors in terms of interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Pastors reveal new aspects of the all-encompassing involvement of Christiesans[17], resorting to a synthesis of biblical references, secular slang, and scientific terminology. Relations between the members of the organization are consensual, more focused on long-term cooperation. The discourse contains apocalyptic millennial expectations, manifested in frequent references to the theme of the eternal Kingdom coming, as well as the coming of the Harvest season. However, the Harvest season presumably has no definite time reference (parishioners' views clash on this issue) — it is not clear whether they expect it to come in the earthly life or whether it has an eschatological meaning.

One of the pastors notes the discrepancy between the fullness of spiritual comprehension of a divine revelation and attempts to comprehend this revelation critically/rationally — the latter is not encouraged[18].

The attitude towards representatives of related denominations is generally friendly within the church. However, several parishioners used pejorative language in reference to the Catholic Church's clergy in an informal conversation. The presence of enlightening tendencies was not observed in the church either: the church members do not seek to guide non-believers or representatives of other Christian denominations on the right path intentionally, since as the pastor mentioned that "*some churches have heard the voice of God*", while the others, obviously, have not, as if it was the God's will rather than area of the parishioners' concern.

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[17]As the believers are considered to be the carriers of the genome called "Sons of God", which is treated as the highest level of believer's identification (see 3.3.4.3 Spiritual genetics).

[18] Passage taken from the pastor's lecture (field notes): *«…you will not understand it, you just block yourself as soon as your "brain" comes to the fore.*" (see 3.3.3.2 Glossolalia)

CH-18's current congregation, among other things, includes some former Baptists and some former parishioners of the Catholic Church. The doors of the church are open to all who are interested in direct communication with the God and to those who have already had such an experience, so they will get an opportunity to share their experiences publicly.

3.4.2.2 Part II

The classification of the influence techniques based on Cialdini's influence principles was used as an interpretive lens to present the observational data collected from the position of a potential convert.

For all the points stated within the framework of the Reciprocity principle, the results may be summarized as follows:

Reciprocation. Communication between a potential convert and the Church members occurs in person at church, in a chat room of a messenger application, and in informal settings in home groups. At the church, refreshments and the Lord's supper are provided free of charge. No attempts to establish a barter relationship with potential converts on the part of organization members were noticed. The details about fund-raising requirements for regular parishioners can not yet be provided, but as for the requirements for newcomers, according to my own and my assistant's experience, any sort of donation is not mandatory.

The church does not systematically attract new parishioners through the distribution of newsletters and via email. In a personal conversation, it was revealed that at least four current parishioners learned about the church through their friends and colleagues. Attending evening services appears to be motivated by getting the opportunity to communicate with the "living God" through glossolalia and prayer and the entertaining format of services (music, dancing, singing).

Liking. The major part of the young parishioners helps to organize events in the Church. Most of them are engaged in creative activities; they also started their musical band that periodically performs in the Church. The first contact with my assistant and me was initiated

by parishioners of the same age (up to 30 years old) who were actively involved in Church affairs (administration of social networks and musical activities). Communication was often accompanied by compliments and encouraging touches such as stroking the shoulder.

Many of the church's parishioners speak Czech and Russian, some of the pastors' sermons are accompanied by consecutive translations into Czech, and during the prayer statements in Czech and Russian can be heard, so the church can be called bilingual. Pastors contribute to developing the parishioners' talents and public speaking skills since talents are associated with gifts of the Spirit (charismata). Charismata are perceived as dispositions that can be developed. Based on this fact, it could be said that the church grows its local celebrities from among its congregation; hence it provides them with a platform for self-expression and allows them to share their thoughts and creativity with a broad audience (during performances, video shooting is periodically conducted, followed by posting videos on the organization's website or YouTube channel). Skilled speakers and musicians who dedicate their works to the glorification of the Lord have the potential to become popular in certain circles.

Authority. Among the authoritative texts to which the Church appeals, the Holy Scripture comes first, as well as the pastors' and parishioners' notes — both of which are freely available on the Internet. In case of any questions, pastors are available on mobile phone, via messenger, or in person. In terms of freedom of thought, the church does not possess the characteristics of authoritarian organization: during discussions, an open exchange of views on the content of the Scripture and revelations is provided — the experience of each believer is treated as unique and meaningful. The spiritual experience of each parishioner who decides to speak out in public has the potential to become a source of unique or superior knowledge for one another. Disagreement with the pastors' opinion is not prohibited or suppressed, so the pastors do not embody absolute authority for the congregation.

Speaking of the superior knowledge, a motive of exclusivity manifested there in a light form (transmitted by one of the pastors): members of the church, unlike non-believers and representatives of other Christian denominations, are among those who "have heard the voice of God," that is why others probably do not have access to the fullness of His revelation. The emphasis is also placed on the belief that the parishioners belong to the generation that will

see the coming of the Kingdom and the coming of Jesus. Jesus and the apostles appear to be the central authority figures for parishioners; their words are referred to in sermons, they are addressed during prayers, the name of Jesus is sometimes used in the allegorical sense — *"Jesus is my inner core"*. Its parishioners describe the church as a place where they can establish direct contact with Jesus through the Holy Spirit, aiming to *"see the living God"*. Despite the fact that scientific or rather pseudo-scientific vocabulary was present in the sermons (see 3.3.4.3 Spiritual genetics), the church does not claim or pretend to be a scientific organization.

