SUMMARY

Verbal strategies in Neo-Pentecostalism. Language as a trigger for spiritual awakening and transformation

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Contemporary Christianity features multiple varieties and the differences between each of them result from the religious practices cultivated in a given group of worshippers and the approach to faith in general, bearing in mind either the traditional or a more spontaneous one. The former refers to religious groups with deeply rooted customs and hierarchical structure whereas the latter stands for independent communities run by entrepreneurial leaders whose modus operandi rests on the strategy known as power evangelism. It was inspired in the 1980s by John Wimber, the father of Neo-Pentecostalism, and has won recognition worldwide due to a strong emphasis it puts on signs and wonders as well as on an individual's spiritual awakening and transformation. Interestingly, it has also affected mainline churches, as in the case of Roman Catholic congregations where Wimber's ideas have been eagerly promoted until today. Present-day power evangelism practitioners tend to act as brands and therefore, they seek to provide their followers with tailored products which can be easily purchased in the religious marketplace. However, the mere fact of having something on sale is not enough. What matters is an efficient performance based on verbal output. Neo-Pentecostal preachers employ a set of verbal strategies typical of the cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) in order to influence their audience in the same fashion mental health professionals do. For this reason, they need a tool, defined in this study as the Neo-Pentecostal language. Continuous exposure to the messages spread during a worship event, brings about the so-called inner restructure which consists in replacing the maladaptive thoughts with the more rational options and hence, recipients develop new behavioral patterns.

With regard to the above, this research aimed to (1) distinguish the features of the Neo-Pentecostal language in terms of its persuasive capacity, (2) analyze the use of those verbal strategies that have been adopted by the Neo-Pentecostal as well as Pentecostal Catholic leaders when interacting with the audience, and (3) explore their transformative potential. The following thesis was formulated: The Neo-Pentecostal language whose performative potential makes it a powerful device, serves as a trigger, modulator, and medium of one's spiritual rebirth that can be experienced as a result of a three-step process involving the preparation, immersion, and reinforcement stages during which an individual's cognition and self-perception undergo

considerable change. The Neo-Pentecostal language tends to be embedded into a set of customized verbal strategies including evidence gathering, consequential analysis, cognitive bias identification, generating alternatives, problem solving, reattribution, imaginal exposure, decatastrophizing, and positivity reorientation that constitute the basis of the cognitive-behavioral therapeutic model (cognitive restructuring) and that can also be recognized in the Neo-Pentecostal ritual which appears to rely heavily on the clinical protocol, especially in terms of functionality and structure. Generative, protective, breaking, and destructive speech acts are one of the most distinctive attributes of the Neo-Pentecostal language. It is argued that they have causative and cathartic consequences. Their perlocutionary effect consists primarily in modifying the mental and social reality.

The investigation was conducted in Poland and Italy. Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) was applied to approach spoken texts including sermons, prayers, and teachings. It was complemented by other methods such as overt participant observation, online surveys, and individual in-depth interviews (IDI). When it comes to the speeches published online by the selected leaders, only power evangelism practitioners were taken into consideration and those encompassed: (1) Arkadiusz Krzywodajć, Filadelfia Church from Wodzisław Śląski, Poland (original name: Kościół Filadelfia, Wodzisław Śląski), (2) Wojciech Wałaszczyk, Vineyard Christian Center from Rybnik, Poland (original name: Centrum Chrześcijańskie Winnica, Rybnik), (3) Marcin Zieliński, The Voice of God Worship Community from Skierniewice, Poland (original name: Wspólnota Uwielbienia "Głos Pana", Skierniewice), (4) Michał Świderski, The Risen Christ School of the New Evangelization from Gliwice, Poland (original name: Szkoła Nowej Ewangelizacji Jezusa Zmartwychwstałego, Gliwice), and (5) Angelo D'Aloisi, Hillsong Milan, Italy. As far as participant observation is concerned, the following communities were explored: Sabaoth Church Roma, Hillsong Rome Connect, and Comunità Cattolica Shalom (Shalom Catholic Community from Rome)

The first chapter deals with the history of the Pentecostal movement both in America and Europe. It starts with presenting the main characteristics of the so-called *First-Wave*, frequently referred to as classical Pentecostalism. It also focuses on some crucial events which can be considered reference points for further advancement, and these are the emergence of Bethel Bible School that later became a training center known for miraculous outpourings of the Holy Spirit and the introduction of what became recognized as the Azusa Street Revival. As for the *Second Wave*, its most significant stages are discussed, including The New Order of the Latter Day, The Healing Revival, and The Charismatic Renewal. Finally, details concerning the *Third Wave* (Neo-Pentecostalism) are enumerated. Special attention is given to Wimber's

preaching model and its promotion all over the world. Besides, this chapter also clarifies what pentecostalization of Christianity is and how it is understood in the contemporary religious marketplace.

The second chapter focuses on religious language and impression management within the context of the Neo-Pentecostal ritual. Issues such as the use of particular speech acts and how meanings are made play a crucial role here. Discussing them helps the reader to understand the interplay between the performer and the audience. Of equal importance is the part devoted to the presentation of Self and how persuasion works when exercised in the Neo-Pentecostal environment. Moreover, the concept of charisma and faith branding are thoroughly explained, bearing in mind the corporate perspective taken in this research.

The third chapter concentrates on the empirical findings. It starts with defining what *cognitive restructuring* means and how it is related to the research in question. Particular strategies are listed and given a closer insight. Then, the nature of the Neo-Pentecostal verbal content is elaborated on, mainly in terms of its persuasiveness and transformative potential. The initial part of the analysis comprises utterances spread by the chosen leaders either on-site or off-site. The former stands for live performances whereas the latter refers to the audio-visual materials published online. Emphasis is put on recognizing interventions typical of cognitive-behavioral model. The final part of this chapter deals with the problem of inner restructure. In other words, it focuses on analyzing the answers provided by respondents regarding their spiritual awakening and catharsis.