Scarcity. Among the influence tools identified in the Scarcity principle framework, the offering of happiness and higher awareness and consciousness were noticed — both in connection with the arrival of the Harvest season, which foreshadows the receipt of charismatic gifts. Many parishioners demonstrate one of such gifts by their actions performing glossolalia during evening services. According to the researches of Hine (1969), Lynn et al.(2010), practicing glossolalia entails a change in self-perception, gaining self-confidence, and a sense of calm and joy. My observation confirmed the presence of positive feelings among the parishioners after the experience of speaking in tongues, but only by words of a single parishioner who described the condition of speaking in tongues as "delight" and according to the visible manifestation of pleasure during the performance (smiling, laughter, the appeal of gratitude).

The offering of ways to improve relationships with other people was outlined only indirectly when during public speeches and discussions, parishioners shared positive experiences of moving to a new working group and spoke about their religious beliefs, which are no longer influenced by the views of their permanent environment. Besides, judging by the friendly attitude towards the new parishioners, the church community itself claims to become a new friendly environment for the neophyte. The offering of either a change of self or a change of the external world through the principles, beliefs, and practices mainly addresses the problem of creating comfortable living conditions for the parishioners (pastors give advice on issues of relationships, disturbing obsessive thoughts, offer to read a group prayer for relatives.) During the group discussions, there have been made some suggestions to take concrete actions to demonstrate their faith (…*"we should practically show that we are ready"*-

for the Kingdom coming), but no concrete suggestions were put forward. Once during the worship, the parishioner expressed dissatisfaction with the activities of the *State Church of that country*, which was rather a demonstration of the expectation of changes that should be made by the hand of higher powers, than a demonstration of his own intentions to take action (*"He will come and He will destroy the State Church of that country, as it destroys the Earth"*).

As for the availability of taught courses related to the doctrine, pastors are supposed to provide advice on glossolalia issues, as well as advice on a personal matter. Besides, they can offer to read a group prayer for relatives' welfare and conduct an exorcism ritual.

4. Discussion

In this chapter, I would like to take stock of the conducted research and outline its findings and limits.

The organization considered in the current thesis has not yet been described in such a format; therefore, the conducted observation was primarily of an introductory nature. For a more complete description of the organization and its assignment to one of the Pentecostal branches, it would be advisable to conduct a longer and more detailed observation than the one presented in this research. An open interview with the church members also carries with it a great information potential, which I felt compelled to avoid due to the methodological barrier inseparable from the chosen observation format. Besides, the perspective of conducting a content analysis of text and video materials presented on the organization's website (recordings of sermons and articles by pastors and active members of the organization) appears highly promising.

As for the limits of the current thesis, first of all, attention should be paid to the fact that the present research is based on the data obtained from a small sample only without the involvement of external data sources, excepting the Bible. Undoubtedly, this raises questions about the objectivity and reliability of the provided data. Considering the ethical aspect of the necessity to conceal the information about the organization, I would be willing to disclose the organization's name to the researcher interested in its further study with the approval of my academic supervisor and the Commission members.

It should be noted that some of the religious and ideological concepts discovered during the sermons might be quite interesting to consider both in psychological and religious studies.

As a researcher, I am aware of my own and my assistant's preconceptions and motivation, which may have affected the field notes content and interviews. Being an interpreter, I tried not to absolutize the theses presented in this work and reflect on them. Among other things, I admit that the researcher's and assistant's reflections presented in the thesis are incomplete due to the established requirements for the research volume and the need to provide preliminary information about the organization, which had not been studied before.

Besides, in the framework of current studies on religious conversion, the issue of demarcation between the concepts of influence, manipulation remains unresolved. It would be more relevant to address this issue in comparative theoretical research to cover the limits of using these concepts regarding the conversion phenomenon and missionary tactics. This appears to be a particularly relevant matter in terms of current research trends in sociology, social psychology, and psychiatry.[19]

It has to be mentioned that Kjaerland, Alison, and Lundrigan do not reject the concept of brainwashing in their article, referring to the fact that it is accepted within the social sciences (Levine, 1984; Beckford, 1979; Barker, 1986, as cited in Kjaerland et al., 2003) and in the

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[19] Alberto Amitrani and Raffaella Di Marzio (2001) discuss the lack of consensus within the academic community on the legitimacy of the "brainwashing" concept. Available at: https://culteducation.com/group/339-mind-control-in-new-religious-movements-and-the-american-psychological-association.html

law (Dressler, 1979 as cited in Kjaerland et al., 2003). However, the issues regarding the limits of using this concept remain unresolved (Zablocki, 1997a).

The limits of the interpretive database used in this research could also be considered. Since Kjaerland, Alison, and Lundrigan focused on the quantitative research of online resources, there may be a question of whether the influence tactics they have identified are applicable in qualitative research. Although the authors of the article did not give any comments upon this issue, their research lacks the analysis and operationalization of the principles of Social Proof and Commitment&Consistency, which are present in the original Cialdini's treatise. The researchers ignored these two principles, presumably due to the fact that they were not suitable for describing a remote interaction between a religious organization and a potential convert. A brief note on the two influence principles which have not been considered in the article is given below.

Social Proof can be described as: action or behavior is considered preferable when a person observes an identical behavior or reaction to this event, especially when they find themselves in an ambiguous or uncertain situation. (Cialdini, 2009, p. 98)

Hypothetically, within the framework of this principle, I could suggest instruments of influence such as praise for the correct performance of the ritual, praise for the relevant interpretation of the ideological text in accordance with the hermeneutic tradition of the religious group, or for example, gift-giving to newcomers.

The principle of Commitment&Consistency means adherence to one's original convictions. "Once we have made a choice or taken a stand, we will encounter personal and interpersonal pressures to behave consistently with that commitment." (Cialdini, 2009, p. 43) Here I could suggest such an instrument of influence as partial acceptance of the original pre-convert's beliefs.

One more thing to point out is that my research expectations regarding Cialdini's model of influence principles significantly changed while writing this paper. The lack of specificity and inconsistent use of critical terms such as *influence, persuasion, and manipulation* in

"Influence. The psychology of persuasion" appears to reduce the presented model's explanatory potential significantly. However, this feature of Cialdini's theory might partially come from the journalistic style of his book "Influence: The psychology of persuasion" and from its orientation towards the marketing and advertising industry. I would not dare to make strong statements about Cialdini's work, as it deserves more detailed analysis and reasoned critique, which is not the point of this paper.

Concerning the ethnographic component of this study, the researcher certainly reckons with all the typical limitations for a field study (Mack et al., 2005). Among such factors is the limited observation period set by the design of the study; in total, I visited the church 8 times and my assistent conducted 4 visits, within the research. Another problem is the documentation of our observations and the fact that collected data were highly dependent on the researcher's and the assistant's mnemonic dispositions. We both did our best to keep our field diaries regularly, compile reports, conduct interviews immediately after each visit to the church, and minimize incidental taking the parishioners' phrases out of context while making the notes. However, despite all the above, a certain imprecision in data collection cannot be ruled out.

5. Conclusion

The present bachelor's thesis investigates the young, multilingual Christian organization operating in the Czech Republic and one of the post-Soviet countries. It dwells upon the theistic beliefs of the studied organization and communication tactics employed to establish relations with potential converts.

The study is based on field observation carried out by the author of the thesis with the cooperation of an assistant-observer. In the theoretical part, the vital points of reference to the problems of religious conversion and recruiting to religious organizations were described. Besides, a brief overview of the Spiritual Renewal movements and New Religious movements history was provided, with the object of a more comprehensive assessment of the organization under consideration.

The observation and data collection phase was followed by the field notes and reports processing, and transcribing the interviews with the assistant-observer. As a result of the research, a description of the rituals and belief concepts preached in sermons were presented and analyzed. The analytical framework of the current thesis includes both the psychological aspects of social influence in communicative and recruiting tactics, as well as the references to sociology of religion, in an attempt to draw a portrait of the yet uninvestigated religious organization.

In light of the research findings, it seems reasonable to suggest that the studied church has the most pronounced characteristics of a neo-Charismatic organization. The practice of glossolalia a exorcism were registered, as well as praicing of the gifts of the Spirit (charismata) and the idea of spiritual healing and not clearly defined millennial apocalyptic expectations.

The organization is not actively involved in attracting new followers through the outside distribution of brochures, fliers or email newsletters but rather gives preference to Internet resources (YouTube, podcasts). Besides, there were two registered cases of joining the church's parish through the social networks, including collegues and friends.

The content of sermons adopts the fundamentals from the scripture occasionally diluted with scientific terminology without an apparent endeavor to establish the scientific status of the organization. In many ways the church acts as a platform to fullfil the creative aspirations of its parishioners and get support through the community networks. No less remarkable is the language factor. A large number of the church's members speak at least two languages (Russian and Czech) and sometimes provide translation of the pastors' appeals to reach a wider audience. For Russian-speaking immigrants, this is an opportunity to be surrounded by their native language and participate services without a language barrier.

When analyzing collected data, I used the referred Cialdini's concept of the influence principles and range of recruiting tactics defined on its basis. Among all the described principles, the Authority and Scarcity principles stand as the most extensively covered within the research outcomes.

The thesis is supposed to draw up a more comprehensive view of the new multilingual charismatic organizations in the Czech Republic. It should be noted that some of the religious and ideological concepts discovered in sermons might be interesting to consider in the context of the psychology of worldviews and values. Besides, this study may also be of interest to intercultural workers working with ethnic minorities since a large number of parishioners of the CH-18 come from the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The interdisciplinary nature of the present study reflects the versatility of spiritual life and a strong preference for the employment of various approaches to investigate the phenomenon of religious conversion and recruiting to the religious organizations to expand the field beyond the current knowledge.

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